

## Speaker's Biographies

**Ballew Souraya Christine:** Souraya is an Ordained Pastor, Certified Life Purpose and Happiness Coach, Certificate of Completion in Trauma Conversation Tools, Published Author/ Motivational Speaker, she has a master's degree in Leadership, and she has a Certificate of Completion in John Maxwell's Effective Communication for Leaders.

**Blair Kate:** Kate Blair joined Savannah/Chatham CASA as the Executive Director in 2018. Prior to joining she served as the Director of Development and Communication with Step Up Savannah. In this role, she managed a large grant portfolio, developed community partnership, and advocate for policies that improve the lives of low-wealth families in Chatham County. Her past professional and volunteer experience includes communications, corporate foundations, nonprofit leadership, board development, and fund development. She is deeply embedded in the Savannah Community. Kate has her B S degree in professional communications from Armstrong Atlantic University. She is a graduate of leadership savannah and board member for migrant equity southeast. In her spare time, she and her husband, Andy and their two sons Turk and Franek, enjoy camping, international travel, and community service.

**Blough, Paul:** Mr. Blough is CEO and founder of Blough Tech, a nationally recognized IT Service Company, focused on helping small business solve their problems through technology. M. Blough and his wife Kim, have fostered over 110 children in their 25 years as foster parents. They have also adopted six children. Mr. Blough is the current AFPAG president.

**Brown, Debra Suzette:** Mrs. Brown has an Associate Degree in Business Management and a B.A. in Psychology. She has been employed with Families First- Georgia Center for Resources and Support for over five years. Mrs. Brown is happily married. She along with her husband, Charles, are raising their granddaughter.

**Calhoun Donjae:** The Early Childhood Collaboration Unit within the Well-Being Services Section of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. The unite provides comprehensive monitoring, consultation, support, and advocacy for children under the age of five with DFCS involvement. With an emphasis on building and fostering relationships that support overall well-being at an early age. The unit works collaboratively with DFCS state and county offices, other state agencies, and external partners to ensure the need of the most vulnerable are met.

**Christianson Ally:** Ally Christianson is the founder of Hope 1312 Collective and Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Is enthusiastic about offering hope in the hopeless situations and giving voice to the voiceless. Much of her current work surrounds advocating for vulnerable families and children. As a clinician, she specialized in providing therapy for children with trauma histories and enjoys supplying practical approaches to caregivers as a Trust-Based Relational intervention practitioner.

**Choosewood Deborah:** Deborah is the Deputy Director of Prevention and Community Support (PCS) in the state of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, the state's child welfare agency, PCS is the state entity charged with administering federal and state funding streams geared toward child abuse and neglect prevention, including the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention federal grant and the state's Children Trust Fund appropriation. Deborah has worked in the early childhood and prevention field for 20 years. She is a member of numerous statewide task force and committees aimed at the prevention of child abuse and neglect,

human trafficking. Youth and adolescent pregnancy. And related topics she is on the National Children's Trust Fund Alliance Board of Directors.

**Clyde Jacqueline:** Ms. Clyde is the Lead Program Specialist with the CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC) with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). She is a graduate of Albany State University where she received her Bachelor of Social Work degree, and a graduate of Valdosta State University where she received her Master of Social Work Degree. Ms. Clyde career in state government expands more than 28 years, while the last 15 years have been in the social services arena. Ms. Clyde began her career in child welfare with DFCS as an intern and has held several positions since that time in her various roles within the agency. She has strived to challenge herself and those around her to always understand the Why? Why we do what we do? Why do we work for DFCS? No matter the route we took that brought us here, we are now at the same destination with the same mission to promote continued safety of all Georgia's children

**Dukes Jennifer:** Ms. Dukes is the Vice President of Government Services at Systems and Methods, inc. (SMI), SMI has supplied software solutions for the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services, for over forty years, in her various roles, Ms. Duke has twenty years' experience and child welfare projects and systems, at SMI and is passionate about helping children and families through technology.

**Dunham Ronald:** Ron is a community relations rep. with Amerigroup. He started on January 6, 2014, after working 10 years with Chatham County Division of Family and Children Services. Mr. Dunham is originally from Hardeeville South Carolina. He is a 1995 graduate from Jasper County High School. Ron is a 1999 Graduate from the University of South Carolina in Columbia S.C. He is married and the father of four children. He is a deacon at the Christ Memorial Baptist Church in Savannah. Ron enjoys reading, investing, and sports, but spending time with his family is what he enjoys the most. Mr. Dunham and his wife appeared on Wheel of Fortune in 2010.

