



## **Presenter Biographies**

### **Kristie Anderson**, Development Director

Kristie has been working in the non-profit sector for 5 years. Through advocating for her own kids with disabilities, and volunteer work within her local special needs community, she realized she had a passion for social impact and fell into the non-profit world. With a natural passion for bringing people together to make change, sharing her own story, and building relationships within her community, it was a natural progression into the world of fundraising and development.

### **Colleen Arnold**, Board Member

Colleen Arnold, Founder of Arnold Advocacy LLC, is a special education advocate, working with families across Marin County to empower students with learning differences through strength-based solutions for both school and home. Colleen was an education specialist in both the public and non-public school sector, and is completing her doctorate in special education at University of San Francisco. She is also an adjunct professor at Dominican University and University of San Francisco, training future educators in areas of assessment, behavior, and understanding Individualized Education Plans. She is a proud a member of the board for Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center, acting as board secretary.

### **Diane Austin, Esq.**, Trainer

Diana Autin is Executive Co-Director of SPAN, which houses the Center for Parent Information & Resources; National RAISE Transition TA Center; NE-PACT Region 1 Parent TA Center; REACH for Transition; and the NJ Parent Training and Information Center, Family to Family Health Information Center, Statewide Parent to Parent program, and chapter of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. She co-directs the National Center for Family-Professional Partnerships, a collaboration with National Family Voices. Autin has 30 years of experience in the parent center movement, formerly serving as Managing Attorney at Advocates for Children of NYC, and 40 years experience as a civil rights attorney. She is the parent of diverse adult children with a range of special needs.

### **Sherry Halley Bingham**

Nevada Dept. of Education, Early Childhood Special ED Programs

### **Jay Blankenship**

Jay Blankenship is an experienced fundraiser and former Executive Director for several nonprofit organizations. Jay has successfully implemented all aspects of fund development including annual giving, grant writing, major gifts, and special events. He has lead several successful capital campaigns and has set up development departments in two organizations. Currently, Jay serves as the Director of Development for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and is responsible for raising individual gifts of \$50,000 or more to support the cancer program and research institute.

### **Joel Boehner**, Director

Joel Boehner currently is the Director of the Indiana Parent Training Project for the Indiana Resource Center for Families with Special Needs (IN\*SOURCE). Joel lives in South Bend, Indiana, with his wife and two children. A father to two children with special needs, he comes to Parent Center work from a professional background in Higher Education.

### **Andrea Bridges**, Project Coordinator

Andrea has extensive experience working with military families. She worked as a Navy Ombudsman and Family Readiness Group Leader during her husband's career in the United States Navy. The youngest of her three daughters has special educational and medical needs and her experience navigating those systems gave her a special appreciation for the challenges that military families encounter. Andrea enjoys working with Parent Center Staff across the county as they support their local military families. She is the project coordinator for Regions 5 and 6.

**Debbie Cate**, Technical Assistance Specialist

Debbie Cate is a technical assistance (TA) specialist with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina (UNC). Her work within the Trohanis Technical Assistance Projects is with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), the IDEA Data Center (IDC), and the North Carolina Early Learning Network (NC ELN). Her current work supports states in their provision of early childhood special education services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), for children ages birth through grade three and their families. She has extensive experience in developing and implementing state systems and processes to provide effective IDEA preschool services, evaluating and monitoring state and local systems leading to improved results, defining and using state data to inform practice and process, and in strategic state planning to enhance comprehensive early childhood systems, all to support positive outcomes for young children and their families.

**Joyce Chastain**, Krizner Group

With many years of senior-level human resources experience in the private sector environment, Joyce Chastain brings a practical know-how to each engagement. As a human resources consultant with the Krizner Group, she specializes in talent development, employee relations, internal investigations, employment law compliance, and affirmative action plans. She is a frequent guest speaker for professional associations and academia covering a wide array of human resources topics.

**Alex Cherup**

Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division, Deputy Administrator of Quality Assurance

**Diana Cruz**, Dispute Resolution Specialist

Diana serves as a Dispute Resolution Specialist for CADRE, the National Center on Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education. She brings considerable experience working at the LEA level, fostering home school partnerships, and employing child-centered decision making. Diana has expertise in IEP facilitation and is a certified trainer in Conflict Resolution and IEP Facilitation. Prior to working for CADRE, Diana was the Coordinator for Due Process for Broward County Public Schools, the 6th largest district in the country, responsible for the management of all dispute resolution complaints filed on behalf of students with disabilities, and was instrumental in establishing the use of IEP facilitation district-wide. She received both her bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Miami in elementary education and exceptional student education. When she is not busy with work, Diana is exploring Oregon with her husband and 7-year-old son.

