

## Endless Possibilities Conference 2023 – Guiding Families through Challenging Times

### CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

**Dr. Ricardo Anderson** is a native from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and has over 20 years of professional experience in education, leadership, higher education, and as a school administrator. He obtained his undergraduate degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, his first Masters of Science Degree from Springfield College in Organizational Management and Leadership, his second Masters of Science Degree in Educational Leadership as a District Administrator and Superintendent Licensures from Cardinal Stritch University as well as his Doctorate in Leadership for the Advancement of Learning and Service.

Dr. Anderson is currently a mental health regional recovery support specialist and an online instructor, a former program coordinator for Recovery Corps, and former academic coordinator for various colleges and universities. For the past 14 years, Dr. Anderson has worked for human service agencies as well as a supervisor/case manager at a mental health organization. Dr. Anderson obtained his Certified Recovery Support Specialist credential (CRSS), Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Facilitator credential as well as the Whole Action Management Health (WHAM) Facilitator credential to help facilitate recovery groups for individuals and for himself.

Dr. Anderson has presented Race Based Trauma in the Community for the States of Illinois and Wisconsin, serves as a panelist and speaker for mental health recovery trainings, serves on board for NAMI of Illinois the Alliance of Peer Professionals (NIAPP), and serves at the chair of the Executive Board for WISE to eliminate stigma of mental health. Dr. Anderson is a published international author, a blogger for mental health and recovery, and is an advocate for underserved populations to obtain equity in mental health, education, and wellness. Dr. Anderson enjoys collaborating with colleagues from all disciplines and is a life-long learner.

**Amanda Dawabsheh** began her journey working with refugees as a 22-year-old moving to Cairo, Egypt to work at a Sudanese school, teaching English as a Foreign Language. Since then, she has accumulated a total of over 10 years teaching ESL and over 9 years working with refugees. She has a BA in English Language Learner Studies and TEFL certification. She currently works in Milwaukee Public Schools as the Parent Coordinator at U.S. Grant School, a K4-8th grade school on Milwaukee's south side. Grant School has a 44% refugee population.

**Amy Maciolek** is the Multilingual Learners and Title III Consultant on Literacy and Mathematics at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and has been with the team since June of 2020. In her role, she provides leadership to stakeholders in working with Multilingual Learners. She works specifically in support of federal funding pertaining to Title III and facilitates the Immigrant Children and Youth Grant. Additional responsibilities include the ESEA consolidated monitoring process, leadership for title III consortia, EL program evaluation, legal requirements and compliance, English Language Development Standards implementation, and Effective Instructional practices for serving English Learners.

**Pam Malin** has been providing support, advocacy, and education to sexual assault victims with disabilities and their families for over 30 years. Pam is committed to providing information and education about boundaries, healthy relationships, self-esteem, and safety to individuals with disabilities, parents, guardians, and disability professionals. She has worked collaboratively with Multi-Disciplinary Teams over the years, including prosecutors, victim witness, investigators, forensic interviewers, first responders, and community advocates to ensure that victims of sexual abuse have

access to the support and advocacy needed. She is passionate about advocating for people with disabilities to have access to safe, full, and meaningful lives.

**Tim Markle** is the founder and director of Forgiveness Factor. Forgiveness Factor exists to promote forgiveness as a way to live mentally well. Tim teaches classes, workshops, seminars and speaks about forgiveness, suicide prevention, and addiction recovery in Wisconsin and nationally. He also works at the Waisman Center at UW-Madison with the Southern Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs.

**Myra McNair** sees potential and possibility wherever she looks. As founder and owner, Myra is the visionary behind Anesis Therapy. With a desire to bring more culturally sensitive mental health services to Dane County, she started the clinic in 2016 as the only therapist and has collaboratively transformed it into a practice of over 50 staff members.

Myra's vision is not only reserved for her business—it is central to what drives her success as a therapist. When Myra meets clients, she doesn't see deficits or weakness or pathology; along with their pain, she sees their strengths, their inherent wisdom— both generational and individual—, and their potential. This way of envisioning her clients is rooted, curiously, in honoring the past. Myra holds dearly the West African Adinkra symbol of Sankofa, the bird with one foot planted firmly in the present, one foot stepping forward, and whose neck is looking back to the past. Sankofa, a Twi word which translates to “go back and get it,” teaches us that to move forward with a strong future, we must honor the lessons of the past—taking what is good and bringing it into the present moment.

As a therapist Myra works with her clients to better understand their past. This then allows them to shape their present, and to pass the seeds of understanding and healing on to the next generation.

Building and training the next generation of mental health workers is another one of Myra's passions. Along with providing a robust clinical internship program at Anesis, Myra is an Adjunct Professor for the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at her alma mater, Edgewood College, and is a consultant and mentor in the UW Infant Mental Health Program from which she also graduated. Myra is the community coordinator of the Raising Safe Families Together program, where she trains community workers and agencies in the Adults and Children Together (ACT) curriculum.

