



GLR WEEK 2021 JULY 26–30

Bright Spots and Silver Linings

A Virtual Gratitude Reception: CGLR Salutes Our Partners

A GLR Learning Tuesdays Session

July 26, 2021 | 3-4:30 pm ET/12-1:30 pm PT

Panelist Bios

Keynote: Suzanne McCormick, U.S. President

Suzanne McCormick was named U.S. President of United Way Worldwide (UWW) in June 2019. She is responsible for helping the 1,100 local United Ways across the U.S. trailblaze in the philanthropic space to build more resilient, inclusive and sustainable communities. That includes leading in equity, tackling community problems with innovative and systemic solutions, and driving the ongoing digital transformation.

Suzanne came to UWW from Tampa, Florida, where she spent five years as President and Chief Executive Officer for United Way Suncoast, one of Florida's largest United Ways. In that time, she cultivated growth, increased community impact and led a strategic plan to break the cycle of generational poverty. Having previously served as the former chair of the United Way Network Partnership Group and National Professional Council, she will continue to enable the teams to develop and leverage powerful philanthropy initiatives, such as Salesforce Philanthropy Cloud. She brings invaluable insights as immediate past chair of the United Ways of Florida that will lend to the ongoing collaboration with United Way State Associations.

Suzanne began her nonprofit leadership career at the International Center of New York and then as CEO for both the American Red Cross of Southern Maine and People's Regional Opportunity. She joined the United Way of Greater Portland in Maine, where she provided 13 years of leadership, including four as President and CEO.

Suzanne holds a B.A. in Political Science from Duke University and is an alumna of the Peace Corps, where she taught English in Thailand. She is the proud mother of two children: Jack, who serves in the U.S Army, and Fiona. Her husband of 25 years, Bill, is a physical therapist. McCormick enjoys running, being a "soccer mom" and spending time with her family and two Boston terriers, Finnegan and Olive.

STATE LEADERS

Delaware: Ken Livingston, Director, Get Delaware Reading, United Way of Delaware

Mr. Ken Livingston is the current Director for Get Delaware Reading with United Way of Delaware where his primary focus is addressing the issue in Wilmington where many children from its zip code within the 8 Promise Communities are identified as not reading proficiency

when exiting the third grade. Get Delaware Reading major areas of focus include school readiness, afterschool/summer learning, connected to Delaware Department of Education literacy plan, creating home libraries for students, increasing school attendance and school connectedness for students, and providing family engagement opportunities.

United Way of Delaware's mission is to maximize the community's resources to improve the quality of life for all Delawareans. By focusing on three key areas of Early Education, College and Career Readiness, and Financial Stability — the building blocks of a good life — we help individuals and families realize their greatest potential.

Ken's current goals and aspirations are:

- Build positive relationships with community, government, and school district leaders as well as early learning centers and community-based organizations to ensure the GDR and CGRL outcomes are informed by the community perspective, especially in the Eight Promise Communities
- Work with UWDE's leadership team to develop and implement a marketing plan for GDR and CRLR, which includes website design and effective use of social media outlets to educate and engage the community.
- Work to increase and grow in the area of personal development.

Since becoming the new director of Get Delaware Reading Ken is most proud of leading the United Way My Very Own Library initiative. Scholastic and the University of Chicago provide students attending 14 Delaware schools with free books to create their own home libraries. This school year My Very Library will provide over 70,000 brand new books to students from 7 school districts throughout 3 counties.

He received his BS degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice from Delaware State University and his MS Degree in Human Services from Springfield College.

In addition to working at United Way of Delaware, he is also employed at the Central Branch YMCA in the Membership Services Department. His passions include providing impactful programming to support parents and children.

One fun fact about Ken is he enjoys going to Cardio Kick Boxing and spending time his daughter. Ken is married to Janelle Livingston and they have 2 daughters.

