

# MS ALLIANCE EMERGING LEADERS: FUNDRAISING EXECUTIVES

In Partnership with the Association of Fundraising Professionals  
Mississippi Chapter



# PARTICIPANT PROFILE BOOK

## 2020-2021



# ABBY MILLER

Care Lodge  
Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc.

Executive Director  
[executivedirector@carelodge.com](mailto:executivedirector@carelodge.com)  
Meridian



Abby Miller is a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and serves as Executive Director of Care Lodge Domestic Violence Shelter in Meridian, Mississippi where she assists victims in moving forward into survivor-hood after experiencing abusive relationships. She has previously served as the Shelter Director and Counselor in her time at Care Lodge.

The daughter of a pastor and a teacher, Abby learned early on the importance of service to others and civic duty. Abby has served various populations in all stages of life through her work at a therapeutic group home for foster children, an acute inpatient psychiatric hospital for teens, and at an inpatient hospice facility. She uses all of these experiences to form individualized, holistic approaches to serving victims of domestic violence.

Abby graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor's of Social Work from Mississippi College, and she went on to earn a Master's of Social Work from the University of Alabama (Roll Tide!). In her free time, Abby enjoys going on adventures with her husband, Tommy, and taking care of their two dogs, Tilly and Bass, and six chickens.



# CARE LODGE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER



ABBY MILLER

## MISSION

Consistent with our belief in the significance and dignity of each person, Care Lodge actively seeks to eliminate domestic abuse by providing victims, offenders, and the community with inclusive and effective programs and services. Care Lodge ensures the safety and confidentiality of victims and is committed to improving the quality of life.

## VISION

“Help Us End Abuse”

Care Lodge Domestic Violence Shelter is the only certified shelter in east central Mississippi that provides safe shelter, advocacy, and comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking. The agency seeks to utilize a holistic approach to the issue of domestic violence by providing resources and support for victims in shelter and in the community, intervention to offenders, and education and awareness to community audiences of all ages. Care Lodge’s core values are: safety and confidentiality, integrity, empowerment, collaboration, and responsibility.

Meridian

[www.carelodge.com](http://www.carelodge.com)

# ADRIAN CROSS



## Meridian Freedom Project

Executive Director  
[across.mfp@gmail.com](mailto:across.mfp@gmail.com)

Meridian

Adrian Cross is a Meridian native. A proud W girl, 2010 Health Sciences graduate of Mississippi University for Women, and a 2015 graduate of Mississippi State University where she received her Master's Degree in Community College Leadership with an emphasis in Educational Psychology. Inaugural Top 20 Under 40 initiate, Eleven Who Care Volunteer Standout and much more to come.

She currently serves as the Executive Director for the Meridian Freedom Project of Meridian, MS. She also serves her community with the Meridian Public School district as the parent engagement specialist, the Meridian Freedom Project, as well as teaching adolescent psychology. She has two real passions and those are people and education and she believes that you can do any and all things through Christ who strengthens you.





# MERIDIAN FREEDOM PROJECT



M E R I D I A N

FREEDOM PROJECT

ADRIAN CROSS

## MISSION

Our mission is to create a corps of academically capable, socially conscious, and mentally disciplined young leaders in Meridian, Mississippi.

## VISION

We envision the day when young people growing up in Meridian, Mississippi, have the support and resources to achieve the same educational opportunities as children anywhere in America.

### Commitment to LEADership

At the Meridian Freedom Project, we believe education is the seed of freedom. When our students complete their Fellowship with us and graduate from high school, our goal is for each of them to have as many choices for their futures as possible. We work with children 6th-12th grade after school and in the summer. We teach four LEAD principle: Love, Education, Action, and Discipline. We offer programming in literacy, female and male youth empowerment, ACT prep, and college prep. Our program was created based on the Freedom Schools of 1964 that were in MS to empower the african american community to vote and work for equal rights. That's what freedom is, the ability to make choices.

Meridian is the home to so many bright and creative young leaders, and we are grateful to be able to work year-round with our Freedom Fellows and their families. We seek to provide an achievement-oriented atmosphere where Freedom Fellows feel seen, heard, valued, and free to make choices. Our Freedom Fellows are not just the leaders of the future, they are leaders today.

