



SPEAKER BIOS

2024 MT WIB SUMMIT HONORARY CHAIR

Lt. Governor Kristen Juras

A fourth-generation Montanan who grew up on her family's ranch near Conrad, Kristen Juras is a wife, mother, grandmother, attorney, and public servant. On November 3, 2020, Kristen became the second female elected lieutenant governor of Montana in the state's history. Kristen plays a key role in policymaking and leads the Governor's Red Tape Initiative to cut unnecessary and burdensome regulations that can hamper small business development.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS (THURSDAY, MARCH 7)

Allison Fasano, Chef - est.1864 | Noir Bar & Restaurant

Allison Fasano is a born-and-bred Brooklynite with a passion for Italian cuisine that started at the tender age of 11. Having graced the kitchens of Michelin Star restaurants, including The Sagamore Resort, Lidia and Joe Bastianich's Del Posto, and the innovative Gato with Bobby Flay's team, Allison's 18-year culinary voyage has been nothing short of extraordinary.

As a TedX speaker, Allison took center stage with her compelling speech, "Food at Everyone's Table," advocating for the importance of combating food waste and ending hunger. Amidst the challenges of the pandemic, Allison became a beacon of hope, feeding first responders at COVID testing sites across NYC with over 4,000 meals a week. She's also a relentless advocate for her community and women, raising \$30,000 to support women-owned restaurants and provide continued education for aspiring young chefs. Allison Fasano is not just a chef; she is a culinary maestro, a trailblazer, and an unstoppable force in the world of gastronomy.

Mary Hanna-Flor, Director of Global Training at Master Connection Associates

Mary started her career with luxury hotels and resorts after graduating from San Diego State University with a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Mary was on the opening team at the Resort at Pelican Hill and Mandarin Oriental Hotel Las Vegas. During her involvement in these preopening teams, Mary's passion for training and development grew as she crafted and delivered materials aimed at enhancing sales metrics and guest satisfaction scores.

Mary's dynamic approach to facilitation has enabled her to travel the world as a Master Trainer and speaker working with senior sales professionals and leaders. Mary specializes in creating and translating a company's service standards from theory into usable practices. She is driven by her commitment to hospitality and her passion for service excellence.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS (FRIDAY, MARCH 8)

Elke Govertsen, CEO/Founder - Mamalode

Elke Govertsen is an entrepreneur and consultant sitting at the intersection of content, culture, conflict, connection, and community. She has been a CEO, Chief Community Officer, consultant, writer, and the heart of every team she has been on. She founded Mamalode, was Chief Community Officer at MyVillage, and has worked with clients ranging from Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge, to Fortune 500 companies, to impact focused creative non-profits. She is an international speaker, facilitator (groups, design labs, conflict, DEIB, and co-creation) and is a certified Integral Facilitation Leader. "There are influencers, there are influencers of influencers, and then there is Elke Govertsen." - George Brandt, Forbes

Elaine Swann, Lifestyle & Etiquette Expert

Elaine Swann is America's Leading Lifestyle and Etiquette Expert - as the founder of The Swann School of Protocol, she is the first ever Black woman to own an etiquette licensing program. With a franchise-like program, Elaine has over 20 independently owned and operated Swann Schools across the US. She has traveled the country sharing her advice with prestigious businesses and universities such as Cisco, Merrill, Stanford, and the Wharton School of Business.

Elaine is the author of "Let Crazy Be Crazy" and has appeared on numerous news and talk shows such as TODAY, Dr. Phil, Dr. OZ, ABC World News, and CNN. She has been featured on NPR, Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, and Business Insider. Elaine continues to passionately pave the way for other entrepreneurs like her and provide job opportunities with her "Business in a Box" model.

PANELISTS (Listed alphabetically BY FIRST NAME)

Amberly Pahut, Director of Community Responsibility & Executive Director of the First Interstate BancSystem Foundation

Amberly is a Montana native and a graduate of Western Montana College, earning her MBA in 2007 with a specialty in nonprofit management from Walden University. For 20 years, Amberly led many philanthropic initiatives and projects in the higher education and health care arenas.