[Pennsylvania: Jennifer Deemer, Vice President of Community Impact, United Way of Wyoming Valley](#)

Jennifer Deemer is the Vice President of Community Impact at United Way of Wyoming Valley, where she leads the organization's Impact agenda, developing and executing strategies that address childhood poverty in Wyoming Valley through education, financial stability, and health initiatives with a focus on ensuring grade level reading for all of Wyoming Valley's earliest learners.

Prior to joining United Way, Jennifer served for two decades in a grant and program management capacity at Highmark where she supported foundation and community relations programs and event sponsorships.

Currently, Jennifer is the Chair of the Luzerne County Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board; and is a member of the Luzerne County Youth Advisory Panel; SHINE Luzerne County Advisory Board; and is Vice Chair of the Disaster Recovery Coalition for Luzerne County.

As a native to Wyoming Valley, she is a proud graduate of King's College receiving her B.S. in Human Resources Management. She later earned her M.A. in Communications Arts from Marywood University. Jennifer is married with two elementary age children.

[Jill Pereira, Vice President, Education and Impact, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley](#)

Jill Pereira's background includes serving diverse populations throughout the Lehigh Valley. She has taken on increasing levels of leadership with the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley over the last twelve years and is currently responsible for overseeing a \$12.7 million annual investment into the areas of education, food access, healthy aging and emergency services to ensure achievement of the organization's goals in the community, including over \$1.4m annually to support a 28 school Community School network. Jill led the creation of the Lehigh Valley Reads – third grade reading campaign and continues to support its evolving focus and commitment to a thriving community through the advancement of literacy, diversity, equity and inclusion practices.

Jill was named one of Lehigh Valley Business Forty Under Forty recipients in 2015 and presented the national Community Schools Initiative Leadership Award in 2018.

[South Dakota: Kayla Klein, Black Hills Reads Director, United Way of the Black Hills](#)

Kayla Klein leads the Black Hills Reads initiative under the United Way umbrella, which is a Campaign for Grade Level Reading initiative. Kayla has always had a passion of early childhood education and has dedicated the last 15 years of her career to advancing the professionals that work with her and status of early childhood education in the state of South Dakota. Kayla graduated from Black Hills State University, holds a degree in Psychology and Human Services as well as a Child Development Associate. Kayla was also a 2016 Women in Leadership series graduate from Black Hills State University. Kayla opened and was CEO of Northern Hills Alliance for Children, Child Development Center for 8 years and in working with families and teachers discovered her passion of public policy and being a voice for early learning. When offered the Black Hills Reads Director position at United Way, Kayla saw this as an opportunity to continue this work in the field at a more impactful level. She has served on many boards including SDAEYC as Public Policy chair, NH CASA as President, Handley Recreation Center as President, and many other boards. This passion is only topped by her passion for her family, which includes her husband Matt Klein and two young and spunky boys Desmond and Lincoln. She will continue to volunteer and help promote the rural communities in the Black Hills and is honored to work with so many passionate individuals.

[Texas: Adrianna Cuéllar Rojas, President and CEO, United Ways of Texas](#)

Adrianna currently serves in the role of President and CEO of United Ways of Texas, the membership association for nearly 70 local United Way nonprofits in the state. Between 1997 and 2013, Adrianna worked with the Meadows Foundation, a Texas-based philanthropic

foundation, where she facilitated investments in nonprofit organizations, advanced strategic initiatives, and cultivated partnerships with philanthropy, business, government, and others. Prior to working in philanthropy, Adrianna worked in governmental relations for several state agencies including the Texas Youth Commission and the Texas Education Agency, as well as an interim legislative committee, the Texas Commission on Children and Youth. Adrianna is currently active in several United Way network organizations including serving in leadership for the Council of States and on the Board of Directors of the United Way Retirees Association.

