



## TANF Rural Initiative Rural Communities Academy



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**Gary Allen** is the Administration for Children and Families TANF Program Manager for the Kansas City Region. Mr. Allen has over 30 years of government service. In addition to writing Social Security and Supplemental Security Income training materials, he has worked with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program since its inception in August 1996. He has degrees from Arkansas State University and Southeast Missouri State University.

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**Barbara Bayes** has a MSW from the University of Texas at Austin with a primary concentration in non-profit management. In May, 2001, she became the first Executive Director of the newly created Good News Mountaineer Garage. Prior to this, she served as Executive Director of the West Virginia Advocates and the Legal Aid Society of Charleston.

Barbara is a 5-Year Cohort participant in the W.K. Kellogg's Rural People, Rural Policy Initiative and serves on the advisory committee on the newly formed Opportunity Car Initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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**Daylan Beamon**, Business Development Manager of Business Access, consults with workforce development professionals to design the most effective programs for their unique needs. Mr. Beamon has successfully overseen the planning, design specifications, staff training, and implementation of more than 60 distance learning programs since 2000. Business Access has implemented 106 Technology Based Learning programs for workforce development that have yielded over 1,000,000 hours of participation.

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**Pankaj Bhanot** is the Acting Division Administrator for the Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division (BESSD), State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services (DHS). Pankaj leads an agency responsible for the administration of the federal and state funded financial assistance (TANF, GA, and AABD), food stamps, child care subsidies, child care licensing, low-income home energy assistance (LIHEAP), employment and training programs, and purchase of service (POS) contracts to provide support and ancillary services to public welfare recipients.

Pankaj has worked in the human services and employment and training areas for 12 years. Since 2002, Pankaj has spearheaded multiple efforts to streamline and improve the service delivery of employment and training program, for example Up-front Universal Engagement (UFUE), a grant diversion program for TANF recipients, Supporting Employment Empowerment (SEE Hawaii Work), a public-private job placement effort for TANF recipients, Reward Work Program, an incentive program for TANF recipients who exit TANF program before the expiration of 24 months of assistance and retain employment on exiting TANF for varying periods. Presently, Pankaj is leading the implementation of the TANF Work Verification Plan requirements of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

In addition to his contribution to the employment and training program, Pankaj is also involved in the child care subsidies program to ensure that working families have child care available for their school-aged children in public schools and that teen parents can have their infants and toddlers cared for on campus so that they remain in school. Pankaj has also sought to improve the quality of care that children receive in all settings by administering different projects such as providing training to all child care providers; creating a child care provider registry for professional development; providing continual



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support for the promotion of the social and emotional development of children; and creating an incentive program for child care providers to maintain or improve the quality of care that they provide to young children.

Mr. Bhanot has B.A. (Honors) in Political Science and LL.B. (JD) from the University of Delhi; an LL.M. degree from the Cornell University Law School; and completed post-graduate research in Public International Law at the School of Law, University of Nottingham (United Kingdom).

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**Dr. Eddie F. Brown** has a unique administrative background in that he has worked at the highest administrative levels with tribal, state, and federal governments. He is the former Director of Arizona Department of Economic Security (1987-1989); Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, United States Department of Interior, Washington, DC (1988-1993); and Executive Director of the Department of Human Services, Tohono O'odham Nation (1993-1996). From 1996 to 2004, Dr. Brown served as Associate Dean and the Director of the Center for American Indian Studies at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

Dr. Brown has directed a number of research and demonstration projects related to the impact of welfare reform on American Indian families and children, mental health assessment of American Indian youth, diabetes prevention in tribal communities, Title IV- E state/tribal agreements, and state compliance of the Indian Child Welfare Act. He is nationally recognized for his knowledge and skills in working with tribal governments and community programs.

Currently Dr. Brown is Professor/Director of American Indian Studies and Co-Executive Director of the American Indian Policy Institute at Arizona State University. He also serves as a member of the U.S. President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Tohono O'odham Gaming Enterprise. Dr. Brown received his Bachelor of Science degree (1970) from Brigham Young University and his Masters (1972) and Doctorate (1975) in Social Work from the University of Utah. He is an enrolled member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and affiliated with the Tohono O'odham Nation.