In addition to her work, she has served in leadership positions on the Board of Directors for the Association of Fundraising Professionals Montana Chapter, Montana Healthcare Communications and Development Association, Billings Clinic Broadwater, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and more. In 2022, Amberly was recognized as one of the top 50 women leaders of the Mountain Region by The Women We Admire. Amberly is thrilled to bring her experience and passion for values-based philanthropy to First Interstate Bank, which she joined in early 2022.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Amy Beck, President - Oboz

With extensive experience in the outdoor and fashion industries, Amy joined Oboz in 2019 and has since championed Oboz's commitment to sustainability and overseen its B Corp certification, obtained in early 2023. Outside of the Oboz business, Amy has devoted significant time to the Conservation Alliance in helping to protect North America's outdoor spaces as a board member since 2017. Now based in Bozeman, Montana, Amy spent more than a decade with brands Smartwool and Lucy Activewear, both part of one of the world's largest apparel portfolios, VF Corporation, and also supports New Zealand-based KMD Brands' portfolio of brands in North America. Amy has a passion for active travel and spends her time away from the office enjoying outdoor adventures all over the world. As a member of the Business for Montana Outdoors Advisory Board, Amy also champions policies and programs that recognize the value of Montana's outdoor economy.

Avanlee Christine, Founder - Avanlee Care

As a founder, Avanlee Christine brings a unique blend of personal and professional experience providing care to seniors and others in need. She has dedicated her career in healthcare and tech primarily in building solutions that improve the lives of family caregivers and aging seniors. She has attracted prominent early stage investors such as Esther Dyson, a notable tech investor, who now serves as chair of Avanlee Care Inc. Avanlee experienced firsthand the ways in which tech solutions were falling short and designed the Avanlee Care app in an effort to pioneer an all-in-one resource to fill the gap in inadequate remote care, one that supports both the caregiver and care recipient. Avanlee has written on topics related to technology, innovation and caregiving for publications such as Fortune Magazine and has been awarded Inc.'s best in business award in 2022.

Becca Egbert, Venture Capitalist

Becca Egbert is a multifaceted leader passionate about driving positive change. A former Midwife and trailblazing FemTech entrepreneur, she is currently focused on fundraising for a Menstrual Health Education nonprofit. She is also laying the groundwork for her next work adventure - launching a new venture firm in 2026. Her vision to make a significant impact in the world of women fundraising and deploying capital is sure to ruffle some industry feathers. You can find her living, loving, cooking, growing gardens, and playing in the mountains, rivers, and starry skies of (windy) Park County.

Blair Fjeseth, SVP & Chief of Staff - Mountain Health CO-OP

Upon graduating from Carroll College - producing pivotal change as the Student Body President - with a degree in communication studies and public relations, Blair served as Deputy Secretary of State for Montana Secretary of State Linda McCulloch. In her tenure with Secretary McCulloch, Blair was pivotal in expanding voting access via satellite voting on all of Montana's Indian Reservations.

In 2018, she started working at Mountain Health Co-Op and currently serves as the COO. Blair was instrumental in bringing affordable health coverage and coverage choices to folks across Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Blair has also demonstrated a passion for strategy and initiating positive change by serving on the boards of directors for numerous nonprofit organizations and the Montana Chamber of Commerce. She has written a monthly column in Montana Parent Magazine for over seven years and was recognized as one of Modern Healthcare's Top 25 Emerging Leaders in Healthcare for 2021, 40 Under 40 in the Helena Independent Record, and as a People of Interest in People Magazine.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Britt Ide, Ide Energy

Britt Ide has 30 years of experience as an engineer, lawyer, and business leader, serving as the CEO of Ide Energy & Strategy to consult on energy, sustainability, and climate solutions. She is currently a board member of NorthWestern Energy, a Nasdaq-listed natural gas and electric utility, serving on the Human Resources and the Nominations and Governance committees. She also serves as the Lead Independent Director of Nasdaq-listed Nxu, Inc, an electric vehicle charging innovator, and on the board of TechnoSylva, providing wildfire solutions.

Britt was appointed by the US Secretary of Energy as a Women in Clean Energy Advisory Board member with Stanford and MIT and holds a Harvard Certificate in Mediation and is a National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) Board Leadership Fellow. Britt is passionate about increasing the diversity of corporate boards and volunteers and coaches women through organizations including Athena Alliance, How Women Lead, and 50/50 Women on Boards. Britt is also a Montana State University alumna and a fifth-generation Montanan, though she grew up across the US as the daughter of an Air Force pilot.