Adrianna lives in Austin with her husband and their two sons, Joaquin and Pablo. She is active in their school and is on the Board of Directors for several nonprofits including Foundation Communities and RAISE Texas. Adrianna has a Master of Public Affairs from the LBJ School at the University of Texas at Austin and a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

Utah: Amy Ahrens Terpstra, Vice President of Collective Impact Partnerships, United Way of Salt Lake

Amy Ahrens Terpstra is the Vice President of Collective Impact Partnerships for United Way of Salt Lake. She leads the talented team working to cultivate partnerships capable of creating lasting social change in schools, neighborhoods, and across the region. Amy joined the UWSL team in 2016 and focused on building cross-sector, regional collaborative action networks that align programs, engage in continuous improvement, and change systems in order to improve specific, measurable outcomes.

For 11 years prior to that, Amy led research and evaluation work at the Chicago-based Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights. There she managed a diverse portfolio of applied research studies with people who were experiencing poverty and intense hardship and trauma. For over a decade she researched and wrote Heartland Alliance's flagship publication, the annual Report on Illinois Poverty, which informed the work of thousands of providers, advocates, and decisionmakers in the state.

Amy holds a bachelors degree in social work from Trinity Christian College and a masters degree in social work from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Virginia: Dr. Susan Patrick, Director of Childhood Success, United Way of Southwest Virginia

Dr. Susan Patrick is a Southwest Virginia native with over 25 years experience working in the field of early care and education as a classroom teacher, an administrator, a teacher trainer, and a university professor in national and international settings. As the Director of Childhood Success for United Way of Southwest Virginia, Dr. Patrick leads a team of professionals dedicated to supporting the health and well being of Southwest Virginia's youngest citizens. The guiding principle of her work is that relationships are foundational to learning and growth for children, adults, and the community as a whole. All this is accomplished by backboning a number of initiatives, including, Smart Beginnings, VQ B5 (formerly the Virginia Quality Initiative and Preschool Development Grant Birth-5), the Developmental Screening Initiative, the Infant Toddler Specialist Network, and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

ATTENDANCE WORKS

Hedy Chang, Executive Director, Attendance Works

Hedy Nai-Lin Chang directs Attendance Works, a national and state level initiative aimed at advancing student success by addressing chronic absence. A skilled presenter, facilitator, researcher and writer, she co-authored the seminal report, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, as well as numerous other articles about student attendance. Deeply committed to promoting two-generation solutions to achieving a more just and equitable society, Hedy has spent more than two decades working in the fields of family support, family economic success, education and child development. She served as a senior program officer at the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund and as co-director of California Tomorrow, a nonprofit committed to drawing strength from cultural, linguistic and racial diversity. In February 2013, Hedy was named by the White House as a Champion of Change for her commitment to furthering African American Education.

Dawn Gerundo, Community Development and Engagement Director, Valley of the Sun United Way

Dawn Gerundo received Bachelors of Liberal Studies in Early Childhood Education and Business Management from Charter Oaks State College. She has 34 years of experience working in education and has been working as a Community Impact Director for Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW). She is a strong advocate for education, with a passion for early childhood. Dawn is involved in working on breaking the cycle of poverty for children and families in Maricopa County. Her professional interests focus on school readiness, early literacy, and community/family engagement. Her current projects include facilitating Read On Avondale, serving on the executive committee for Read On Phoenix and leading early grade and school readiness initiatives for VSUW. She oversees all the VSUW funding partnerships through grants and contracts for children. In addition, she serves as an advisory board member for Catholic Charities Westside Head Start program and has served on the Arizona State Board of Education K-3 Literacy Ad Hoc.

Tricia Johnson, Director of Education Initiatives United Way of Greater Kansas City

Tricia has taught middle school in Chicago and internationally. She earned her master's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University, and worked in Indonesia in support of post-tsunami development before moving to Kansas City in 2009. Tricia founded the nonprofit, Show Me KC Schools, in 2013 to help parents find the right information and a right school for their child in Kansas City. In 2020, Tricia joined United Way of Greater Kansas City as the Director of Education Initiatives.