Meridian

[www.themeridianfreedomproject.org](http://www.themeridianfreedomproject.org)

# ALLYSON BREWER

**Community Care Network, Inc.**

Associate Director

[allyson@ccnms.org](mailto:allyson@ccnms.org)

Ocean Springs



Allyson Brewer is the Associate Director for Community Care Network (CCN). After 10 years in the public sector working primarily for Governor Jindal's Administration in Louisiana, she felt the call to return home to the nonprofit world - specifically ministry - where she's spent the past 10 years working in addiction recovery and the fight to end homelessness. While she still enjoys the political arena, and recently managed a successful State Senate campaign, the truest of joy comes from the bigger victories: The mothers at CCN when they have breakthroughs with their children. The children when they finally turn a corner and start to trust and move forward. The families when they graduate and years of cycles start to break. These will always be the most important career and life accomplishments of all, for the ripple effects are truly immeasurable.

In her free time Allyson enjoys spending time with her husband Tim and their niece and nephew, Grace and Levi.



# COMMUNITY CARE NETWORK, INC.



Community Care Network

ALLYSON BREWER

## MISSION

The mission of Community Care Network is to provide emergency assistance and safe transitional housing and life skills Programs for women and children and to assist families to move from homelessness to stability.

## VISION

The vision of Community Care Network is to empower our clients:

- 1) to become self-sufficient, productive citizens in our communities.
- 2) to become positive role models for their families.
- 3) to develop lifelong healthy habits leading to housing stability.

Community Care Network, located in Jackson County, is a faith-based agency serving homeless clients throughout Mississippi. CCN clients have experienced a wide range of factors leading to homelessness including: substance abuse, PTSD, emotional disorders, mental illness, criminal records, a lack of education leading to a deficiency in employment skills, and most often trauma.

Sue's Home, our long-term Transitional Housing Facility strives to teach clients to be free of addictive substances, and to change any life controlling barriers. Many clients have some combination of physical, psychological, and social impairment, and our program approach provides a climate of acceptance and an environment of trust, faith, and honesty.

Breakthrough! provides emergency crisis and transitional housing for 18-24-year-old homeless young adults. This population has been identified as one of the most at-risk and fastest growing group of homeless in Mississippi. CCN staff mentor these vulnerable young adults for 2 years while providing life skills and employment assistance.

Jackson County  
[www.ccnms.org](http://www.ccnms.org)

# AMBER OLSEN



## United MSD Foundation

Executive Director

[aolsen@unitedmsdfoundation.org](mailto:aolsen@unitedmsdfoundation.org)

Ocean Springs

Amber Olsen is the mother to three daughters. In 2016, her youngest daughter Willow was diagnosed with Multiple Sulfatase Deficiency(MSD), an ultra rare, terminal genetic condition. Since the diagnosis, Amber formed the United MSD Foundation (501c3), assisted in forming an independent Scientific Advisory Board of experts, joined together with three global sister organizations, and is pushing forward the first ever Phase I Clinical trial. Olsen is the chief fundraising officer for the organization and will not stop until every child with MSD has an opportunity to live a healthy life without limitations. Amber and her husband, Tom Cannan, have resided in the beautiful and giving community of South Mississippi for the last 18 years with their three wonderful daughters, Kylee (17), Jenna (13), and Willow (6).

In her professional career, Amber founded Nextaff Gulf Coast in Ocean Springs, MS in 2007 to offer recruiting services for businesses in South Mississippi. Amber is certified by the Human Resource Certification Institute as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR). Amber is originally from Missoula, Montana where she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Business in 1998 from University of Montana. Amber has held various community leadership positions, including most recently as a member of the board of Directors of the Mississippi Center for Medical Fragile Children, a collaborative initiative with First Lady of Mississippi, Deborah Bryant.





# UNITED MSD FOUNDATION



MULTIPLE SULFATASE DEFICIENCY

AMBER OLSEN

## MISSION

The United MSD Foundation advocates for, supports, and funds biomedical research to cure Multiple Sulfatase Deficiency (MSD) and avails its research to cure other lysosomal storage diseases.

## VISION

Through relentless pursuit of treatments, we aspire for all children with MSD to lead a healthy life without limitations.

On May 9th, 2016, Willow, two-year-old daughter of Tom Cannan and Amber Olsen, was diagnosed with a rare terminal disease called Multiple Sulfatase Deficiency (MSD). Children with MSD become severely disabled and die an early death (normally before age 10). In 2016, after meeting with researchers, doctors and other parents with children with MSD from all over the world, Amber established The United MSD Foundation.