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**Doug Burnham** is the Coordinator of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project at the University of Kentucky, College of Social Work and a Technical Consultant with the Drug Endangered Child Training Network in the College of Public Health at UK. He is Professor Emeritus at Eastern Kentucky University where he served 27 years as the Director of the Social Work Program. In 1992 he was named ECU Foundation Professor, the university's highest honor for teaching excellence. For four years he served as the Vice President of the National Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. Doug was instrumental in the development and implementation of the Kentucky Public Child Welfare Certification Program, and has written and presented widely on child welfare training. He has a long history of advocacy for families and children, serving as Chair of the Kentucky Citizen's Foster Care Review Board, a member of numerous state task forces, committees, and legislative work groups, Chair of the Governing Board of the Fayette County Primary Health Care Council, and a long standing member on the Board of Directors at the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center and the South End Community Empowerment Center. Since 2003 Doug has served as a member of the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Work Group in the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. From 2003 – 2008 Doug was a Health Specialist with the UK Cooperative Extension Services, HEEL Program. Over the past few years



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Doug has become involved in a number of local, state, and national initiatives on substance abuse, including serving on the Strategic Planning Framework State Incentive Grant, Strategic Planning Committee and Advisory Committee, as well as the Kentucky Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. He is presently working as a part of the staff of the Kentucky Drug Endangered Child Training Network. He was recently appointed to the National Committee on Neurodevelopment and Psychosocial Assessment and Intervention for Drug Endangered Children

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**James D. Butler** is a Family Assistance Program Specialist in the Division of State & Territory TANF Management, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), Administration for Children and Families and possesses over 14 years work experience in the behavioral sciences on the State and local level as well as the federal level. He serves as the Project lead for the Rapid Response to Technical Assistance Contract, the Individualized Training and Technical Assistance for the TANF program, and various other projects within the Technical Assistance Branch. He served as co-lead to the Achieving Common Goals II conference, “Addressing Substance Abuse & Mental Health Barriers to Employment through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in partnership with SAMHSA and OFA in 2007 and is the lead for the Rural Communities Initiatives Academy and Initiative.

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**Dr. Geni Cowan, PhD**, is an associate professor at California State University, Sacramento. Of Choctaw Indian and African American heritage, Geni’s areas of expertise include cultural diversity, case management, the Indian Child Welfare Act, organizational development, leadership and management, domestic abuse, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS. She has been a trainer with The Center for Human Services since 1992, and has worked with American Indian communities and individuals. She has worked as an instructor and educational administrator at a tribal college, and provided counseling and student support services to Indian students. In addition to her many years of experience with education and human services organizations and programs, Geni has worked with Tribal TANF programs to help develop organizational structures and policies, and in program planning. Her TANF experience includes both public and tribal programs, and focuses on professional development, operating procedures, assessment, case planning, and organizational development. Geni has more than 25 years’ experience in human services, as a counselor, trainer, and administrator.

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**Nancy Dickson** is the Auxiliary Services Coordinator at the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement, Inc. (SAFE Family Services Center) in Sylacauga, Alabama. She received her B.A. in Communications and a double minor in Business at Auburn University. After her graduation from Auburn, and prior to her employment at SAFE, Mrs. Dickson was employed in the area of Sales and Marketing, primarily in the tourism industry in Birmingham and Atlanta. Mrs. Dickson has lived in Sylacauga, Alabama for the past 10 years and for the past 7 years has coordinated programs at SAFE ranging from public transit to rural health care and everything in between. Mrs. Dickson is actively involved in her community, serving on numerous committees and projects including the Sylacauga’s Promise Committee which for the past 3 years in a row has been selected as 100 Best Communities in the Nation for Young People. She was part of the 2008 Leadership Alabama Initiative and is in the upcoming Leadership Sylacauga Class of 2008. Mrs. Dickson is married to Mr. Tripp Dickson and is the mother of 2 children, Drew, age 9 and Elizabeth York, age 7.