Caitlin Jensen, Executive Director - Montana Child Care Business Connect | Zero to Five

Caitlin is the founding executive director of Zero to Five Montana, a statewide early childhood policy and advocacy organization that leads innovative capacity-building programs. For nearly 20 years, she has worked in early childhood policy and systems building, and began her career in a Head Start classroom. Her experience working with children and families, both locally and internationally, led her to pursue her master's in social work with an emphasis on policy & advocacy at the University of Washington. She completed her Maternal and Child Health Leadership fellowship through the UW School of Medicine/Seattle Children's Hospital, and holds a certificate in Entrepreneurial Leadership in the Social Sector through Babson College, as well as a certificate in P-3 Leadership through the University of Colorado Denver. She is passionate about working with community leaders and policy makers alike to address systemic issues in the field of early childhood. Caitlin lives in Helena and is the mother to two little boys, an infant and a 3-year-old, who inspire her every day to make the state a better place for all kids and families.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Carmen McSpadden, Founder – 17West, Leadership & Organizational Development Services

Recently retired from directing the Montana State University (MSU) Leadership Institute for over twenty years, Carmen also worked as director of the Leadership Fellows Program and adjunct faculty in management for the Jake Jabs College of Business and Entrepreneurship (JJCBE). She is a founding member of Leadership MSU and Developing Excellence in Academic Leadership. Decades of board service to public schools and nonprofits, Carmen currently is President of Headwaters Economics. Prior to MSU, Carmen co-owned a successful adventure travel company with travel throughout the West and the world (now owned by Xanterra Parks & Resorts).

In 2024, Carmen received her 9th Chamber of Commerce/MSU Alumni Association's Awards for Excellence/Founders Day Award, was chosen as one of MSU's 125 Extraordinary Ordinary Women throughout MSU's 125-year history, and has received the Community Mediation Center's Peacemaker Award, Bozeman Daily Chronicle's 2008 Woman of the Year, Prospera & JJCBE 2012 Mentor of the Year, 2015 Leadership Montana's Service Award and in 2016 the prestigious Athena Women's Leadership Award.

Christi Jacobsen, Montana Secretary of State

Christi Jacobsen became Montana's 22nd Secretary of State in January 2021.

Secretary Jacobsen is a native Montanan, born and raised in Helena, where she and her husband raised their five children. Secretary Jacobsen was educated in Montana receiving a degree from Carroll College and a master's degree in public administration from University of Montana. Secretary Jacobsen has two decades of experience in leadership for state government. She has increased efficiencies in the office, cut business registration fees in half, and implemented an improved, modern, secure election management system. Montana has had record new business registration under her leadership.

Cora Chandler, Founder – Cora Kay Productions

Cora Chandler (Aaniih/Cree) is the visionary force behind Cora K. Productions, as a seasoned event planner with a passion for promoting Indigenous talent and stories. Known for her expertise in organizing captivating Indigenous fashion shows, Cora created a platform that celebrates Indigenous designers. Her events not only highlight the beauty of Indigenous fashion but also contribute to the empowerment and recognition of Indigenous artists in the industry. In the realm of entertainment, Cora orchestrates laughter-filled evenings with Indigenous comedy shows that highlight the wit, humor, and unique perspectives of Indigenous comedians. In addition to fashion and comedy, Cora organizes vibrant and culturally rich art markets, providing a platform for Indigenous artists to showcase their talents, connect with a broader audience, and contribute to the thriving Indigenous art community. Cora continues to break new ground in event planning, leaving a lasting impact on both the Indigenous community and the wider audience.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Courtenay Sprunger, State Representative – HD7 / Kalispell

Courtenay Sprunger is the current representative for Montana State House District 7, the Heart of Kalispell. A fifth-generation resident of the Flathead, Representative Sprunger is the founder and CEO of Big Sky Public Relations, a former chair of the Kalispell Chamber, and a Montana Ambassador; she has also served with numerous community organizations such as the Conrad Mansion, Daybreak Rotary, CASA for Kids, and the Flathead Food Bank.

Representative Sprunger served her first term in the 68th session of the Montana State Legislature and was a member of State House Administration, House Local Government, and House Transportation. During this time, she introduced nine bills and passed eight including the SAFER Act, a \$100 million match fund to improve Montana's roads and bridges, CTE Advanced Opportunities, the Adoption Tax Credit, and a bill to enforce mandatory jail time for fentanyl traffickers. She's running for re-election and looks forward to returning to the legislature to continue work tackling key state issues such as education reform, workforce development, community safety, housing, and infrastructure.