**English Alex:** Alex English graduate from Florida State University in 2015 with a bachelor's in hospitality and Events Management. Since August 2020, she has served as Community Training Manager of the Vashti Center, since joining the team Alex has been trained as a facilitator for three different professional development opportunities that Vashti offers to youth serving organizations and foster parents in the community, these include Connections Matter, Circle of Safety, and Stewards of children. Most recently she has also begun managing all staff training and development at Vashti.

**Farrar Jack and Sarah:** Dr. Farrar is a clinical psychologist who has been involved in Biofeedback and Neurofeedback for over 20 years. He is presently the director of Mind Sync in Jonesboro Georgia. His clinic specializes in the Neurofeedback as a primary modality of treatment for youth who have emotional and behavioral problems. He has previously served as director for a hospital treating emotionally, sexually, and physically abused children.

**Gandy Jim and Iris:** The Gandys are foster parents, they have four biological children and one adopted child, nine grandchildren, currently we have five foster children. Jim is a Minister and Iris is a nurse Mr. and Mrs. Gandy have been married for twenty years.

**Gillespie Joyce Hinson Brenda:** Program Manager for the Georgia Center for Resource and Support. Is a licensed social worker with forty plus years of experience in public and private child welfare services. She retired from the Georgia Division of Family and Children Service in 2004, continuing as an independent contractor until 2009. She has been employed with Families First Inc. Since and is enormously proud of the GACRS team who

provide support, training, and resource for all caregiver families. She has four grandchildren who are quickly growing into young adults, she feels blessed to be a part of their life.

**Gilliard Whitney Lam.**

**Hayes Brad:** Mr. Brad Hayes (DAWG) serves as the Georgia State President, and Little River Chapter Vice President in Valdosta Georgia.

**Herring Betty:** Betty Herring serves as the Georgia State Treasure, and Hooch Chapter Treasure Braselton Georgia.

**Hernandez Daisy:** Ms. Hernandez is a Legal Advocate at SAFE Shelter, Center for Domestic Violence in Savannah, Ga. Where she aids clients with Temporary Protective Orders and ensure their safety and those of their children. Ms. Hernandez graduated from Savannah State University with bachelor's degree in Political Science and Psychology. Shortly after graduating she moved to Savannah, Ga. To pursue a career in social services beginning with the Department of Family and Children Services as a Family Preservation Case Manager, Recovery Place, Inc. as a Case Manager with a focus on Therapeutic Child Care. The Youth Advocate Program (working with at risk youth), and SAFE Shelter as the Child Advocate. She has well over 18 years working with children who have either experienced domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse and numerous traumatic events in their young lives and strive to bring healing to those who have experience trauma and stress due to Domestic Violence.

**Jamison-Water Leah:** Mrs. Jamison has been in DFCS for over 20 years, she currently serves as an Adoption Assistance Consultant to the Social Service Administration Unit (SSAU) where she is responsible for processing IV-E Adoption Assistance applications. In her role, Mrs. Jamison also assist with policy consultation, special need determinations, and approvals of special services adoption assistance requests. Mrs. has a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Georgia State University. She is currently pursuing her Master of Social Work through the University of Georgia and will be graduating in the Spring of 2022

**Jones Beck:** Ms. Jones is the assistant vice president of governmental services at system and methods, inc. SMI and the project manager for smile accounting system for over forty years, smile has supplied a full services financial management solution for DFCS to pay their employees and vendors, and to provide comprehensive reporting for critical budget decisions. In the recent years SMI has developed a secure web portal accessible by foster and adoptive care providers to access detailed payment and tax information.

**Jones Daren:** Is the Associate Director of Training and Consultation Service with the Karyn Purvis Institute of child development (KPICD at (TBRI). Since Daren joined the Purvis Institute in 2014, he has been an integral part of teaching and spreading TBRI across the U.S. and throughout the world. Daren earned his bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He began his career as a behavior instructor of a therapeutic day treatment program serving children and youth who could no longer function in a regular academic school setting. After serving as a behavior instructor, Daren decided to obtain his Master's in Social Work from Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. He spent 12 years serving youth and families within residential and foster care setting as a direct-care worker, residential group home, supervisor, and trainer, before beginning his work with the KPICD. Daren is currently pursuing a PH. D in Counseling and Counselor Education at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, TX. and serves as the liaison between the KPICD and Georgia's TBRI Ambassador Organization, Global Impact International.