We are actively funding research for viable treatment options into development alongside our sister foundations in Argentina), Ireland and Spain. We have the scientists, doctors, facilities, and permissions in place for moving forward with treatments for MSD to begin – we simply need to fund it into fruition. The progress made in developing treatment options not only touches our rare disease population but is proving to have far reaching implications for other more well known conditions like Alzheimers and Parkinson's disease.

Ocean Springs

[www.curemsd.org](http://www.curemsd.org)

# BIANCA ZAHARESCU

**Spring Initiative**  
Chief Financial Officer  
Co-Executive Director  
[bianca@spring-initiative.org](mailto:bianca@spring-initiative.org)  
Clarksdale



Bianca C. Zaharescu, B.A., Chief Financial Officer of Spring Initiative in Clarksdale, Mississippi, co-founded the educational non-profit in 2011 out of a deep sense for social justice, desire for racial reconciliation, belief in the power of education and relationships, and love for young people.

A naturalized citizen, Bianca moved to the US from Romania when she was 2 years old. Bianca is a graduate of the University of Illinois, holding a Bachelor of Arts in African-American Studies and History. Bianca first came to Clarksdale in 2006, moving there for a gap year between high school and college in 2007. Today, in her role as Chief Financial Officer of Spring, Bianca shares responsibility for all organizational decisions with her Co-Founder, Anja Thiessen (Chief of Staff and Marketing), and their third leadership team member, Rachel Bouer (Director of Program and Student Success).

Bianca is also the Director of College Spring, the program that supports Spring's original cohort of students who are now college sophomores, juniors, seniors, and new graduates. In her free time, Bianca enjoys music, eating, laughing, dancing, and the presence of family and friends. Bianca hopes to continue to help build Spring into an organization that can serve more young people even more effectively. Bianca is committed to being a true part of the Clarksdale community for the long run.



# SPRING INITIATIVE



BIANCA ZAHARESCU

## MISSION

Spring Initiative empowers young people in the Mississippi Delta to beat the odds, access the opportunities they deserve, and build successful, happy and hopeful lives for themselves.

## VISION

Spring Initiative envisions a Mississippi Delta full of hope where young people follow their dreams.

Spring runs four daily and year-round K-12 programs currently. Spring's goal is to empower students to live out their full potential; break the cycle of poverty; lead happy, healthy, secure, and fully engaged lives; and give back to their community. Spring works hard to provide holistic opportunities and steady support for students across every age group, through engaging, daily investment and individualized, long-term commitment. The students themselves, however, are the ones who work hard to make their dreams come true and to build a bright future. We practice growth mindset and invest in college readiness, provide a safe space that encourages healing and self-confidence, and support students practicing leadership in their own lives and community. Spring helps students confidently explore their interests, take risks, follow their passions, and seek out the unique life path that will bring them most joy and fulfillment as they share their gifts with the world.

Coahoma County

[www.spring-initiative.org](http://www.spring-initiative.org)

# DIANE EASLEY



## Community Care Network, Inc.

Executive Director

[diane@ccnms.org](mailto:diane@ccnms.org)

Ocean Springs

Diane Easley is the founder and Executive Director of Community Care Network (CCN). She is a registered nurse who also holds a Masters degree in Administration. Diane has over 30 years of nonprofit management experience including Director of the women's program at the Home of Grace, service on a number of boards and agencies, and a dedication to prison ministry.

During her years of passion and service to women and children in her care, she saw an undeniable need for a safe place for them to call home. Eighteen years ago, through her vision, the help of a dedicated community, and God's guidance - Sue's Home was born. Today Sue's Home continues to serve women and children who find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons. With her leadership, CCN was chosen in 2020 by HUD to spearhead an innovative homeless youth housing and life skills program.

In her free time, Diane enjoys spending time with her husband Wallace, her two boys - Mitch and Derek - and her five grandsons.



# COMMUNITY CARE NETWORK, INC.



Community Care Network

DIANE EASLEY

## MISSION

The mission of Community Care Network is to provide emergency assistance and safe transitional housing and life skills Programs for women and children and to assist families to move from homelessness to stability.

## VISION

The vision of Community Care Network is to empower our clients:

- 1) to become self-sufficient, productive citizens in our communities.
- 2) to become positive role models for their families.
- 3) to develop lifelong healthy habits leading to housing stability.

Community Care Network, located in Jackson County, is a faith-based agency serving homeless clients throughout Mississippi. CCN clients have experienced a wide range of factors leading to homelessness including: substance abuse, PTSD, emotional disorders, mental illness, criminal records, a lack of education leading to a deficiency in employment skills, and most often trauma.