Diane Conradi, Founder – Montana Access Project

Diane Conradi is the founder/CEO of Montana Access Project. As an experienced attorney, founder and advisor to Whitefish Legacy Partners/Whitefish Trail, Montana State Parks Foundation, and appointed member to Montana's first State Parks and Recreation Board she has in-depth experience in creating, enhancing and sustaining high quality nature-based recreation access that supports economic vitality, community health and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Dr. Alison Harmon, Vice President of Research and Economic Development – MSU

Dr. Alison Harmon arrived at Montana State University in 2004 to join the food and nutrition faculty with an interdisciplinary background in biology, forest resources, and nutrition science. In 2015 she was appointed Dean of the College of Education, Health & Human Development and in 2022 she began serving as Vice President for Research & Economic Development.

Her faculty work has been related to curriculum development and educator guidance around food systems and sustainability, providing leadership in the development of innovative programs and curricula at Montana State University including the Sustainable Food & Bioenergy Systems Bachelor's degree program; the campus farm-- Towne's Harvest Garden; the Montana Dietetic Internship which has since become a Master's degree; and the Hospitality Management & Culinary Arts Bachelor's. As Dean, she grew research expenditures in the college by 57%. She was passionate about developing leadership in higher education administrators, improving student success, widening access to higher education, and supporting high quality P-12 education and well-being in rural and indigenous communities. In this capacity she helped launch the LIFE Scholars Program which provides individuals with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to have a college experience.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Dr. Melissa Wolf, Bozeman Health Medical Director of Women's Services

Melissa Wolf, MD received an undergraduate degree from Cornell University and a medical degree from State University of New York at Buffalo, completing five years of residency including one year of Family Medicine training and four years of training in Obstetrics and Gynecology. Following residency she worked as an OB/GYN physician in rural Tooele, Utah for three years as part of the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program. In 2008 Dr. Wolf joined Bozeman Health Women's Specialists where she specializes in general women's health and pregnancy care.

Dr. Wolf has also worked extensively with underserved populations spending four months of 2015 in a South Sudan women's hospital with Doctors Without Borders. Additionally, she published a humorous and informative women's health book in 2011: *Do You Have a Tipped Uterus? 69 Things Your Gynecologist Wishes You Knew*. Dr. Wolf enjoys hiking around Bozeman, is a marathon runner, and in 2013 she completed the Coeur d'Alene Ironman Triathlon.

Dr. Suzanne Tilleman, Sprunk & Burnham Endowed Dean - University of Montana College of Business

Suzanne Tilleman is the Sprunk and Burnham Endowed Dean of the University of Montana's College of Business at the University of Montana. Prior to her appointment as interim dean, she was Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Management and Marketing. Suzanne's industry experience includes working for some of the largest players in the natural resources arena: General Electric, Exxon, and Monsanto. Her research focuses on firm performance and environmental sustainability issues. One of her publications, *Creating Economic and Environmental Value Through Industrial Symbiosis*, received the Impact on Practice Award from the Organizations and Environment Division of the Academy of Management.

In 2017, she received the inaugural Knick Family Faculty Fellowship in recognition of her research efforts. A dedicated educator, Suzanne has won the Outstanding Undergraduate Faculty in Management Award four times since joining UM. Originally, from Havre, MT, Suzanne is committed to the success of the students, College of Business, University of Montana, and the entire state.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Jenni Graff, Executive Director – Early-Stage Montana

As Early-Stage Montana's Executive Director, Jenni oversees the daily operations and is tasked with multiplying the organization's statewide impact on the entrepreneurial ecosystem. She's passionate about diversifying the economy in MT by helping new entities grow, scale and create new jobs right – that's probably because she has seen first-hand the positive impact innovative startups are having by creating job opportunities that didn't exist when she graduated from college.

Prior to joining ESMT, Jenni was the founder of a professional recruiting firm, and worked in Economic Development. She has worked extensively with state and local agencies to bring technology companies to the state and encourage business growth. She holds BA and MBA degrees from the University of Montana. In her spare time, she is an active volunteer with Montana Ambassadors and still considers herself a mountain athlete (albeit slow).

Jenny Walby, General Manager – Ressler / Toyota of Bozeman

Jenny Walby grew up in Ennis, MT. She never imagined working in the automotive industry, but after over 12 years with Ressler Motors now, she can't imagine a more challenging and fulfilling industry and workplace to be a part of. She started as an Internet Sales Professional, moved to a Floor Sales Professional, then worked as a Finance Manager, served as Cadillac Brand Manager, was promoted to Sales Manager, then worked as the Marketing and Business Development Manager for Ressler. She now serves on the Executive Leadership Team for the Ressler Motors Automotive Group, and is the General Manager of Toyota of Bozeman.