**Victoria Davis Dávila**, DPI Grants Coordinator

Victoria is the Department of Public Instruction Grants Coordinator at WI FACETS, Wisconsin's Parent Center located in Milwaukee. Her grants focus statewide and locally on engaging and empowering families to produce better academic and behavioral outcomes for their children, especially children with special needs. Part of her work includes building family leaders through the Serving on Groups curriculum. Victoria received her Bachelor's Degree from UW-Madison in 2007 and her Law Degree from Marquette University in 2011. Prior to joining WI FACETS, Victoria was an attorney in private practice, where her practice focused on disability law, including special education, guardianship, and juvenile law issues. She has served on non-profit boards, spoken on disability law topics for various groups, and volunteers for pro bono legal service providers. Victoria is the sister of a young man with physical and learning disabilities. She is married and lives in Milwaukee with her husband.

**Joe Goyos**, Family Resource Center Education Program Director

Joe has spent the last 20 years in the disability field in many roles and capacities. At the age of 12 his father had an accident and suffered a spine injury which left him with limited mobility. A few years later Joe's father was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. Since his parents were from Cuba, Joe advocated and interpreted for them at social services appointments as well as at doctor's appointments. His first job in the disability service field came when he was 20 where he provided recreation therapy at a special population recreation center. His career took him on a path that led to positions as a Para-professional, Teacher, Director of Structured Day Program for adults with

Traumatic Brain Injuries, Special Education Advocate and Coordinator of a New York State Department of Education funded Parent Center. In the fall of 2010, Joe and his family moved to the Bay Area where Joe started as Education Manager at SFCD, where he managed Education trainings, workshops, and events. He is now the Family Resource Center Education Program Director, overseeing the Education program at SFCD.

**Ron Hager**, Senior Attorney at the National Disability Rights Network

Ron Hager is a Senior Staff Attorney at the National Disability Rights Network in Washington, DC. Ron provides training and technical assistance to the P&A/CAP network on special education and assists in overseeing training and technical assistance to CAP. He has specialized in disability law, particularly special education, since 1979, when he started his legal career in Buffalo as a VISTA attorney. After that, he was a Clinical Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo Law School for nine years, supervising the Education Law Clinic. In 1991, Ron moved to Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) where he represented clients in a wide variety of disability-related cases. As part of the National AT Advocacy Project team, Ron is also a frequent speaker and author on disability and assistive technology related issues. He was co-chair of the New York State Bar Association's Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities for four years, and was on the Board of Directors of Parent Network, a Parent Training and Information Center, for many years. Ron was also the President of the Board of Directors of Autistic Services, Inc., in Western New York, for 10 years. Ron earned a B.A. in Psychology from the State University of New York at Binghamton and a J.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo Law School.

**Susan Henderson**, Director

Susan Henderson joined Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) in 1997, and became its executive director in 2006. She loves dogs and cats. In addition to her executive director responsibilities, she manages the children and family advocacy and international disability rights programs. In 2004, she started the Foster Youth Resources for Education project to protect the rights of children with disabilities in the child welfare system. In 2006, she established DREDF's Disability & Media Alliance Project (D-MAP) to address misinformed coverage that colors public perceptions of disability, and to raise public awareness to help end disability discrimination. She works internationally with other disability-led organizations to conduct workshops on disability and human rights.

**Kendra Hughes**, Consultant

Kendra Hughes has more than 25 years' experience as a training and technical assistance provider, and facilitator. Ms. Hughes is a motivating speaker with expertise working across the United States and Pacific Islands. With an energetic and engaging attitude, she helps people and agencies create client focused systems with intention. Emphasizing core values, vision, and mindfulness, Kendra guides individuals through a process of examination and reflection to inspire change. With expertise in equity and social justice, Kendra has helped schools and social service agencies create an inclusive culture where educators, students, families and community members can connect and be involved in the process of change in a meaningful way. Ms. Hughes has a deep understanding of how people can make fundamental, positive changes in their outlooks and lives. As a change agent, she strives to cause a shift in how one thinks and initiate transformation within one's self and across systems. She builds relationships and utilizes meaning and relevance and is energized by seeing people achieve success and find meaning in the workplace and life.