**Mauer Mary Margaret:** Mary Margaret PH. D Senior Vice President of foster care services for global impact international, and Co-founder of the Restoration Come Center for foster, adoption, and family services, is an enthusiastic advocate and community organization on behalf of foster children and their birth, foster, and adoptive families. She has served as an officer or board member for multiple local child service organizer, and she is the Co-Founder of the Floyd Faith Coalition for Families. Having studied neurobiology at Emory and Georgia State University and trained as a TBRI Practitioner, Mary Margaret has focused her effort on supplying services for children and caregivers who have experience trauma and leading the TBRI Georgia Collaborative initiative to provide community wide equipping of caregivers and child welfare professionals in trauma informed care.

**McDougald Nicole:** Nicole McDougald is a Program Director with the CPS Intake Communication Center with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. Mrs. McDougald manages the Information and Technology in CICC. The Bibb Call Center and supplies oversight and staff to intake involving near serious injuries near fatalities and child death. Mrs. McDougald is a graduate of the University of Georgia, where she received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Master of Social Work. Mrs. McDougald has 21 years of professional experience in social services to include work in a Hospital Emergency Department and at DFCS. Her career at DFCS has spanned over 19 years and includes front line case management and supervision in all child welfare program areas. She also managed the Special Investigation Unit for the State of Georgia, where her team investigates allegations involving children with serious injuries near fatalities allegations on facilities and schools, and allegation of abuse for children in foster care.

**Meadows Stacy:** Stacy Meadows is a Licensed Master Social Worker. She received her master's degree in Social Work from the Florida State University, and in 2013 began working in program development to provide teens and young adults in foster care with educational, career planning, and health and wellness services. Stacy joined Families First and the Georgia Adoption Reunion Registry in 2016 and for the past five years has been privileged to serve adoptees, birth family members and adoptive and foster parents in the State of Georgia and beyond. At the Reunion Registry Stacy works with those affected by adoption in Georgia to navigate the complex dynamics of adoption search and reunion.

**Miranda Elijah:** Since 2017, Elijah Miranda has served as the Executive Director of the Vashi Center, a non-profit in Thomasville, Georgia that has been serving children and families since 1903. He received his Master's in Public Health from Hunter College. He also holds a bachelor's degree in Public Promotion and Behavior from the University of Georgia. Elijah has overseen the growth of Vashti's School -base community mental health program as well as the development of professional learning programs bringing much needed resources and training to rural southwest Georgia. He is a trained facilitator or for Connections Matter and is currently in process of becoming a trust based relational intervention (TBRI) practitioner

**Mobley-Gore Kimberly, Dr:** Dr. Kimberly Mobley is currently employed with the Brighter Day Education Consulting, which provides services that support local school districts to provide general supervision for special education and related services to students with disabilities. As a former Director of Special Education and Special Education Program Specialist for Georgia Department of Education Compliance Unit, she has gained experience.

**Ozment Angela:** Mrs. Angela Ozment is the Program Director of the CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC) with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. She is a graduate of Shorter University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Human Services. Mrs. Ozment began her professional journey with the State of Georgia over 15 years ago this journey started with her taking a position, while she was still in college, as a Health Service Technician at Northwest Georgia Regional Mental Hospital. She later transferred to Lookout

Mountain Community Services, to continue her passion for serving people in the role of Social Service Technician, which introduced her to Social Work. Once she received her degree, she began her career with the Division of Family and Children Services in her hometown of Chattooga County she devoted six years to serving her local county as an Investigator and Family Preservation Case Manager. In October 2013, she volunteered with the onboarding of what is now known as CICC. During her volunteer time, she received her proverbial calling to serve the State of Georgia on a larger scale, so she transferred to CICC.

**Puckett Collen S:** Manager of Family Support Services at Good Legal Firm. Owner of Families Anchor, and Podcast host for the “F” Word Foster Care. Collen is the first Parent Navigator in Georgia. Collen’s family’s experience with foster care system allows her to supply a unique support to parent currently walking through the system themselves. Collen presented several times to the Georgia Child Welfare Summit, ABA National Conference Attorneys Conference, ABA Children and the Law Conference, and National Conference for the National Association of Counsel for Children. She also Taught at Youth Law Conference, Region IV Parent Attorney Leadership Summit. Child Welfare Law Specialist Meeting, and DeKalb County Parents’ Attorney Conference.