Jessica Dehn, Founder/Owner – Explore Montessori & Academy

Jessica Dehn, founder of Dino Drop-In is a revolutionary in early childhood education. With over a decade of experience and a Master's in Public Administration, Jessica blends her passion for entrepreneurship with a commitment to community impact.

Jessica's entrepreneurial journey took off when she founded Dino Drop-In: the model gained national acclaim, winning 2nd place in the SBA's InnovateHER contest in 2017. Addressing community needs brought to light during and since the pandemic, Jessica has launched and grown four more early education brands including; Dino on the GO!, ABCDino Academy, Explore Montessori Academy, and Dino Discovery offering innovative childcare solutions to fit the varied early education needs of modern families. Jessica Dehn's story is one of innovation, resilience, and a dedication to creating positive change in the early learning landscape.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Karen Dove, Program Director - Native Women's Launch (NWL) Program

Karen is the Director of Program Integration at Accelerate Montana. Karen brings over 20 years' experience in learning, leadership development, workforce development, community and economic development, project and program management, and change leadership to her role at AMT. In her spare time, she serves as a Director, Board of Directors for the Project Management Institute's Educational Foundation and teaches project management and leadership development. When she is not working for Accelerate, you will most likely find her outside, enjoying the outdoors.

Kassi Strong, Program Director - Rocky Mountain Women's Business Center (AccelerateMT)

Kassi is a born and raised Montanan who is passionate about helping companies grow with thoughtful business plans and marketing strategies. She is the Program Director of the Rocky Mountain Women's Business Center (RMWBC) hosted by Accelerate Montana. Kassi has a background in digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and business consulting. When she isn't meeting with, or advocating for, women business owners in Montana, she is likely spending time outdoors or in the Billings community with her husband and two sons.

Kim Jakub, SVP Rocky Mountain Refining - Par Montana

Kim Jakub serves as the Vice President and Refinery Manager at the Par Montana refinery located outside Billings in Lockwood, Montana. A Chemical Engineer originally from Nebraska, Kim has lived in numerous cities throughout the country and has resided in Billings for nearly 6 years.

Kim and her family moved from Houston to Billings in 2018 with ExxonMobil as a desire to live in a Northern climate and smaller community. Kim enjoys working in refining/manufacturing for the variety of challenges the industry brings - from daily optimization opportunities to navigating broad business and regulatory environments. She is proud to lead a team of over 300 highly capable employees that safely and reliably provide the fuel for both business and adventure across the Rockies region. Kim is also actively involved in the community, serving on the board of directors of Big Sky Economic Development and Montana Petroleum Association.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Kirsten Suddath, General Partner – Next Frontier Capital

Kirsten joined Next Frontier Capital as a General Partner in 2021. Before joining NFC, Kirsten served as a Senior Associate with Blackhorn Ventures, based in Denver, CO. Prior to joining Blackhorn, she was an Entrepreneur in Residence with the Techstars Boulder Accelerator where she helped source and select companies for the accelerator program. Kirsten has been involved with numerous Boulder-based startups across CleanTech, telecom, transportation/distribution, and software technology companies.

She has a double BA in mathematics and philosophy, and an MBA focused in entrepreneurial finance from the University of Colorado, Boulder. She's also a former competitive big mountain skier having competed on the Freeskiing World Tour Qualifier and in the Colorado Freeride Championships. Besides startups and skiing, Kirsten is passionate about spending time outdoors with her husband Ben and daughter, as well as a big USWNT soccer fan and classically trained pianist.

Larissa Martinez, Founder & President – Women's Public Leadership Network

Larissa Martinez is Founder and President of Women's Public Leadership Network (WPLN), a nonprofit that educates, organizes, and inspires center and right-leaning women to enter public office at all levels of government and be effective leaders. In this role, she uses her nearly two decades of experience as a political strategist to help women across the country get involved in politics, seek public office, and gain leadership positions. Larissa has worked on campaigns at every level, mainly for women candidates including Meg Whitman for California Governor, Deb Fischer for U.S. Senate and Carly Fiorina for President. And she is the author of a children's book, "My Mommy Is a Candidate."