Sue's Home, our long-term Transitional Housing Facility strives to teach clients to be free of addictive substances, and to change any life controlling barriers. Many clients have some combination of physical, psychological, and social impairment, and our program approach provides a climate of acceptance and an environment of trust, faith, and honesty.

Breakthrough! provides emergency crisis and transitional housing for 18-24-year-old homeless young adults. This population has been identified as one of the most at-risk and fastest growing group of homeless in Mississippi. CCN staff mentor these vulnerable young adults for 2 years while providing life skills and employment assistance.

Jackson County  
[www.ccnms.org](http://www.ccnms.org)

# DINA RAY

**But God Ministries**

Director of Development

[dinaray@butgodministries.com](mailto:dinaray@butgodministries.com)

Ridgeland



Dina Ray is a jack of all trades and has had a very diverse background. She is a graduate of Baylor University with a BBA in Marketing / Management and is also a professionally trained Chef, graduating with honors from the former Le Cordon Bleu Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago in 1998. She worked for 15 years in the Plastics industry working for Dow Chemical, Rexene, Bayer Corp and GE Plastics. Dina also taught at Viking Cooking School when it was open in Ridgeland, MS. She spent 8 years as the State Director of Mississippi for March of Dimes and is currently the Director of Development for But God Ministries.

Dina feels her diverse background has prepared her to be a nonprofit executive and has given her insight that is often missing in the nonprofit world. The mission aspect of nonprofit work is particularly important to her, and she enjoys feeling like her efforts make an impact on the world.

In her free time, she enjoys cooking and creating recipes and cookbooks, painting and traveling and is a huge pet lover. She is also a member of Broadmoor Baptist Church.

Dina is married to Ken Ray and they have 3 teenage boys, twins Aidan and Connor who are 17 and Seniors at Germantown High School and Griffin who is 16 and a Junior at Germantown High School. She is a huge supporter of the award-winning Germantown Band, GHS Baseball and GHS JROTC.



# BUT GOD MINISTRIES

The logo for But God... Ministries, featuring the letters 'BGM' in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font.

But God...  
Ministries

DINA RAY

## MISSION

But God Ministries (BGM) mission is to share the love of Christ while building sustainable communities around the world.

## VISION

To continue our work in Haiti and make it sustainable so that the Haitians are running most of the work and we are partners in support, and to repeat our SPHERES model throughout the Mississippi Delta and other impoverished southern communities to build a model of sustainability and hope. It is our desire to share the love of Christ while assisting in bringing the resources that change lives for the better, so that the local citizens can begin to lift their own communities in hope.

BGM began in 2011 working in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. We developed our SPHERES model in 2 communities in Haiti. Spiritual; Physical (Medical/Dental); H- H2O; Education; Roofs (Housing); Economic Development (Jobs); Soil (Healthy food) In Haiti, we have 4 medical clinics & lab, 2 dental clinics, 130 Haitians employees, 180 houses, 2 churches, 2 Hope Centers, sponsor and feed 950 children in school, and regular mission teams. BGM decided to translate lessons learned in Haiti to our state of Mississippi in 2016 in Jonestown, MS in the Mississippi Delta. We partner with churches, universities, private businesses. Short-term mission teams provide the manpower to build sustainable communities. In Jonestown, we now have Hope Center, a dental clinic, an economic center, Montessori School, an after-school program, a life center, an affordable housing program, a medical clinic, and weekly mission teams.

Mississippi Locations: Ridgeland/Jonestown  
Haiti Locations: Gallete Chambon/Thomas/Mathias  
[www.butgodministries.com](http://www.butgodministries.com)

# JASON MARTIN



## Tupelo and Lee County Hunger Coalition

Executive Director

[jason@unitedwaynems.org](mailto:jason@unitedwaynems.org)

Tupelo

Jason Martin is the Executive Director of the Tupelo/Lee County Hunger Coalition. He has held that position since January of 2018. The Hunger Coalition is an initiative of United Way of Northeast Mississippi and a special project of the Create Foundation. Jason also directs the St. Luke Food Pantry and has been employed there since 2014.

In his work with the Hunger Coalition he works with food pantries, hot meal services, in-school food pantries, and weekend backpack programs. The partnerships of the Hunger Coalition are always expanding to create a better network of organizations that collaborate to meet the needs of food insecure residents in Lee County and much of northeast Mississippi.

Jason's favorite hobbies are riding bicycles, backpacking, and kayaking. He and his wife Jennifer have been married since 2000 and have three dogs.