Vision To Learn

Corrine Kroger is the Regional Director of Vision To Learn- Iowa. With a Masters in Public Administration, she began her career working within Illinois Park Districts where she developed and administered recreation programs for youth in the Chicagoland area. Corrine

served as Superintendent for multiple districts focusing on process improvement and efficiencies before taking on a consultant role as a Senior Planner working with government agencies to develop strategic and master plans for their communities. When Kroger moved to Iowa with her husband and four children, she began working with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque where she was instrumental in launching local Campaign for Grade Level Reading Initiatives in two rural communities. Corrine brought her expertise and passion to Vision To Learn when she joined in 2016. Inspired by her own vision health history, she recognized the importance and need for accessible vision care in her own community. She is passionate about systems change and recognizes the power that true community has to enact meaningful and lasting change. Since launching Vision To Learn in Iowa in 2016, more than 9,500 students in 13 counties have received vision care services throughout Iowa.

Kate Bennett, Community Impact Officer, Education, United Way of Central Iowa

Kate Bennett began her career at United Way of Central Iowa in 2002 as the Executive Director for Polk County Early Childhood Iowa. In that position, Kate worked to create a collaborative system for government and local nonprofits to support at-risk children ages 0-8 and their families. The outcome of that work was a much more collaborative system and higher quality early childhood services in central Iowa.

Starting in 2012, Kate has served as the Community Impact Officer-Education. She spearheaded the 2020 goals to raise the graduation rate for the three-county area from 83.4% in 2008 to 93.6% in 2019. This increase of 10.2% means 6,300 more students have graduated than would have if the graduation rate had stayed at the 2008 level.

For the last two years, Kate has been a part of the team who created the United to Thrive framework which UWCI officially launched in May 2021. This framework maintains a strong education focus while looking through an equity lens and COVID recovery. Kate is the staff lead for two volunteer cabinets who guide this work: Early Childhood Success and Education Success. Kate is looking forward to this next exciting chapter in central Iowa.

Kate lives in Des Moines with her husband, Blair, daughter Natalie, 18, and son Walker, 17. All four are proud DMPS alums and students. They thoroughly enjoy their time with their 2 dogs, Fitz & Stella.

Doug Linkhart, President, National Civic League

At the National Civic League, Doug Linkhart's life-long values of inclusiveness and equity are in close alignment with the organization's mission, and are used to guide his leadership as President. He is an expert in civic engagement, and works to connect residents, government, nonprofits and business. His vision and strategic planning efforts include a focus on collaboration with other key organizations focused on advancement and nurturing of inclusive communities.

Doug brings over 40 years of experience in the public policy arena, including 18 years as an elected official, including eight years as a Denver City Councilman and ten years as a Colorado State Representative and Senator. Doug started his career by managing local campaigns, then worked in the federal government as a Presidential Management Intern. He later ran his own consulting business, spending his free time as a newspaper columnist and neighborhood

and political activist. He founded a nonprofit organization to serve neighborhood associations and their residents, which he directed for ten years. After running for Mayor of Denver in 2011, he was appointed by the winning candidate as the Executive Director of Denver's Department of Environmental Health, a 300-person agency which he managed for four years.

Becky Miles-Polka, Senior Consultant, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

As founder and President of Within Reach Consulting Services, Becky Miles-Polka serves as a trusted advisor to non-profit leaders, funders, public and private sector leaders engaged in improving the well-being of communities and the people who live in them. She brings experience in community change, population health and maternal-child health.

Becky is a Senior Consultant to the Campaign for Grade Level Reading serving as the State Lead for Iowa and a Senior Fellow with Attendance Works. Becky is also a HealthConnect Policy Fellow with the Mid-Iowa Health Foundation

Becky is a Registered Nurse, Certified Nurse Midwife and Registered Yoga teacher.