Prior to founding WPLN, Larissa served as a Senior Government Relations Professional at Invariant, representing companies ranging from start-ups and Fortune 500s. She also worked as a senior advisor to U.S. Senators Deb Fischer, Chuck Hagel, and Johnny Isakson, and U.S. Congressman Nathan Deal. Larissa serves as an Advisory Board member of the Women's Democracy Network at the International Republican Institute, a Leadership Network member of the American Enterprise Institute, is a former member of the Trump Administration's Transition Team, and is the Vice President of the Alumni Board at the School of Public and International Affairs at UGA.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Laura Orvidas, Chief Executive Officer - onX

After an 18-year career at e-commerce giant Amazon as vice president of consumer electronics and private brands, Laura Orvidas is leading onX as the digital navigation company's CEO. Founded in 2009, onX develops software that helps inform, inspire, and empower outdoor enthusiasts and is an industry-leading brand with over 350 employees. Today, millions of customers rely on onX's suite of navigation apps which include onX Hunt, onX Offroad, and onX Backcountry. Because off-the-beaten-path experiences are at the heart of what onX does, the company also leads initiatives to protect and expand access to public land and promote stewardship opportunities.

Laura resides in Bozeman, Montana, with her husband, two children, horses, dogs, and chickens. She enjoys spending time hiking, biking, horseback riding and skiing under the legendary Montana "Big Sky."

Liz Marchi, Head of Community Engagement - Two Bear Capital

Liz Marchi, a founding partner, is also the Head of Community Engagement at Two Bear Capital, a top tier VC firm, led by Mike Goguen, focused on solutions to challenges in health and wellness with offices in Whitefish, San Diego, Palo Alto, Boston and NYC. She is the founder of Frontier Angel Funds I and II, Montana's first angel funds, which seeded more than \$20 million in early stage risk capital. She served as President and CEO for 7 years of Montana West Economic Development and the Flathead County Port Authority focusing on marketing, communications and access to capital for economic and entrepreneurial development. She has raised funds for many organizations and has served on the Boards of North Valley Hospital, the Advisory Board of the Montana Meth Project, the Governor's Economic Advisory Council, the ACE Scholarship Advisory Board, the Board of Code Montana, and as Vice Chairman of the Greater Polson Community Foundation, and currently sits on the Board of the Montana State Chamber of Commerce. She and her husband Jon raised Wagyu cattle for 35 years. She has three children, two stepchildren, six grandchildren and Corgis and recently took up flyfishing.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Liz Moore, Executive Director – Montana Nonprofit Association

Liz has spent her professional career in nonprofit endeavors, primarily in antipoverty programs before joining MNA as Executive Director in 2011. During her tenure with MNA, the organization has prioritized capacity building in more rural areas of the state, supporting a multi-generational workforce, addressing workplace well-being and equity and belonging for all Montana nonprofit leaders. Liz credits the MNA team for three significant recent accomplishments: helping lead a successful 2020 Census effort; serving as a primary resource for nonprofits navigating COVID and playing a pivotal role in increasing and securing permanency for the Montana Endowment Tax Credit. Liz currently chairs the Board of the National Council of Nonprofits. In addition she is adjunct faculty in the University of Montana's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program, teaching Nonprofit Public Policy and Advocacy.

Liz's love of Montana reflects her roots growing up on a ranch in eastern Montana. She has resided in western Montana since 1984 where she enjoys flyfishing, singing, photography, chasing two dogs and hanging out with her grandkids!

Lynn-Wood Fields – AccelerateMT Rapid Training Program Manager for Film & Media

Award-winning filmmaker, producer and educator, Lynn-Wood Fields graduated with her MFA in digital filmmaking from the University of Montana. Her work has since gone on to screen at over 50 film festivals and venues globally including "Are we There Yet" screening at Indie Memphis Film Festival, 2016; Western History Association Conference, 2015; Frozen River Film Festival, 2014. Her current projects include television series "Perma Red", "House Calls", premiering on PBS in 2022, "Social Impact" with the Institute for Family and "Snqwey+mistn" a documentary on Salish forever foster homes. She owns Montana Film Tax Credits and Montana Media Center which focuses on training Montana filmmakers. She is also a member of the MEDIA Coalition of Montana (MCM) which is working on legislation around the MEDIA (Montana Economic Development Industry Advancement) tax credits and cap raises. She is passionate about working with AccelerateMT to connect Montanans to film and media rapid training courses for them to economically benefit from this industry.

Mariah Omeasoo, Marketing Coordinator – NWL Program

Mariah was born and grew up on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. She is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana and Ermineskin Cree Nation in Alberta, Canada. She has a Bachelor of Business Administration-Marketing from the University of Montana. Through her role as the Rocky Mountain Women's Business Center Marketing Coordinator, Mariah not only promotes the success of women-owned businesses but also contributes to the broader goal of economic empowerment and community development.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Mary Rutherford, President & CEO - The Montana Community Foundation, Inc.