# TUPELO/LEE COUNTY HUNGER COALITION



Tupelo/Lee County  
**HUNGER  
COALITION**

**JASON MARTIN**

## MISSION

Increasing food security by collaborating with food pantries, hot meal services, and weekend backpack programs.

## VISION

To be a facilitator for Lee Countians to have enough food to live active and healthy lives.

The Tupelo/Lee County Hunger Coalition was formed in 2016 by the Tupelo/Lee County Community Foundation, a CREATE Foundation affiliate. They partnered with the United Way of Northeast Mississippi. The Hunger Coalition works with all stakeholders who comprise the food distribution system to better understand the current situation and determine what is needed to eliminate food insecurity for all people in Lee County.

**CONNECT.** We are striving to connect service organizations with the resources and volunteers they need to better deliver their programs.

**EDUCATE.** A portion of our work involves educating the community about the deep impact of food insecurity and to raise awareness of the needs and the organizations that are providing resources.

**ADVOCATE.** We are advocating for better resources, funding, and the level of need at the local and state level.

Tupelo

[www.tupeloleehungercoalition.org](http://www.tupeloleehungercoalition.org)

# JILL GORDON

**Enrich MS**

Chief Executive Officer

[JillG@enrichms.org](mailto:JillG@enrichms.org)

**Brandon**



Jill Gordon founded Enrich MS in December of 2019 in an effort to combat the youth vaping epidemic our children are dealing with. Enrich MS is for OUR kids. Our mission is to provide a community supported Youth enrichment education program committed and dedicated to engaging and informing youth, parents, schools and community partners. Enrich MS is already making a substantial impact in our communities across the state towards prevention for a variety of issues affecting our youth today.

Jill has over 21 years of professional experience in the banking and finance industry as well as several years as a Marketing professional. Jill has a tremendous passion for helping others and she prides herself in helping her clients achieve their dreams while maximizing their earnings and savings. Gordon is a REALTOR for Three Rivers Real Estate 601-303-SOLD. Gordon also has a business and marketing firm specializing in conceptual design, revenue growth, graphic design and event planning.

Gordon has been recognized as a Top 10 Business Woman in Mississippi and Top Entrepreneur from the Mississippi State Business Journal. Her most recent award is the 2020 Parent of the Year for Northwest Rankin Middle School and Rankin County School District Parent of the Year. Jill is married to Justin Gordon, and they have one teenager. The Gordon family lives in Rankin County and enjoys being part of IFC Soccer and spending time outdoors.



# ENRICH MS



JILL GORDON

## MISSION

Our mission is to provide a community supported Youth enrichment education program committed and dedicated to engaging and informing youth, parents, schools and community partners. Enrich MS is already making a substantial impact in our communities across the state towards prevention for a variety of issues affecting our youth today. We have a clear vision and specific strategies to greatly reduce vaping, educate on the dangers of substance abuse, suicide prevention, social media use, and a variety of youth related issues

### School Programs

Enrich MS has launched a program in Central MS for youth enrichment beginning with Vaping and cigarette use. We also continually expand by offering programs on social media use and suicide prevention. We have a Peer to Peer Leadership development programs for high school and middle school kids. Enrich MS covers the entire state utilizing the best technology possible.

### Parent Panels

Enrich MS hosts small group events throughout our communities and have a panel of experts lead discussions on these topics to provide answers and resources. We invite parents, youth and other community leaders to further our mission and provide evidence based quality information. Our community and business partners are featured and invited to these events as well.

Brandon

<https://enrichms.org/>

# JONATHAN GREEN



## Steps Coalition

Executive Director

[jgreen@stepscoalition.org](mailto:jgreen@stepscoalition.org)

Gulfport

Jonathan Green is the Executive Director of the Steps Coalition, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Gulfport, Mississippi. As such, he is responsible for managing development and ensuring the programs meet the requirements of its five operational pillars – Affordable Housing, Environmental Justice, Human Rights, Economic Justice and Preservation of Historical Communities – and cultivating the funding sources that ensure the organizations longevity. Jonathan's current initiatives include the development of a mixed-use housing development and the building of a community solar farm.

Jonathan has a broad-based, international finance background that includes Financial Planning & Analysis, Process Transformation, Technology Integration, Supply Chain Management, and significant experience working on a global basis for several category-leading, Fortune 500 organizations. He is recognized for his exceptional business intuition and laser-like focus on process improvement, cost containment, strategic alignment, and team development. His leadership has driven millions of dollars in operating expense reductions, product cost savings, EBITDA growth and working capital optimization for his employers and clients.