**Pupp Lori:** Lori Pupp has 20 years of child welfare, and leadership experience. She has served in the social services area both in the public and non-profit setting. After earning her BA at the University of North Georgia, Lori gained broad child welfare as an employee of the Division of Family and Children Services and in a variety of roles within the CASA organization at both the local and state levels. Lori has a passion for and unique understanding of the power of partnership between agencies and families to achieve extraordinary outcome for children.

**Patterson, Dajari:** Ms. Patterson has over 20 years of Child Welfare experience in both the public and private sectors. Ms. Patterson received her bachelor’s and Master’s in Social Work from Clark Atlanta University. She also has a Juris Doctorate degree from Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School. She started her career at a private adoption agency in Atlanta. Ms. Patterson has been with the Division for ten years, having held positions in region fourteen as well as the State Office. Her area of expertise includes Adoption, Foster Care, Kinship Care and Resource Development. She is originally from Chicago and is the proud parent of one adult son.

**Reed Marva:** Marv Reed is the Director of the CPS Intake Communication Center CICC with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. Mrs. Reed is a graduate of the University of West Georgia, where she received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, as well as a graduate of Troy University where she received her Master of Science in Counseling and Human Development. Mrs. Reed has over 28 years of professional experience in social services, child welfare, and human services delivery program, where she has been a part of the agency’s front-line staff and its executive leadership staff, she began as a case manager in her local county, and has held several positions within the agency, including but not limited to being Regional Director, a Class 5 County Director, State Program Administrator, and State Director of Family and Child Well Being. In her role within the agency, Mrs. Reed has constantly proven her ability to lead change within the agency.

**Reese Leroy E:** Dr Reese is an adjunct associate professor at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science and Pediatrics. He is Director of the Smart and Secure Children Parent Leadership program MSM. He is also the Director of Behavioral Health at Akoma Counseling and Consulting Inc. an outpatient behavioral health clinic in Atlanta. A widely published author, he was a member of the American Psychological Association Task Force that published the report Resilience and Strength in African American Children and Adolescents. Previously, Dr. Reese, was a senior scientist section chief at the U.S. Center for Disease Control Prevention. Dr. Reese received his doctorate from the Ohio State University. He did his

internship and fellowship at the University of Illinois Medical School's Institute for Juvenile research in the Department of Psychiatry.

**Robinson Niesha:** Niesha Robinson Interstate Compact Placement Unit Director with the Department of Human Services provides oversight over placement for children statewide Her educational background includes a Bachelor's in Psychology and a master's degree in Counseling. Working within DHS has been a part of her life since 2005. She began her career as a Case Manger working in Investigations and Family Preservations. She was then promoted to the position of supervisor for Child Protective Services, Administrator, Program Director, Field Program Specialist, ICPC Administrator, and now ICPC Unit Director.

**Scott Jessica:** Jessica is a native of Savannah, Ga, mother of one son and graduated from Savannah State University with a bachelor's in Social Work. For the past seven years she has practiced Social Work in variety of settings including non-profits and private practice and serves as the Child Advocate at SAFE Shelter Center for Domestic Violence. Her focus is on childhood trauma and developmental assessments, she is dedicated to being a voice for children who have been exposed to domestic violence and at-risk youth

**Thomas Erin Patrice:** Ms. Thomas has lived experience as a parent with child welfare involvement. Her parental rights were ended and then reinstated after a period of incarceration and rehabilitation. She successfully reunited with her son in 2020. She is currently employed by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network where she serves as the Training Coordinator for RSPECT Institute of Georgia. Her role is to help peers in developing their own stories of recovery through a five-day training process. She is a Certified Peer Specialist Mental Health as well as a Certified Peer Specialist- Addictive Diseases, she is formally trained in both Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid and has Completed Trauma Informed care and Cultural Competency Training. She is a Whole Health Wellness Coach. She is a mentor/advocate for her peers who are experiencing challenges related to mental health and substance use disorder.

**Tiller Stephen:** Mr. Tiller is the Georgia State Secretary, and the TWO River Chapter President in Savannah, Georgia

**Tyner Angela:** Ms. Tyner has served as the Advocacy Director for CASA since 2004, where she supplies legal guidance and technical help to the CASA network and participants in policy and legislative reform efforts. Ms. Tyner also serves on several task forces and committees seeking systemic child welfare improvement. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia and her JD from Mercer Law. She is a certified Child Welfare Law Specialist.