As the President and Chief Executive Officer, Mary leads the Montana Community Foundation (MCF) in its mission of cultivating a culture of giving so Montana communities can flourish. Joining the Foundation in 2014, Mary has led MCF's efforts to preserve wealth in Montana for the benefit of Montana. During her tenure, MCF's assets have nearly tripled while awarding record grants and scholarships across the state. Under Mary's leadership, has committed to investing 5% of their investable assets in Montana's main streets. This will represent more than \$6.5 million invested in Montana communities. Mary has more than 35 years of philanthropic leadership experience in Idaho and Alaska. A fifth-generation Idahoan, Mary earned a master's degree in Philanthropic Studies from Indiana University and a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, ID. Mary serves on the Helena Branch Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. With a belief that philanthropy can empower individuals to transform society, Mary's work at MCF highlights the importance of local and community impact.

Molly Kocialski, Rocky Mountain Regional Director - U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

As the Regional Director of the Rocky Mountain United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), since January 2016, Mollybeth (Molly) Kocialski carries out the strategic direction of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, and is responsible for leading the Rocky Mountain regional office. Focusing on the nine states within this region and actively engaging with the community, Ms. Kocialski ensures the USPTO's initiatives and programs are tailored to the region's unique ecosystem of industries and stakeholders.

Ms. Kocialski brings more than 20 years of intellectual property experience to the USPTO and is a recognized IP leader in the Rocky Mountain region, currently serving as the Vice President of the Colorado IP Inn of Court. She has also served as the head of the IP Committee, was a member of the Board of Directors for the Colorado Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel, and served on the National IP Committee of the Association of the Corporate Counsel. In 2015, Ms. Kocialski was recognized by ManagingIP magazine as one of its North America Corporate IP Stars.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Nancy Schlepp, VP - Communications and Government Relations, Sandfire Resources America and FY24 Montana Chamber Board Chair

Nancy Schlepp is the VP Communications & Government Relations and a Corporate Officer of Sandfire Resources America. Nancy has 25 plus years of worldwide business experience in corporate affairs, government relations, international trade, communications, public policy, and human resources. Previous positions include the Executive Director of the Montana Taxpayers Association and National Affairs Director for the Montana Farm Bureau Federation. Currently, Nancy is the Board Chair of the Montana Chamber of Commerce, sits on the executive committee of the Montana Taxpayers Association, and serves on the boards of the Montana Mining Association, REAL Montana Board, the Montana Non-Profit Board, and the Meagher County Community Foundation. Nancy has also served as a Meagher County Commissioner. Nancy grew up in Ringling, Montana where her and her husband own and operate her family's cattle ranch which has been in the family for 128 years. They have 3 children, Sarah (26), Ethan (21), and Dawson (16).

Sam Schmidt, Physical Therapist | Clinic Director - Alpine Physical Therapy

Sam is a co-owner of Alpine Physical Therapy in Missoula, MT, with five locations. She and her partners created a new type of PT clinic using a walk-in, urgent care model called PhysioTrekk. Sam also co-founded the non-profit Fit To Fight, which provides a support group based on exercise, education, and health for those fighting cancer in the greater Missoula area. As the current Vice President of the American Physical Therapy Association Montana (APTA- MT), she leads the Legislative Committee, participates in the Payment Committee, and works with physical therapy professionals from all over the state.

Through her APTA-MT leadership and support of her committee members, Sam advocates for patient access to care, improved reimbursement for providers, and education to payers on the value and role of Physical Therapy for the healthcare system. The American Physical Therapy Association Private Practice Section recently recognized Sam nationally for her contribution to the Physical Therapy business sector with the 2023 Community Impact Award. When not teaching movement, helping others recover from injury, advocating for improved healthcare policies or managing her businesses, Sam can be found around the campfire, on the river, or in the mountains with her husband and two young children.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Shannon Christensen, Principal-in-Charge of Architecture, Cushing Terrell

Shannon Christensen, AIA, LEED BD+C, is an architect and principal owner with Cushing Terrell, a multidisciplinary design firm founded in 1938 with more than 425 team members in 13 offices as well as working remotely across the country. Joining in 2006, Shannon was named principal-in-charge of architecture in 2021, taking on responsibility for guiding the vision, strategy, and growth of the firm's architecture team across all its locations, and is also a leader of Cushing Terrell's project management initiative. Shannon's upbringing in Circle, Montana, gave her a bias for action and a foundation of giving back to her community and her profession. She is passionate about inspiring the next generation of architects, serving as an NCARB licensing advisor for 12 years, on the advisory council for Montana State University's School of Architecture for 10 years, and is president of the Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools, connecting students of all ages with the architectural profession.