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**Cynthia M. Duncan** is founding Director of the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire. The Institute conducts applied and policy research on children and youth, vulnerable families, and sustainable community development, with special attention to small cities and rural areas. The Institute's research faculty and outreach team work with UNH faculty to develop responsive and rigorous analyses that can help decision makers make informed choices that encourage upward mobility and resilient communities. From 2000-2004, Duncan served as the Ford Foundation's Director of Community and Resource Development. From 1989-2000 she was a professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire, where she taught classes on poverty and inequality, political sociology, social change, and qualitative and applied methodology. Duncan is the author of *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America* (Yale University Press 1999), which won the American Sociological Association's Robert E. Park Award, *Rural Poverty in America*, an edited collection on rural poverty, and numerous articles on poverty and development. Prior to joining the UNH faculty she worked at the Aspen Institute in Washington, DC and at MACED, a development organization in Appalachia. Duncan received her BA in English from Stanford University, and her MA and Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky. She serves on several regional and national community development-related boards.

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**Roger Fisher** is the Employment and Training Coordinator for WSOS where he oversees all the Employment and Training Programs WSOS operates. These programs include Federal, State and local funded programs. Mr. Fisher's background includes providing direct service to participants in a number of WSOS employment and training programs since 2000 and has oversight of the programs since 2005. Prior to coming to WSOS, Mr. Fisher worked in the manufacturing industry and for over 20 years 12 of which he was a Union Chairman. He is a Certified Family Development Specialist through the University of Iowa, School of Social Work. Mr. Fisher gained experience in the Criminal Justice field while working at a community based correctional facility and a youth center. He also worked in a Mental Health Crisis unit providing direct supervision to clients. Mr. Fisher has a Bachelor of Criminal Justice with a Major in Forensic Psychology from Tiffin University and an Associates Degree of Law Enforcement with a Major in Advocacy, Counseling from Terra Community College.

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**Almetra J. Franklin**, Chief Executive Officer of St. Mary/Vermilion Community Action Agency/Head Start Program, is a longtime employee of the agency. She is the President of the Region VI Community Action Association, and the State Treasurer for the State Association. She is also the Past President of the Louisiana Community Action Association, and current President of the State Association of Community Housing Developers (CHDO). She is credited for building the first single-family ownership subdivision (Faith Place) in Louisiana for working families using blended funding. Mrs. Franklin has received numerous awards and accolades for her contribution to the non-profit industry. Most notable, is the prestigious Martin Luther King "What Manner of Man Aware." She has been invited to testify before Congress regarding the Gulf Coast recovery efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Her testimony was featured on the Ms. Foundation Web site. The agency, under her leadership, has also received several national awards for outstanding services to children and families and recognition for the first CHDO to put a project in service in Louisiana.

Mrs. Franklin's career actually began over 40 years ago as a Head Start parent registering her child for school. She has also had the privilege of being a Head Start grandparent. She started off as the agency's secretary and eventually worked her way up to CEO and Head Start Administrator. She has been instrumental in building this agency up from two programs to the current 42 programs. She has received



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a Master's Certification of Business Administration from Tulane University and is currently working on certification in Family Counseling. Her affiliations include membership in eighteen organizations, including BYNET Health Coalition, Boys and Girls Club, Acadiana Works, Inc., NAACP, MLK Memorial Committee, and the Red Ribbon Committee. Married to David Franklin, Mrs. Franklin is the mother and grandmother of three daughters and seven grandchildren.

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**Julie Gondry**, Program Director, Tribal TANF Programs and Operations Manager, The Center for Human Services, UC Davis Extension. Ms. Gondry manages the operations of the largest continuing education program for social services and other helping professionals in the nation. She has over 20 years experience working in the areas of eligibility, TANF, employment services, child welfare, and adult services. Since 2003 she has worked with Tribal TANF programs to provide culturally relevant professional development services and training to supervisors, case managers and support staff. Her experience includes assistance in the development of a Tribal health and wellness program, Tribal TANF case management training, and program development and evaluation. Julie has worked with the following tribes to provide a variety of services: United Auburn Indian Community, Hoopa Valley Tribal TANF Program, Owens Valley Tribal TANF Program, South Puget Inter-Tribal TANF Program, Yurok Tribal TANF Program, Navajo Nation Program for Self-Reliance, Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California Tribal TANF Program, California Tribal TANF Partnership and the Cook Inlet Tribal TANF Program.