**Wade Julie:** Julie Wade is a lawyer who serves as the Executive Director of Park Place Outreach, a teen homeless shelter in Savannah. A Georgia native, she attended the University of Georgia for undergraduate and law school. Prior to transitioning to non-profit. Julie clerked for a federal Appellate Judge in Atlanta and practiced law in Hawaii, Boston, and Savannah for 17 years. She also served on the Board of Education for the Savannah Chatham County Public School System for 10 years. Julie currently serves on the Board of Directors for the UGA Alumni Association and Planned Parenthood Southeast. She is a member of the Metropolitan Savannah Rotary and has taken part in Leadership Georgia, Leadership Southeast Georgia, and leadership savannah. Julie married her high school sweetheart and together they have three school -aged children.

**Walker Samantha:** Samantha Walker received a Bachelor of Art degree in English from the University of New Orleans and a Master of Social Work degree from Southern University in New Orleans. After college, she began her career as a CPS Investigator. In 2008, Samantha moved to Georgia and began working for the Division of

Family and Children Services as a foster care case manager. During her thirteen years tenure with the division, she has served in many capacities including foster care case manager, kinship assessor, permanency supervisor, permanency administrator, and permanency program director. She is currently serving as the Division's Reunification Director.

**Wells Karla:** Karla Wells is a program manager with the state adoption unit She has been with Georgia Division of Family and Children Services since 1998. During her career with DFCS Karla has specialized in Foster Care, Adoption and Resource Development. She also worked as a State Trainer with Education and Training, covering all Social Services program training classes. Karla began serving as a Regional Adoption Coordinator in 2008. For the last nine years, Karla has been serving as the Program Manager for the RAC's.

**Wittman, Angel:** Mrs. Wittmann began her career with DFCSs as a Placement Case Manager in 1990 in Laurens County. She then worked in Resource Development and Adoptions in Treutlen, Montgomery, and Wheeler Counties from 1994-1999. For 2 years she worked for Tennessee Department of Children's Service in adoptions. From 2001-2004, Mrs. Wittman worked for Kentucky Department of Community Based Services first in Foster Care, then CPS Investigations including Special Investigations and end with Recruitment and Certification for Foster and Adoptive Families. She returned to Pickens County DFCS in Oct 2004 to Foster Care, Adoptions and Resource Development. Mrs. Wittman began her current position with Social Services Administration Unit as a Post Adoption Program Manager in July 2014

**Whidby Angela:** Angela have been a foster parent for over seven years, she and her husband Steve have sixteen children, eleven grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Angela graduated from West Gwinnett High School, while in high school her first job was with the IRS during tax season. Angela is currently the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Regional Vice President for Region 2. Committee Member of Hart/Franklin Counties Foster/Adoptive Association, Chair of the Hart County Cupboard, Board of Elections, Governor Appointee for Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, and former Franklin County Commission.

**Wicks, Evangel D:** Evangel has more than 28 years of child welfare experience with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. She previously served as a case manager, Foster and Adoptive Parents Trainer and Assessor, a Supervisor and Administrator, Mrs. Wicks currently manages the state's contracts for private adoption agencies. She also manages a team of three dedicated staff who supervise Post Adoption Services.

**Williams Cutter Kimberly:** Kimberly Cutter-Williams has been a fulltime hair stylist for over 20 years and a Licensed Cosmetology instructor for over 15 years. Mrs. Williams holds a Cosmetology License from Savannah Technical College, Teachers License from Poway Beauty College, a bachelor's degree in Psychology from St. Leo University and her Master's in Education from Armstrong State University. She is currently employed as the Department Chair at Savannah Technical College, Mrs. Williams is a State Certified Mediator, she is married and enjoys spending time with her family, husband Richard, children and two granddaughters Khloe and Zoe.

**Wilkes-Wisotsky, Juli:** Attorney Wilkes-Wisotsky is a native of Jefferson, Georgia and has practiced law since 1996. As a graduate of UGA School of Law, her practice solely on adoption in 2010. She has helped complete hundreds of adoptions and is a Fellow of the Georgia Council of Adoption Lawyers. She is particularly interested in the concerns of foster children in Georgia and loves to complete foster care adoptions. She has been a foster parent herself and has served on the Board of Chosen for Life, an adoption ministry found in the Watkinsonville/Athens area.