**Debra Jennings**, Director

Debra is Executive Co-Director of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) in New Jersey. She serves as the Project Director for the national Center for Parent Information and Resources, the national Resources for Access, Independence, Self-Advocacy, and Employment Center (RAISE), and coordinates contracted RPTAC consultants for the National Center for Systemic Improvement.

On several state and national advisory committees, including National PLACE, Debra is committed to ensuring that the voice of parents/families and communities are not left out of discussion of policies and practices impacting children and families. Debra is a graduate of Northwestern University with a degree in Economics and has completed coursework in business, finance, public administration and non-profit management at the Kellogg School of Management and Seton Hall

University Center for Public Service. She is the mom and first advocate of two daughters, one of whom received special education services and the other who participated in Title I Basic Skills. Both are college graduates.

**John Kenyon**, Consultant

John Kenyon is a nationally recognized authority on nonprofit technology and communications. He is an educator and consultant who's worked exclusively with nonprofits for over 25 years providing advice, teaching seminars and writing articles. John is an adjunct professor at both the University of San Francisco and Sonoma State University. He has been a featured speaker across the US, England, Australia and online.

**Ginger Kwan**, Director

Ginger Kwan is the Executive Director of Open Doors for Multicultural Families, a nonprofit, grass root family support organization. The organization's mission is to ensure multicultural families who have loved ones with developmental/intellectual disabilities and special health care needs have equal access to information, resources and services. She is also a parent of a fine young man with autism. Both her professional work and personal life have been involved with serving diverse families of loved ones with special needs. Ginger believes that with appropriate language and cultural support to refugee and immigrant parents who have limited English proficiency and those from the communities of color, they will be empowered to make informed decisions and be strong advocates for their children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Stephanie Moss**, Executive Director

Stephanie Moss has a bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology and more than 25 years of experience working with individuals from birth to adulthood with developmental disabilities. Stephanie joined Parent to Parent of Georgia in July 2007 as the director of the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) and now serves as their Chief Operating Officer. Prior to joining Parent to Parent, she worked with the Part C system in Georgia for twelve years, serving as the state coordinator for 6+ years.

**Daniel Parker**

Daniel is an Assistant Director of Special Education with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI). Previously, Daniel was the Autism Consultant as well as Family Engagement consultant for WI DPI and facilitated updated guidance for Wisconsin's College and Career IEPs: Improving Outcomes for Students 3 through 21. Daniel has a unique blend of home based, general and special education teaching, and administrative background at the school, district, and statewide levels. His interests include data analysis, self-determination, family engagement, positive behavior interventions, and cross agency/organization collaboration. Daniel received a Master's Degree in Human Development and Family Life and a Master's Degree in Special Education both from the University of Kansas.

**Nelsinia Ramos**, Multicultural Consultant

Nelsinia Ramos is the Parent Services Coordinator for Wisconsin's Parent Training and Information Center WIFACETS, and has been with the organization since 2003. She coordinates statewide parent support and leads the agency's Volunteer Parent Leader Program. She also works for the WI Special Education Mediation System as their Outreach Coordinator; and works for the Region 4 PTAC coordinating multicultural work. Ramos is the parent of a young adult with social intellectual needs. She is passionate about empowering parents and youth with disabilities from all backgrounds.

**Emily Rome**, Development

With over 14 years' experience in the nonprofit sector, Emily has a passion for social justice and empowering people to be at the center of transform their lives. Emily joined the PEAK Parent Center team (region 5) in 2015, when she decided to put her development skills to work for PEAK in efforts to make a positive impact in her community! Much of Emily's professional background consists of direct client services and advocacy work in the nonprofit arena. Social justice is strong passion of hers. Emily values the idea that everyone has a story to tell, that people's stories are

pretty interesting, and there is a lot we can all learn from each other. One fun fact about Emily: annually, she works as an international election observer and has observed elections in Ukraine, Albania, and Azerbaijan! Emily loves connecting with people of the world and being a part of a process that allows people to use their voices. She has seen first hand that there is power when people come together.