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**Shawndus Gregory** is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Career Pathways Program at Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas in Helena-West Helena, AR. She graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelors of Science in 1986. Since 1989, she has worked with Welfare and TANF clients where her jobs included Social Service Worker, Case Manager, Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) Supervisor, and Child Care Licensing Specialist, among others. During her 18 years at Phillips County Department of Health and Human Services, Shawndus has served on the Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) policy review team and was very active in the implementation of the welfare reform act in Phillips County. In her current role Shawndus assists TEA clients with their educational and employment needs.

Shawndus lives in Helena-West Helena with her husband, Phillip and their two children. When not working, she enjoys watching her son and daughter participate in sports which include football, softball, baseball, basketball, and cheerleading.

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**Trina Gress** attained a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from the University of Mary and a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Utah State University. She is a Licensed Social Worker and a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. She has worked in the Human Services and Rehabilitation fields for 12 years in Bismarck/Mandan and the surrounding communities. Trina is the Chief Operations Office for the Community Options, Inc. Employment Services called Career Options. This program provides a variety of services including, vocational assessments, vocational development and vocational coaching/consultation services to varied clientele across the state of North Dakota.

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**Lou Ann Hargrave** is TANF coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE), where she helps single parents obtain the credentials to work in jobs that support their families. She has been a CareerTech educator for 28 years, first teaching high school vocational home economics classes and then serving as a career specialist in a three-county area. Prior to her current assignment, she worked 15 years as equity coordinator for ODCTE, during which time she spent 5 years coordinating the Displaced Homemakers/Single Pregnant Women/Single Pregnant Teen Program and 12 years coordinating the Careers Unlimited Program.

She has received the Outstanding Educator Award from the New and Related Services Division of the Oklahoma Vocational Association. She has held numerous offices in professional associations, including national President of the Career and Technical Education Equity Council (an affiliate of the Administration Division of the Association of Career and Technical Education), state President of the Oklahoma Association of Job Search Trainers. She also has served on the board of directors for the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity and Oklahoma Goodwill. She has served on many state and national committees, including state and national conference planning committees and the Legislative Committee of the Association of Career and Technical Education.

Ms. Hargrave has a B.S. in home economics and M.S. and Ed.D. degrees in occupational and adult education from Oklahoma State University.

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**Anna Huff** is employed by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Public Health as a Community Liaison to the Dean of the College of Public Health. Her work involves the implementation of community-based risk reduction and health promotion activities across the Delta of Arkansas. She is also the Director of the Mid Delta Community Consortium (MDCC) where she manages over a half million dollars of which she administers and distributes across 19 Delta counties in Arkansas to assist in meeting unmet health needs through the provision and coordination of technical assistance to ensure sustainability in these communities. A graduate of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, she is a native of the Delta and also a graduate of LeadAR (Arkansas' state leadership program). Her work has taken her across the US and abroad, studying at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel and the University of Davis at Davis, CA learning new techniques, skills, and sharing lessons learned with others in the field. She is very engaged in community activities and presently serves on the Board of the Arkansas Coalition of Excellence, Arkansas Kids Count Coalition, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Delta Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Advisory Council, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH), a member of the National Association for Female Executives, a Certified Volunteer Manager, and Youth Department Director at her church. She is actively engaged in several community-campus partnerships, Marvell Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative (NIRI) where MDCC serves as the fiduciary agent and chairperson of the Delta Bridge Health Care Goal Team. She is a co-instructor at the COPH and a community researcher. She is the mother of two adult sons, a seventeen year old daughter who is a high school senior and one granddaughter.

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**Judy Kennedy**, TANF Program Manager, State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Kansas

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**Shauna King-Simms** is the Director of Transitional Programs at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), where she works with policy and program development targeting economically disadvantaged and educationally under-prepared students. Prior to joining the KCTCS staff in August, 1999, Shauna administered post-secondary education TANF contracts for the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and served as staff for the Cabinet's task force on post-secondary education. Ms. King-Simms spent 10 years as a state level administrator of Kentucky's adult basic education and literacy initiatives and 7 years as a student services administrator in a two-year college. She was also a regional administrator for the Job Training Partnership Act program.