A native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Jonathan currently calls Biloxi, Mississippi home, but has lived in places as far flung as Dublin, Ireland and Johannesburg, South Africa and considers himself a citizen of the world.



# STEPS COALITION



JONATHAN GREEN

## MISSION

The mission of Steps is to build a democratic movement to create and support a healthy, just, and equitable Mississippi Gulf Coast.

## VISION

To ensure that local neighborhoods will be involved in decision-making processes that affect their lives and the future of their communities. Non-profits, faith-based, civic organizations, and all people who share Steps' vision working together for a healthy, just, and equitable Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Steps Coalition was formed in 2006 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Comprised of 20+ nonprofit organizations and community members, Steps convenes and provides space for the community to define and advocate for its priorities – to build capacity and leadership and provide a voice for the community – by facilitating communication, coordination, and collaboration among its members.

Core Values: Affordable housing, environmental justice, human rights, economic justice, and preservation of historical communities

Gulfport

[www.stepscoalition.org](http://www.stepscoalition.org)

# KI HARRIS

**Freedom Project Network**

Executive Director

[ki.harris@freedomprojectnetwork.org](mailto:ki.harris@freedomprojectnetwork.org)

Sunflower



Ki Harris began his career as an advocate for educational equity in 2014 as a middle school English teacher and football coach in Greenwood, Mississippi. From 2016-2018, he served as the Director of College Access and Experiential Learning at the Sunflower County Freedom Project - the Freedom Project Network's most senior program. In 2018, Ki returned to his hometown of Atlanta, and spent a few years working in nonprofit recruitment. In August of 2020, Ki returned to the Freedom Project family to take the helm of the Freedom Project Network - the umbrella organization that aims to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of all Freedom Project programs across the state of Mississippi.



# FREEDOM PROJECT NETWORK



KI HARRIS

## MISSION

The mission of the Freedom Project Network is to strengthen, fund, and unite our current Freedom Project sites, serving the communities of Sunflower County, Meridian, and Rosedale, Mississippi.

## VISION

We believe that a free democracy demands a challenging, relevant education that prepares all citizens to participate actively in society. Educational inequity in Mississippi undercuts our nation's ideals of equal opportunity. To address and help alleviate this inequality, the Freedom Project Network supports individual Freedom Project sites that provide educational enrichment, leadership development, and college preparation programming for youth in Mississippi.

The Freedom Project Network was formed to support the work being done at each Freedom Project site.

The Freedom Project Network is committed to:

- Building capacity for each Freedom Project site through coordinated fundraising and staff support.
- Encouraging and facilitating cooperation among Freedom Project Network affiliates.
- Strengthening the network with deliberate, thoughtful, and community-supported expansion.

Sunflower

<https://www.freedomprojectnetwork.org/>

# LAURA PAYNE

## Back Bay Mission

Development Coordinator  
[lpayne@thebackbaymission.org](mailto:lpayne@thebackbaymission.org)  
Biloxi



Laura D. Payne, a native of Biloxi, MS, is the Development Coordinator at Back Bay Mission. She is serving on the Biloxi Bay Area Chamber Board, served as the Lighthouse Business and Professional Women Co-Chair. Laura previously worked for the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, Inc. She has developed over 14 years of nonprofit knowledge and 30 years of management. She graduated from Leadership Gulf Coast 2014. She is a proud mother and grandmother.



# BACK BAY MISSION



LAURA PAYNE

## MISSION

Strengthening Neighborhoods, Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives

## VISION

Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly

Back Bay Mission works with the impoverished and homeless. We meet their emergency needs first and then work with them in meaningful ways to help them find their road to self-sustainability. Homeless Services: Homeless Outreach and Home At Last programs. Micah Day Center, where homeless can take showers, clothes laundered, mailing address, access computers, help retaining identification, and meet with caseworkers. Housing: Housing Rehabilitation Program and work to provide affordable and safe housing . Education and Advocacy: Mission Trips provides hands-on service learning. Bridges Out of Poverty teaches participants how to get and stay out of poverty with the assistance of a mentor for 2 years. Community Health Initiatives help people be good stewards of their health. Client Support Services: Emergency Assistance (utilities, prescriptions, ID) and a Client Choice Food Pantry. Veterans: Veterans Support Fund and Home Port that consists of 8 units to house previously homeless veterans.

