



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. Lionel J. “Bo” Beaulieu has been the Director of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) since August 1997 and is also a professor of rural sociology in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University. Dr. Beaulieu’s professional efforts have been devoted to social capital resource issues in the rural United States and the South; the educational success of rural youth; e-commerce and entrepreneurship development activities; and the expansion of civic engagement in rural areas. During his tenure at the SRDC, Dr. Beaulieu has introduced a number of innovative activities to the region and beyond. They include: (1) launching of the Extension E-Commerce National Demonstration Project that has facilitated the adoption of important e-commerce strategies by small businesses in rural America; (2) spearheading a national effort to strengthen the quality of Web-based resources available to rural people via the eXtension rural entrepreneurship initiative; (3) helping establish the Southern Research and Extension activity that is focusing attention on the new Hispanic South; (4) conducting evaluation research of the most promising strategies for bringing about social and economic advancement in low-wealth counties in the Mississippi Delta Region; and (5) creation of the Food Assistance Small Grants Program in partnership with the Economic Research Service - an effort that has resulted in over 1.2 million dollars being invested in over 160 social scientists located in 33 institutions of higher learning.

He is the author of numerous publications, including edited book volumes, book chapters, and articles that address rural development, education and labor force issues in America. Dr. Beaulieu received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Sociology from Purdue University. He completed his term as president of the Rural Sociological Society (RSS) in August 2004. He currently serves as Editor of the *Rural Realities* policy/information series sponsored by the RSS.

Dr. Jerry Conover directs the Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC) at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business. The IBRC analyzes economic, workforce, and demographic trends throughout the nation and its states and local regions. Recent IBRC projects have addressed such issues as benchmarking regional economies, exports and foreign direct investment at the state level, and the role of innovation and industry/occupation clusters in strategic planning for regional economic development. Dr. Conover earned Ph.D.s in Psychology and in Business Administration from the University of Missouri. An active participant in research and economic development activities for many years, Dr. Conover is past president of the Association for University Business and Economic Research.

Sally Cutler is the current Executive Director of the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development (NCWWDB), covering nine counties in the central part of Wisconsin. Numerous education, employment, business, and economic organizations work with NCWWDB to build sectors. Most importantly, she oversees NCWWDB’s job centers to provide quality workers for quality jobs.

Previously, Ms. Cutler directed Marshfield Clinic’s department of Human Resources Development developing the education, training, and career development for over 5,000 employees. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Education from University of Wisconsin River Falls and her Master’s Degree from University of Wisconsin- Madison in Continuing and Adult Education.

She is married and lives on a 235-acre farm near Milladore. She has two married daughters and four grandchildren.



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Elizabeth (Liza) Ehrlich joined the New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation in 2002, and has dedicated her career there to the Parks Opportunity Program (POP), one of the nation's largest and most successful transitional employment programs. In her current role of Director of Program Operations and Client Services, Liza designs and implements pioneering programming where trainees perform valuable work for NYC Parks, increasing civic pride and greening city neighborhoods while pursuing sustainable employment and financial self-sufficiency. This is her fourth position within POP, and in each role she has created innovative partnerships with other NYC agencies and private organizations to provide opportunities to trainees in areas including education, vocational training, financial empowerment, housing, childcare and benefits assistance, and emergency intervention.

In February, Liza was honored as the NYC Parks' Commissioner's Employee of the Month, and recently returned from the Cross-Atlantic Welfare-to-Work Conference in Rotterdam, Netherlands where she shared strategies with European Social Service agencies to assist in their efforts to transition their citizens to self-sufficiency. Liza holds a Bachelor's Degree in American History and Government from the University of Delaware.

Karen R. Elzey is Vice President and Executive Director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW), a 501(c)3 nonprofit affiliate dedicated to strengthening the nation's educational standards and the quality of its workforce. ICW promotes high educational standards and effective workforce training systems so that they are aligned with each other and with today's rigorous business demands.

Ms. Elzey leads ICW in helping chambers of commerce, businesses, and trade associations address their education and workforce needs. Education reform and workforce development are central concerns of her work. She focuses on ensuring that the business perspective is represented in education reform and workforce development. Ms. Elzey advances policy positions and promotes public-private partnerships to ensure that businesses remain competitive in a global economy.

Ms. Elzey serves on the boards and advisory committees of the National Information and Communication Technology Literacy Policy Council; the American Association of Community College's Advisory Committee for the Plus 50 Initiative; the U.S. Steering Committee for the China-U.S. Conference on Workforce Development; the National Institute for Literacy's Workforce Basic Skills Expert Working Group; and the National Teachers Hall of Fame.

Eva Greenwalt is the WorkFirst Program Manager at the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. She oversees \$28 million in contracts that provide transitional jobs for TANF participants who are considered the hardest to serve. Washington is considered a national model for helping TANF parents overcome barriers to employment through transitional jobs. Her team's efforts were recognized with a CSG Innovations Award in 2001.