Myra utilizes a variety of therapy modalities to meet her clients' needs. While her clinical outlook is largely rooted in psychoanalytic and narrative therapies, Myra also utilizes Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, Hypnotherapy, Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and Brainspotting.

Myra has received numerous awards for her fierce service and leadership in the field of mental health. She received the NAMI Dane County 2020 Mental Health Trailblazer award, the Black Chamber of Commerce 2020 Eagle Award, and the Wisconsin Alliance on Infant Mental Health Spirit Award. In 2022, Myra was named one of Brava Magazine's “Women 2 Watch.” She was recognized in Business Magazine's “40 under 40”, and as a Health Innovator in the 2017 “M List.”

**Dr. Amy Nelson Christensen** is a Clinical Assistant Professor of School Psychology in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago and the Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Institutional Change in the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Prior to joining the faculty at Loyola, Dr. Nelson Christensen served as a practicing school psychologist for Milwaukee Public Schools, serving mainly in an alternative high school setting where she

championed efforts to create trauma sensitive school spaces throughout the district. She also worked to develop and lead professional development on social emotional learning with schools throughout the district. Her work in the schools earned her recognition as School Psychologist of the Year in the state of Wisconsin for 2015 and an Excellence in Education Award from the Milwaukee Board of School Directors. Dr. Nelson Christensen's support in establishing trauma sensitive practices in the schools also led to the award of a 5 year multi-million-dollar grant from the federal government to establish systems for school-based mental health supports in the most violent school neighborhoods throughout the city of Milwaukee. Shortly afterwards, Dr. Nelson Christensen moved on to become an educational researcher for Milwaukee Public Schools where she used research to continue to push for systemic change to support the social emotional learning needs of children throughout the district. As a researcher, she facilitated projects focused on implementing systems of support for district-wide implementation of social emotional learning curriculum, building teacher-student relationships, restorative practices, culturally responsive practices, and a framework for school improvement focused on school culture and climate. Dr. Nelson Christensen was also part of the steering committee that established the Department for Black and Latino Male Achievement in the district, focused on using research and evidence-based practice to improve the conditions and systemic structures for meeting the social-emotional needs of Black and Latino male youth in the district.

Dr. Nelson Christensen obtained her Masters of Arts degree in Educational Psychology (2007) and her Doctorate of Philosophy in Urban Education with a specialization in School Psychology (2014) from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is a licensed school psychologist in the state of Wisconsin and a Nationally Certified School Psychologist in the United States. Currently, she teaches courses in social justice for school psychologists, legal issues in special education law, and systems change and consultation.

**Troney Small** was born and raised in the city of Milwaukee. He is a Peer Support Specialist and currently works as a Family Navigator for the Next Step Clinic in Milwaukee, supporting families and children with developmental and mental health challenges. His work has opened hesitant people up to addressing their own concerns or those of their children or other loved ones. He is a council member for the Coalition for Children's Mental Health and a Community Stakeholder on the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board Advisory Council. Troney was the recipient of the 2021 Marie C. Perry: Rising Leader Award, established to honor Marie's memory. This award recognizes the visionary leadership by an individual who is a rising leader in the Milwaukee area mental health community.

Troney spent years working as a case manager with the Milwaukee Health Department's Direct Assistance for Dads Project before taking the role as a Family Navigator. The focus of the project was to assist expecting fathers and fathers with kids between 0 to 2 and their engagement with children. The program promoted healthy birth outcomes and child development, with hopes to reduce infant mortality. Through this work, Troney gained extensive exposure to child development tools and assessments that broadened his community resources and networks.

Troney has been an advocate for individuals and families facing mental health challenges for over a decade. Performing in the production written by Brenda Wesley titled "Pieces in My Own Voice" is one of the ways he has done so. Troney is one of eight performers in the play that illustrates the darkness of stigma for people living with mental health challenges, but it also delivers a message of hope and recovery. "It is much more than just a show, it has been lifesaving for people like me over the years. I feel blessed to be a part of a team that is constantly striving to help individuals and families strengthen their abilities to overcome barriers in their lives, boost their self-esteem and spread the message that hope, and recovery is real."

**Libby Strunz** is a School Mental Health Consultant for the Department of Public Instruction. She earned a bachelor's degree in English Education from UW – La Crosse in 2010 and a master's degree in School Counseling from Winona State University in 2016. Libby began her career in public education as a high school English teacher and later transitioned to being a middle school counselor. As a school counselor, her leadership roles included trauma sensitive schools, equity, social-emotional learning, academic and career planning, and school-based mental health services. She is a certified Trauma Sensitive Schools Trainer and Nurtured Heart Approach Advanced Trainer. As a member of DPI's Student Services/Prevention and Wellness Team, she provides training and technical assistance in the areas of comprehensive school mental health systems, bullying prevention, and trauma sensitive schools.