Biloxi

[www.thebackbaymission.org](http://www.thebackbaymission.org)

# LAURA POLING



**Tishomingo County  
Community Coalition**  
Prevention Coordinator  
tc3laura@gmail.com  
**Tishomingo**

Laura is the Prevention Coordinator for the Tishomingo County Community Coalition (TC3). She has a Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Mississippi State University. She has worked in children's therapy, which included working hand-in-hand with families, school systems, and at times, CPS workers. Laura spent two years working with Northeast Mississippi Community College to assist individuals in obtaining their high school equivalency diplomas, and she has worked as an addictions therapist in both an inpatient setting and a prison setting.

As a Prevention Coordinator with TC3, her time is spent working with others in Tishomingo County to meet the needs of our community. A significant portion of her time is spent on projects related to Safe Have, a temporary homeless shelter, and drug prevention.

As a Prevention Coordinator and a resident of this county, it is Laura's goal to make Tishomingo County the absolute best that it can be!





# TISHOMINGO COUNTY COMMUNITY COALITION



LAURA POLING

## MISSION

The Coalition will join with all community partners to improve quality of life through collaborative planning, community action, and policy advocacy.

## VISION

Together We Can

The vision is to bring our whole community together to improve the overall quality of living in Tishomingo County.

The Coalition's goal is to meet the needs of the community and county as seen by residents who live there. During meetings, needs of the county were assessed, and the Coalition began making plans to meet those needs. The Coalition also works to raise awareness of resources within the community and build a collaboration of networks in order to use those resources to their fullest potential.

Tishomingo County  
[www.tc3coalition.org](http://www.tc3coalition.org)

# LAURETHA BELLINDER

## Bridge Builders Leadership Initiative

Executive Director  
[lbellinder@bbli.org](mailto:lbellinder@bbli.org)  
Pearl



Lauretha L. Bellinder has a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting from Dillard University, Master of Business Administration from Jackson State University, and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with an Emphasis in Mathematics from the University of Texas in Arlington. Lauretha is a certified teacher in Mathematics and Business Education. Lauretha served in the classroom for 9 years and continue to help students as the owner of B-Excellent Tutoring.

She worked as the Director of Membership Services at The Bridge Church for 2.5 years before being named Executive Director of Bridge Builders Leadership Initiative in January 2018. Lauretha is married to Attorney Thomas Bellinder and they have two children, Landon and Robbi. Lauretha is an active member of The Bridge Church and loves working in any capacity of serving the community, children and impacting the next generation. She is a community organizer and currently holds the position of secretary for The Bridge Church Board of Directors.



# BRIDGE BUILDERS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



LAURETHA BELLINDER

## MISSION

Bridge Builders Leadership Initiative is a faith-based, teen after school program for students in grades 6 – 12. The purpose of the program is to give students a safe and constructive after school atmosphere designed to promote positive change. The program seeks to go deeper than grades. The goal is to challenge students to look beyond academics and prepare for practical, life situations that happen inside as well as outside of the classroom.

## MOTTO

Building Great Character, Building Great Leaders

The specific objectives and purpose of this organization shall be:

- to build character and integrity.
- to improve relational, social, and communication skills.
- to encourage teamwork and sportsmanship.
- to develop a community service mentality.
- to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Pearl

[www.bbli.org](http://www.bbli.org)

# LORENA QUIROZ-LEWIS



## Immigrant Alliance for Justice and Equity

Founder & Executive Director  
[quiroz.lorena.katherine@gmail.com](mailto:quiroz.lorena.katherine@gmail.com)  
Jackson

Lorena is an organizer, activist, and public health professional with twenty years in public health, various leadership roles and grassroots organizing experience. In her role as an organizer for the Industrial Areas Foundation, she helps to build statewide power for the underserved populations of Mississippi. Prior to her role as an organizer and E.D. of IAJE, Lorena served for two years as Executive Director of L.A.B.A.Link, where she was responsible for helping restructure the board and grow the vision of the organization. Through these efforts she secured contracts with Health Connect One, a national birth equity organization, R.O.S.E. (Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere), and the MS State Department of Health through which she held the first statewide Language Access conference. As a result of the conference, she founded the MS Language Access Coalition with over twenty member and partner organizations, including MS Center for Justice, MS College, Milsaps, My Brothers' Keeper and UMMC.