Currently, Ms. Greenwalt represents her agency at the Washington State WorkFirst Partnership which brings state agencies and the Governor's Office together to improve statewide outcomes for TANF families. Prior to her work at Community, Trade and Economic Development, Ms. Greenwalt coordinated community service programs for the Washington State Department of Corrections at their McNeil Island facility.



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Jennifer Hilmer Capece is the Program Manager of the American Association of Community Colleges Center for Workforce and Economic Development directing research, technical assistance trainings, and business development efforts. She advances the Center's aim to empower community colleges to collaborate with industry, workforce boards, economic development entities and other community organizations to improve the prosperity of individual workers, businesses, and communities. Ms. Hilmer Capece's background is in youth workforce development with isolated or disengaged populations. She is currently focused on progressive economic development efforts in rural community colleges and her latest publication is *Sustaining Partnerships for Regional Economic Growth* funded by MetLife Foundation. Ms. Hilmer Capece received her Master's in Public Policy and Management from the University of Melbourne.

Diana Hinton Noel is the Director of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Labor and Economic Development Standing Committee. In this capacity she tracks federal and state unemployment trends and provide technical assistance to state lawmakers across the country on a host of labor and economic development issues. Additionally, she conducts research, writes issue briefs, makes presentations for legislators and staff, and answers information requests on related federal policy.

Prior to this, Ms. Hinton Noel was the lead NCSL contact for two grants funded by the U.S. Department of Labor on employment of persons with disabilities and a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation on transportation coordination. In that role, she participated in policy groups developed through the grants and maintained information on state legislation.

Ms. Hinton Noel was a member of Americorps, served as a juvenile counselor with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice, and was a law clerk for a social security disability firm. She graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Arts degree in government and politics and received her Master of Public Administration degree from Bowie State University.

Dr. Deborah M. Markley is Managing Director and Director of Research for the Rural Policy Research Institute's Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, a national research and policy center. Her focus within the Center is practice-driven research and evaluation of best models for entrepreneurship development in rural places. Prior to her work with the Center, she was the Chair of the Rural Policy Research Institute's Equity Capital Initiative and completed a national study of nontraditional venture capital institutions. Dr. Markley's research has also included case studies of entrepreneurial support organizations, evaluation of state industrial extension programs, and consideration of the impacts of changing banking markets on small business finance. She has extensive experience conducting field-based survey research projects and has conducted focus groups and interviews with rural bankers, entrepreneurs, business service providers, venture capitalists, small manufacturers, and others. Her research has been presented in academic journals, as well as to national public policy organizations and Congressional committees.

Dr. Markley received her PhD. in agricultural economics from Virginia Tech in 1984 and has held faculty and research positions at the University of Tennessee, the University of Massachusetts, and Purdue University.



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Jim Richardson is the Executive Director of the National Rural Funders Collaborative in Dallas, Texas. Mr. Richardson received his B.A. in History, with a minor in Business, from Southeastern Louisiana University and a Master of Theology (MTh) degree, along with several years of doctoral studies in Philosophy and Theology, at Southern Methodist University. He has more than 20 years of experience in affordable housing, nonprofit management, community development lending and philanthropy, including nearly a decade with Bank of America. Mr. Richardson is the founding Executive Director of NRFC and lives in Dallas when he is not on an airplane to some remote rural community.

Christina Sklarz-Libby is the Program Manager of Maine's North Star Alliance Initiative, a WIRED Grantee. Ms. Sklarz-Libby has over eighteen continuous years within the State of Maine's economic development arena with past government employment on the local, regional and state level as well as serving in a managerial capacity to the state's business attraction agency, Maine and Company.

Prior to her appointment to the governor's office to oversee the management of Maine's North Star Alliance Initiative's \$14.4MM federal grant, Ms. Sklarz-Libby worked for the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, as a Development Project Officer managing the state's Community Development Block Grant loan portfolio and later as a Business Development Specialist, serving as one of the state's front line authorities providing companies with one-on-one project management through assistance with utilization of local, state, and federal workforce and economic development programs and services.

She holds a Master's of Science in Business Administration from Husson University in Bangor.

Susan Swanton is the Executive Director of Maine Marine Trades Association. Ms. Swanton began her career in the marine industry in 1979. For nearly twenty years she worked primarily as a service manager in small boatyards located on Maine's southern coast. Other industry experience includes managing a major marine retail operation and inside sales work for a marine wholesaler.