Shauna initially joined the KCTCS Chancellor's office staff to implement a statewide TANF funded initiative aimed at recruiting, transitioning and supporting Kentucky's public assistance recipients in the Community and Technical College System. This nationally recognized effort, "Ready to Work", proved so successful that the state TANF agency requested a parallel initiative targeting the state's adult education population. This transitions model integrates campus-based targeted case management with a TANF funded work study component. Additionally, she has assisted in the design and supported implementation of innovative transitioning collaborations among KCTCS colleges and local adult education providers statewide.

More recently, Shauna has facilitated the statewide Career Pathways initiative. All sixteen KCTCS colleges have developed and implemented at least one Career Pathway in an employment sector identified in collaboration with their local stakeholders. As part of this process, Shauna facilitated the statewide Developmental Education Pathways faculty workgroup.

Shauna has a BA from Eastern Kentucky University and an MA from the University of Cincinnati in Organizational Behavior and Communications.

**Janel Luck** is a longtime employee of the Department of Social Services and was appointed Director of the Family Support Division in June 2005. In that role and in her previous roles, she has held the responsibility for directing and managing Missouri's TANF program. Missouri was the recipient of numerous TANF high performance bonuses, including one for ranking number one in the country in Job Entry. In addition to TANF, she is responsible for Medicaid Eligibility, Food Stamps, Child Support Enforcement, and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. The Family Support Division is comprised of over 4,000 employees with offices in 140 locations throughout the state.

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**Bobbi Mariani** is currently the Director of Economic and Employment Support within the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and is responsible for Benefits and Services for:

- § Cash Assistance - General, Temporary Assistance to Families, Child Care, Low Income Energy, Food, Refugee and Funeral
- § Supports - strengths and barriers assessment, barrier reduction, employment services, skills training, tuition loans and waivers, child care resource and referral, and food distribution
- § Advocacy and Protection - Child Care Quality and Early Childhood Development, Adult Protective Services and Child Care Regulation

She has served in that capacity since March of 2003. She worked for SRS 20 years ago in what was at that time Income Maintenance in the Topeka Area Office. She left SRS to pursue a career in Human



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Resources and spent almost 20 years with the Department of Administration in the Division of Personnel Services. Her most recent role there was Director. As Director, she was responsible for a comprehensive statewide Human Resource Program for nearly 37,000 state employees. Major areas of responsibility included Compensation, Recruitment and Selection, Workforce analysis, Benefits Administration, Integrated HR and Payroll Information System, Training and Organizational Wellness and Employee Recognition.

Bobbi received a BA in Business Administration/Labor Relations from Kansas State University in 1982 and an MA in Public Administration from the University of Kansas in 1992. In 1998, she completed the Kansas Certified Public Manager Program. In 2001, she completed the certification to attain a Professional HR designation.

She is active in American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) and International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) and is becoming actively involved in American Public Human Services Association (APHSA)

In 2002, she received the Carl Wettengel Achievement award from IPMA National and also HR Professional of the year from the Kansas Chapter. She has received Certificates of Recognition from 3 consecutive Governors for her achievement in program development and implementation in the area of Drug-Free Workplace, Kansas Quality Management and Statewide Human Resource and Payroll System implementation. In 1999, she was chosen as YWCA Women in Leadership's Honoree.

She believes Public Service is the most noble profession and that there is no greater honor than to serve your fellow citizens of Kansas.

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**Kathleen Miller** joined the Rural Policy Research Institute in January 2000 as Program Director. Ms. Miller is responsible for assisting the RUPRI President in the coordination of the RUPRI program of work, which encompasses researchers and practitioners across the country analyzing the rural impacts of public policies and programs. Ms. Miller serves as the coordinator for the RUPRI Rural Poverty Research Center and the Community Policy Analysis Network.

Ms. Miller's research interests include understanding how the definitions of rural geographies impact policy outcomes, and she has published several RUPRI policy briefs on this topic.

Ms. Miller received a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Economics from Penn State University, where she also received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. Ms. Miller currently resides on a small hobby farm in Blackwater, MO.