Shannon was recognized in 2017 with the AIA Young Architect Award, the first person to receive the award in Montana. Today, Shannon serves as the 2024 chair of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Construction Contract Administration Knowledge Community and serves on the AIA Strategic Council as the first councilor appointed by AIA Montana.

Sheridan Johnson, Government Affairs Specialist – Montana Chamber

Sheridan Johnson is Government Relations Specialist for the Montana Chamber of Commerce. She currently sits on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Early Childhood and Business Advocacy Council and is championing the Chamber's childcare policy initiatives. Prior to coming to the Chamber, Johnson served as a Public Policy Assistant for the American Farm Bureau Federation in Washington, D.C. She is a graduate of Montana State University (MSU) with degrees in Political Science and Agriculture Education with an emphasis on Communications. Johnson is the former State President of the Montana FFA Association, Montana's largest high school Career and Technical Education student organization.

Susan Carstensen, Independent Advisor

Advisor, Activist, Patron of Heroic Endeavors, 30+ years as a technology executive. Current board member at DADavidson, onX, Quiq, Cogito, Hatch and MSU Innovation Campus. Formerly CFO/COO RightNow Technologies, CEO Workfront, cofounder Yellowstone Growth Partners.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Suzi Berget White, Commercial Lender - First Security Bank

Suzi Berget White is an AVP / Commercial Lender at First Security Bank at the Downtown Bozeman branch. White is an experienced business consultant driving growth and results. She was formerly the Director of Business Development for Prospera Business Network and under her leadership, won the Small Business Administration's National Award for "2019 Women's Business Center" of the Year. She has counseled more than 1,500 Montana business owners and non-profits focusing on business strategy, financial planning, exit strategy, marketing and sales. As a small business owner she has successfully launched and brought to market three businesses and effectively expanded, and sold, a construction business.

Professional award highlights include winning the "Montana Ambassador of the Year" award in 2020 and the "20 under 40 years old" award in Southwest Montana. She is proud to serve on the Montana Ambassadors board and the City of Bozeman Downtown Urban Renewal District board.

Telesa Via - Head of Sales, IHG Luxury & Lifestyle Americas

Heartfelt connections are at the core of Telesa Via's ethos where she has two decades of hospitality commercial experience, and believes success is as much about moving forward as it is about giving back. Telesa oversees sales activities from coast to coast and beyond, with four brands spanning the Americas Region for IHG Hotels & Resorts. One of her endeavors is co-chairing Kimpton's internal committee, Black Lives Matter: Act to Action, to create real change to promote opportunities and advancement for Black People and People of Color. In the 15 years she's been part of the IHG family, Telesa has overseen sales and marketing activities crossing geographic divides and she has consistently built strong bridges between the ownership groups and IHG. Telesa co-founded MLC Cancer Foundation with the mission of raising ovarian and breast cancer awareness and chairs the Board of Directors of the Cinderella Foundation, dedicated to empowering girls living in high-risk, low-income communities in the Washington DC metropolitan area. In recognition of her service and professional accomplishments, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants honored Telesa with the Bill Kimpton Award in 2014, and she has also received the Top Minority Business Leaders Award from the Washington Business Journal, completing the Leadership Greater Washington program in 2015.

PANELISTS (Continued)

Toby O'Rourke, President & CEO - Kampgrounds of America

Inspired by her company's mission of "connecting people to the outdoors and each other," Toby O'Rourke is a thought leader and visionary for outdoor hospitality. As President & CEO of Kampgrounds of America, Inc., she oversees the world's largest branded system of campgrounds, KOA, which has over 500 franchised and company-owned locations across North America. Her unique professional experience in digital marketing, brand management, strategic foresight, technology consulting, business architecture, and software development has helped push KOA to be at the forefront of industry change and modernization. Prior to KOA, Toby held positions with WhiteWave Foods (now Danone), Sara Lee Corporation, STA Group, and Deloitte Consulting. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame and has an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Yolanda OldDwarf, Founder - Sweet Sage Woman

Yolanda OldDwarf, a proud member of the Apsaalooke Nation (Crow Tribe), is the creative force behind Sweet Sage Woman, an indigenous design business dedicated to producing clothing and accessories that are both stylish and size-inclusive. As the founder and designer, Yolanda infuses her creations with a contemporary twist on her Tribe's traditional designs, sharing her unique perspective with the world.