In 1997 she accepted her current position as Executive Director of the Maine Marine Trades Association – a statewide organization that represents approximately 180 member firms that are engaged in all aspects of boat building, repair and service. During her tenure in this position she has played a significant role in creating and implementing the Maine Marine Trades Apprenticeship Program, the Maine Clean Boatyards & Marinas Program and a number of other environmental initiatives in partnership with EPA Region 1 and Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Ms. Swanton has received numerous recognitions and awards including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, New England Region Environmental Award in 2004. In 2005, she was appointed by Governor John E. Baldacci to serve on the Maine Jobs Council, Maine's statewide workforce investment board, and reappointed in 2008. Ms. Swanton was also appointed to serve on the Workforce Alliance National Leadership Council and is a member of Maine's North Star Alliance Initiative; Maine Sea Grant College Program; Maine's Working Waterfront Coalition; and the England Marine Trades Association.



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Joy Tinker is a TANF Program Specialist in the Boston Regional Office of the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), part of the Department of Health & Human Services. She joined the Family Support Administration (FSA) in 1990 just before ACF was formed. Ms. Tinker has had several assignments since then including special projects for the Regional Administrator, regional lead for Domestic Violence issues for several years and Program Specialist in Child Support Enforcement as well as in TANF.

Ms. Tinker came to DHHS from the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) organization in New Hampshire where she wrote and directed the Family Independence Program, steering it into national recognition. The program recruited small groups of volunteer, long term welfare recipients living in the same town, and addressed each family's needs with local resources providing longer term case management to assess, counsel, train, school and place each participant while dealing with individual issues and providing a unique plan for each family.

Denise Tolbert currently serves as the Executive Director of Employment Contractor Services for the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). She is responsible for seven innovative Employment Contracts with over 34 locations throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Through these contracts over 20,000 New Yorkers are placed in jobs each year. In addition, she oversees the Transitional Employment Programs administered in conjunction with NYC agencies which create over 6000 jobs yearly at the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Sanitation. She is also responsible for the [Work Experience Program](#) which refers over 19,000 participants to work assignments throughout the city. Her combined programs serve approximately 25,000 public assistance recipients.

Ms. Tolbert has risen through the ranks of HRA, starting as a caseworker after receiving a Bachelor of Science in Urban Studies and Political Science from The American University of Washington D.C., where she also earned an Associate of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice.

She is the proud parent of a daughter who currently studies at Stamford University. She is a member of Zeta Phi Beta International Sorority which helps women of collegiate-bound programs pursue their ultimate goal of higher education through mentoring and scholastic endeavors. She has been an active member of St. Paul Community Baptist Church for over 25 years and supports its growth throughout Brooklyn and Queens counties in New York City.

Barbara Van Burgel has been serving as the Director of the Office of Integrated Access and Support (OIAS), Department of Health and Human Services since 2006. Ms. Van Burgel oversees and directs the programs provided by the Office of Integrated Access and Support (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Food Supplement Program (FSP), State Supplement Program (SSI), Parents as Scholars (PaS), General Assistance (GA), MaineCare (MC) eligibility, Additional Support for People In Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE), Division of Support Enforcement & Recovery (DSER), and Division of Social Security Disability Determination to over 500,000 Mainers monthly. Ms. Van Burgel directs four divisions: Programs & Policy, Child Support Enforcement and Recovery, Disability



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Determination Services, and Regional Operations. Ms. Van Burgel testifies at the Maine Legislature on bills that affect our programs.

From 2003 to 2006, Ms. Van Burgel served as the Deputy Director and the Acting Director of the Office of Integrated Access and Support.

From 1996 to 2006, Ms. Van Burgel was the Deputy Director for the Bureau of Family Independence, Department of Human Services. This Bureau is responsible for providing public assistance, food stamps, medical assistance, child support collections, and job training services to eligible Maine families. The Bureau has sixteen local offices, approximately eight hundred staff and an annual budget of \$225,807,588. The Deputy Director is responsible for the budget, local operations, and management information systems.

From 1988 to 1996, Ms. Van Burgel was the Program Manager for the ASPIRE Program which provides education, training, employment, support services, and dependent care services to public assistance and food stamp families. During her time in this position, the number of parents obtaining permanent employed increase from 362 to 6,300 and the budget increased by three hundred percent.

Ms. Van Burgel is a graduate of Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan obtaining a Bachelor of Science Degree in Medical Technology and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology with a Secondary Education Teaching Certificate and Master level course completions from the University of Maine at Orono in Educational Counseling.

Ms. Van Burgel has been recognized by the State of Maine for the Employee Service Award in 1995, the Department of Human Services' Commissioner's Award for Meritorious Service in 1994, and appreciation awards from Federal Department of Health and Human Services, Coastal Enterprises, Inc. and Maine Centers for Women, Work and Community.

Lisa Washington-Thomas is Branch Chief of the Division of Self-Sufficiency in the Office of Family Administration, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). She possesses a breadth of experience in a wide array of social services programs, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Job Opportunities and Basic Skills, and Emergency Assistance Group, the Rapid Response to Technical Assistance Contract, the Healthy Marriage Resource Center, and the Community Planning Grants. Ms. Washington-Thomas earned a B.A. from Georgetown University.