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**Margaret Morton, Ed.S** was born and raised in Sylacauga, attending Sylacauga City Schools and graduating from Sylacauga High School. Mrs. Morton is the Executive Director of the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement, Inc. SAFE Family Services Center. She received her B.S., M.A. and her Ed.S. degrees from the University of Alabama as well as certification in Guidance and Counseling from Jacksonville State University. Mrs. Morton is retired from the public schools of Alabama with over 30 years of service and has served as adjunct faculty at both the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the University of West Alabama. In 1995 the Alabama Counselor's Association named Mrs. Morton as



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the Elementary Counselor of the Year. In 1996 the Sylacauga City Schools Foundation recognized her for the Joseph B. Morton Excellence in Education Award. Since 1998 Mrs. Morton has directed the development and implementation of the family services center model in Sylacauga, Alabama. Through SAFE and under Mrs. Morton's leadership the City of Sylacauga became one the first five communities in the state to receive the designation as a Community of Promise and for three consecutive years has been named one of the 100 Best Communities in the Nation for Young People. Twice, Mrs. Morton has been recognized by the Cottaquilla Council of Girl Scouts for their Woman Committed to Excellence Award. In 1993 she was selected for the 2003 Miss Sylacauga Pageant Woman of Achievement Award. Mrs. Morton was presented the Distinguished Citizen Award by the Greater Alabama Council for the Boy Scouts of America at the 2008 American Values Luncheon. She currently serves on the Statewide Parent and Community Involvement Advisory Committee, the Alabama Reading First Leadership Team, the Alabama Office of School Readiness Task Force and is a member of the Executive Board of Directors for the Alabama Partnership for Children where she serves as Treasurer and VOICES for Alabama's Children. She is the Co-Chair of the Region 4 Health Committee for the Governor's Alabama Rural Action Commission. Mrs. Morton also serves as Vice President for the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers and is a member of the University of Alabama's College of Education Board of Advisors. She has served as an elected member of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, a member of the Talladega County Children's Policy Council, the Coosa Valley Adult Education Advisory Council, the Sylacauga Literacy Council and is Chairman of the *Sylacauga Promise* Committee. In addition, Mrs. Morton is a member of the Leadership Sylacauga Class of 2000 and Leadership Alabama Class of 2002.

Margaret Morton is a member of St. Jude Catholic Church where she serves as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. She is married to Dr. Joe Morton and is the mother of two sons Matthew Morton and his wife Briana of Homewood, Alabama; and Josh Morton and his wife Jen and granddaughter, Linley of Auburn, Alabama.

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**Denise Parker** is the Northwest Region ACCESS Program Manager for Florida Department of Children and Families. She has been employed with the Department for 26 years. She began her career as a Food Stamp Eligibility Specialist promoting to a management position within three years and working in public service management since 1985 with the State of Florida. She has managed both in the operational and program areas. She has served on the JobsPlus Council with Workforce Florida and on the advisory committee for Okaloosa County extension with the University of Florida.

She has a Masters in Public Administration from the University of West Florida and was inducted in Pi Alpha Alpha the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. She recently graduated from the Certified Public Managers program and is in the PhD program for Public Administration at Florida State University.

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**Marvin N. Pichla** is a lifelong Thumb Area resident, growing up on a farm near Ubly, Michigan. Marv attended Central Michigan University and received his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science in 1978, and Masters Degree in Public Administration in 1982. In 2001, he received a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Organization and Management from Capella University.



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Since 1978 Dr. Pichla's professional career has revolved around developing and delivering unique employment training, human service and community improvement programs. His work experience has also offered him the opportunity to regularly interact with federal, state and local government officials. Finally, Marv's professional and personal passion for facilitating organizational creativity has led him to start-up his own Inspiring Innovations, Inc. ([inspiringinnovations.com](http://inspiringinnovations.com)) and National Center for Public Sector Innovations ([ncpsi.com](http://ncpsi.com)) small business ventures.

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**Jackie Savage** is responsible for the establishment, coordination, and collaboration of Connectinc, Inc., a state-of-the-art telecommunications center in North Carolina that focuses on helping families and communities achieve self-sufficiency. Connectinc's first project, Work Central, began as a six-county collaborative effort to ease the transition of TANF recipients to self-sufficiency and continues to support the work of the county's Department of Social Services. The National Governors Association and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have named Work Central a "best practice."