**Rosie Rowe**, Executive Director

Rosie Rowe has been working for Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii, LDAH since 2003. She has served in several capacities from Project Coordinator for a Federal Grant through Administration on Developmental Disabilities to her current position as Education & Training Coordinator. Rosie has received extensive training in Hawaii's education system, federal and state laws affecting special education and the Individualized Education Program process and effective advocacy practices. Rosie brings over 40 years of personal experience to her position, first as a sibling and now as a parent of a graduating senior with a disability. This provided a foundation for her 25 years of professional experience as a direct support provider and as an administrator

**Cristina Santamaría Graff, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Education

Currently an Assistant Professor in Special Education Teacher Education at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Cristina Santamaría Graff has an extensive background in special education. An ardent advocative for inclusive education and positioning parents as experts in the field of special education, her support of parent-to-parent organizations is manifested in her current research on "Families as Faculty," her membership on IN\*SOURCE's board of directors, and beyond.

**Jan Serak**, CEO

Jan Serak is the CEO and founder of Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support (WI FACETS). She is the Co-Director of the Region 4 Parent TA Center and Co-Director of Wisconsin's Parent Training and Information Center. She is one of 3 Partners who administer the WI Special Education Mediation System and also works on the National Center for Systemic Improvement. She is the parent of a young adult son with autism.

**Chris Stagge**, Accounting and Development Assistant

Chris Stagge is the Accounting and Development Assistant for WI FACETS, coordinating fundraising and special events. She also serves as the Region 4 PTAC Program Assistant, coordinating the Annual Region 4 Parent Technical Assistance Center Conference. Chris has worked for disability related non-profit organizations since 1993, and with WI FACETS since 2008. Chris is the parent of a son with autism.

**Debra Tucker**, Executive Office

Ms. Tucker received a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from Florida State University. While teaching, she implemented a peer tutor program and the first middle school inclusion math class in North Florida. She also had the pleasure of operating the first Child Care/Early Head Start Partnership in the nation. Ms. Tucker has been administrating non-profit programs for over 15 years, and currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Parent to Parent of Georgia. She has overseen many grants, contracts and collaborative agreements, and her agency currently serves as Georgia's Parent Training and Information Center, Family to Family Health Information Center, Babies Can't Wait (Georgia's early intervention program) Central Directory, P2PUSA's state affiliate, and the Region 3 Technical Assistance Center for Parent Centers.

**Cheri Sylla**

Cheri has worked with families and special education directors in many districts to look for ways to increase family engagement. Implementing the WSPEI District Family Engagement Liaison Program in the CESA 1 area has resulted in over half of all districts identifying a local parent to be trained as their district's liaison. Cheri has provided trainings and workshops to families of children with disabilities focused on developing leadership skills and knowledge to enhance positive parent professional partnerships for positive outcomes for their child.

Cheri is the mother of an adult son with an intellectual disability and epilepsy. She has been an actively engaged parent throughout his school years and continues to support him to have a happy, fulfilling life in his community.

**Judy Wiley**, Program Manager, NAPTAC

Judy Wiley is Apache and is the director for the National Indian Parent Information Center. NIPIC currently is funded by a grant from the US Department of Education as the National Native American Parent Training and Information Center. She has previously worked for the Oregon Parent Training and Information Center as the American Indian Outreach Coordinator for over 15 years. Judy is also a mother of two and has a son with disabilities. Judy also co-founded the Native American Parent Support, a Native American parent group founded in 1990 in Oregon. She is a member of the Bureau of Indian Education National Advisory Board for Exceptional Children.

**Perry Williams**, Office of Special Education Programs

**Jessica Wilson**, Director of Communications & Dissemination

Jessica Wilson is the Director of Communications & Dissemination at the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network. Her main projects at SPAN are the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR) and the RAISE Center. She has a diverse background in publishing as a copy editor, proofreader, and production editor; advertising and marketing; international recruitment; and website design. Jessica holds teaching certificates for Language Arts, Adult Education, and ESL as well as certificates of achievement for Intercultural Communication and Diversity & Inclusion. Before joining SPAN, she was as an ESL instructor for international university students and business professionals. Jessica's most important and enjoyable job is mother to and advocate for her beautiful and amazing son.