Lorena worked at the Office of Health Disparities Elimination where she served as Latino Outreach Coordinator, and then Director of Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement. She is a Community Development Fellow for the Foundation for the Mid-South, has been part of the Language and Emergency response Cohort at the Praxis project, was a community fellow for the MSDH, as well as faculty for the Birth Equity Leadership Academy for Health Connect One. She is part of an interpreter cooperative and has been a doula for over ten years, a certified lactation consultant and trainer.

Lorena's heart is with the community; and her work on growing and nurturing relationships on the grassroots level between black and brown communities, as a means of healing justice, is at the core of her work. She immigrated from Ecuador to Harlem as a child. She has a Bachelor's in International Relations and Master's in Teaching. Lorena is



# IMMIGRANT ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE AND EQUITY



LORENA QUIROZ-LEWIS

## MISSION

To move our communities forward in achieving societal change, justice, dignity, safety and full inclusion while cultivating a movement through leadership development, community organizing, policy development, healing justice, and love and celebration of our varied cultures.

## VISION

- To develop a vision for immigrant justice that centers brown and black immigrants
- To develop framework, principles and values for immigrant justice
- To develop a structure for immigrant justice that centers brown and black immigrants
- To develop social, political, economic strategies of organizing, advocacy and policy work that centers dignity, humanity and cultural realities of brown and black people
- To develop capacity of local, state, regional and national allies and ally institutions to be sanctuaries, produce mindful resources, and be mindful resource generators

IAJE is an institution whose goal is to grow and build collective power among low wage workers and immigrant communities. Our purpose is To amplify the voices of marginalized, multi-racial, and immigrant communities by active participation in civic engagement in deconstructing barriers that perpetuate racial, xenophobic, socio-economical, and gender identity and sexuality disparities and oppression. Creating a Mississippi where every Mississippian is embraced as full members in every part of society.

Statewide

# REBECCA STEWART

**Domestic Abuse  
Family Shelter, Inc.**

**Executive Director**

**[Rebecca@domesticabusefs.org](mailto:Rebecca@domesticabusefs.org)**

**Laurel**



Becky Stewart serves as the Executive Director of the Domestic Abuse Family Shelter, Inc. of Laurel and Hattiesburg. DAFS serves victims of domestic violence across 11 counties in Southeast MS. Becky has served as the Executive Director for four years and previously served on the DAFS Board of Directors for 12 years.

Becky graduated from William Carey and MSU. She retired from the Jones County School District in 2015 after serving the last eleven years as an elementary administrator. Her time spent in education has allowed her to experience first-hand the joys of helping others succeed. Her passion for victims and their children is evidenced in the gains made by the agency the past four years.

Becky is very involved in her community. She has been a member of the Laurel Lions Club for 17 years and works with area civic clubs. Becky is married to Glen Stewart of Laurel. They have two sons, Austin and Rayce.

They have two daughters in law, Katie and Lauri, who are both educators. Her greatest joy is their five beautiful grandchildren Mae, Cal, John Luke, Rhett, and Davis. In her free time, she enjoys traveling across America and abroad, reading, and spending time with her grandchildren.



# DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SHELTER, INC.



REBECCA STEWART

## MISSION

The Domestic Abuse Family Shelter, Inc. is dedicated to breaking the cycle of abuse by maintaining a program with a broad base of services, community support, as well as local and state involvement.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of DAFS is to provide victims of domestic violence with the skills, tools, and understanding to make choices leading to violence-free living and to raise awareness of domestic violence in the community at large. We believe in the right of all persons to live without fear of abuse, oppression, or violence. We support respect and equality in relationships and believes that our services and programs should empower victims of domestic violence and prepare them to be self-sufficient.

The Domestic Abuse Family Shelter, Inc. is dedicated to breaking the cycle of abuse by maintaining a program with a broad base of services and community support as well as local and state involvement. DAFS' purpose is to provide victims of domestic violence with the skills, tools, and understanding to make choices leading to violence-free living and to raise awareness of domestic violence in the community at large. We strive to provide accessible, culturally relevant, domestic violence and trauma-informed services for primarily men, women and children exposed to family violence, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and elder abuse. Victims also include those undeserved and unserved populations consisting of LGBTQ, teens, undocumented immigrants, persons with Limited English Proficiency, Native Americans, as well as the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Laurel & Hattiesburg



# EMERGING LEADERS: FUNDRAISING EXECUTIVES



[alliancems.org](http://alliancems.org)

601.968.0061 ext. 117

[dave.miller@alliancems.org](mailto:dave.miller@alliancems.org)

[amanda@msbroadcasters.org](mailto:amanda@msbroadcasters.org)