Ms. Savage created Work Central after serving as a consultant to the Governor's Work First Business Council. She assisted in the creation of the March to Work job fairs for the purpose of hiring Work First participants, which led to 14,000 new hires in 2 years. Her experience culminated in the creation of Connectinc in 2000. Under Ms. Savage's leadership, Connectinc has received numerous awards and has been duplicated successfully in Minnesota.

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**Sidonie Squire, MA**, is the Director of the Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), US Department of Health and Human Services, where she administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the Nation's principal welfare assistance program. She joined ACF in June 2005. Ms. Squier has served in various welfare administration and policy positions-most recently as the Federal Liaison on human service issues for the State of Texas. Previously, she worked in Austin, Texas, administering TANF, food stamp, and Medicaid eligibility programs as well as special nutrition, refugee, and domestic violence programs. While in Austin, she served on the American Public Human Services Association steering committee for TANF and the Texas County Advisory Workgroup on Healthy Families, which focused on healthy marriage. Earlier, Ms. Squier was the State of Florida's Director, economic Self-Sufficiency and Welfare Reform Administrator. She has also worked in Michigan and California in health and human services policy and communications roles. Ms. Squier graduated from California State University at Long Beach with both a B.A. and an M.A. in communications.

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**Nicole Thompson** has a joint appointment at Mississippi State University. She is the coordinator of the American Indian and Alaska Native Initiative of the National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives and an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education. This dual appointment allows Thompson to engage in research activities on two fronts; American Indian and Alaska Native early care and education and middle level education and teacher preparation. Thompson learned from an early age the importance of her Native culture and heritage, and of honoring her family. Although Thompson did not grow up on her Indian reservation, these early teachings now serve as inspiration for her work at Rural Early Childhood. Aware of the lack of research surrounding American Indian and Alaska Native early childhood education and young children, Thompson is actively pursuing collaborative relationships with individuals, organizations, and



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institutions that will enable Rural Early Childhood to engage in activities that will enhance the lives of young children who are American Indian and Alaska Native.

Thompson's outreach activities are as diverse as her research activities. Thompson travels across the United States to make presentations focused on American Indian and Alaska Native early learning and care where she promotes culturally competent interactions between Native and non-Native individuals. She gives lectures on ages and stages of child development as well as the research activities that she has been involved in at Rural Early Childhood. Further, Thompson holds the position of Chair-Elect for the American Educational Research Association's Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Special Interest Group. Locally, Thompson serves as the faculty advisor for Mississippi State University's Native American Student Association (NAMSA).

Thompson holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees in Elementary Education from East Carolina University and a Doctor of Philosophy in Elementary Education from the University of Georgia.

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**Teresa Wall-McDonald**, Development Director, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Montana

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

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**Bruce Weber** is professor of agricultural and resource economics at Oregon State University and director of the OSU Rural Studies Program. From 2002-2005, he served as co-director of the RUPRI Rural Poverty Research Center. At OSU since 1974, he has worked to support the Land Grant University mission by developing an integrated outreach, research and teaching program on poverty and hunger, state/local government finance and rural economics.

His collaborations with faculty at other universities and state policy analysts have produced, among other things, a model that is still used by the Oregon legislature to analyze the impact of major tax proposals on distribution of Oregon's tax burden. His understanding of Oregon's tax system has put him in advisory roles to both the governor and Oregon legislature on tax policy. His multi-disciplinary explorations of rural labor markets and welfare policy have informed Congressional deliberations about federal welfare legislation. Weber is co-editor of *Frontiers in Resource and Rural Economics* (Resources for the Future Press, 2008) and of *Rural Dimensions of Welfare Reform*, (W.E. Upjohn Institute Press, 2002), the only comprehensive assessment of the impact of the 1996 welfare law in rural areas. His rural development courses at OSU have involved students in delivering student-generated applied regional economic analysis to local community leaders.

He received his PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. He is a Fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association; has served on numerous government, foundation, research and extension advisory committees; and is a Senior Fellow of the National Poverty



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## Rural Communities Academy



### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

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Center at the University of Michigan. He and his wife live in Corvallis, Oregon and have three adult children in the Pacific Northwest.