

## The Voices for Healthy Kids Summit 2025

### PRESENTER/SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



American Heart Association



Wednesday , September 10, 2025

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#### WELCOME AND EVENT KICKOFF

**Lori Fresina, Executive Director and Vice-President, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**



Lori Fresina is the Vice President and Executive Director of Voices for Healthy Kids, American Heart Association. Through her leadership, direction and dedication, Lori has made a significant contribution to making communities healthier and more equitable through effective public policy.

As co-creator of the Power Prism® advocacy framework, Lori's expertise includes campaign planning, equitable coalition practices, community mobilization, training, grassroots development, and media advocacy.

Before joining the American Heart Association in March 2019, Lori had long stints in public interest advocacy as senior vice president and New England office director for M+R Strategic Services, Northeast Regional Advocacy Director for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and a variety of roles with American Cancer Society.

Lori received a bachelor's degree in communications from Emerson College and a master's degree in public policy and citizen participation from Tufts University.

#### WHAT'S IN YOUR BASKET?

**Peng Her, CEO, [The Hmong Institute, Inc](#)**



Peng Her has over 20 years of community development experience working with elected officials, residents, businesses, and service providers. As a cultural broker, Peng has worked with City of Madison Police Department, educational institutions such as Edgewood College, law firms such as Quarles and Brady, and numerous nonprofits. He helped develop the Hmong language and culture enrichment program that teaches Hmong students to read, write, speak in Hmong and about their history, heritage, and culture. The Hmong Language and Culture Enrichment program received the 2021 National Education Association Award for their work.

Peng helped establish the Hmong American Studies program at UW Madison and was a founding board member of the Hmong Chamber of Wisconsin. Peng was the recipient of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Humanitarian Award in 2015 for his work to better his community. He currently sits on the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Committee and the Board for Access Community Health Centers.

In addition to his community work, Peng is a proud father of three and can be found spending time outdoors camping, fishing, canoeing, or hiking in the woods. He can also be found in the kitchen cooking for friends and family members.

**Ben Schmauss, National Senior Advocacy Consultant, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**



Benjamin Schmauss MPH, M.S., is our National Senior Advocacy Consultant for Voices for Healthy Kids. Ben earned his undergraduate and Masters of Public Health Degree's from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and also has a Master's Degree in Teaching and Learning, specializing in Brain Research from Nova South Eastern University. Ben is an avid learner and teacher with a growth mindset.

Ben Schmauss is a dedicated husband, father and advocate who brings heart, humor, and purpose to everything he does.

## CARRYING HISTORY: 50 YEARS OF THE HMONG EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

**Lee Pao Xiong, Founding Director, [Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University](#)**



Lee Pao Xiong is the founding Director of the Center for Hmong and East Asian Studies at Concordia University, St. Paul—the first such center in the world. A refugee from Laos, he brings over 30 years of experience in public policy, higher education, and community development.

Xiong has served in leadership roles at the City of Minneapolis, The Urban Coalition, and several Asian American organizations. He was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and by Governor Jesse Ventura to the Metropolitan Council.

He has organized international conferences, curated cultural exhibits, and co-founded key community institutions. His work has earned him numerous awards and national fellowships. Xiong holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, an M.A. in Public Administration from Hamline University, and is ABD in his doctoral studies.

## CENTERING COMMUNITY IN POLICY MAKING

**Juan Luis Rivera Reyes, Coalition Organizer for Equity in Place, [The Alliance](#)**



Juan Luis Rivera-Reyes joined the Alliance staff in August 2022. He will be the coalition organizer for Equity in Place.

Juan Luis (he/him) grew up in many neighborhoods throughout St. Paul and has had the opportunity to call Los Angeles and Phoenix home, as well. Having the opportunity to live and learn in so many diverse neighborhoods, he learned the importance of having a community and being committed to your community.

In his work he makes it a point to establish real relationships with individuals, amplify their stories, needs, and humanity. Life is complicated enough; low-wealth, BIPOC, queer, immigrant, disabled, and working people should not have to constantly fight systems of exploitation and oppression in their daily lives.

**Nicole Donoso, Policy & Democracy Organizer, [Voices for Racial Justice](#)**



Nicole Donoso (she/ella) wakes up each day with the intention of building a society where human dignity and social justice are the norm. Born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia, she later moved to Minnesota, where she earned a degree in Global Studies with a concentration in Human Rights and Justice in Latin America from the University of Minnesota. In 2018, Nicole received the Inna K. Meiman Human Rights Award from the Human Rights Program.

She is deeply rooted in her community as an organizer for the Colombian diaspora in Minnesota and also enjoys storytelling as a documentary producer. Nicole credits her mother as her greatest hero and admits that Oreo ice cream is her biggest weakness. A feminist and soccer player, she thrives in collective spaces that reimagine what collective liberation can look like.

Currently, she serves as a Policy Organizer at Voices for Racial Justice, where she works to advance racial equity and community-centered policy change.

## FINDING COMMONALITIES AND SOLUTIONS WITH DECISION-MAKERS

**Allyson Frazier, National Senior Director, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**



Allyson has worked in public affairs for more than 25 years and has kept her sense of humor and belief in government for and by the people. For two decades with the American Heart Association, she has been responsible for planning and implementing advocacy campaigns on the state, regional and local levels. Prior to joining the American Heart Association, Allyson was the campaign manager of Clean Air Works, the successful campaign that made Boston one of the first major cities to go smoke-free and ultimately paved the way for a smoke-free state law. She supported the passage, implementation and monitoring of public health laws and regulations. Allyson credits this experience as providing her an excellent understanding of the process of implementing changes once a bill becomes a law.

Allyson earned a master's degree in social work from Arizona State University, specializing in community-based strategies and a bachelor's degree from American University in international studies. She is currently in a Master of Arts program in organizational management.

**Laura Coleman, Media Relations Manager, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**



Laura Coleman is the Advocacy Media Relations Manager for Voices for Healthy Kids. She helps shift the focus from the personal to the social across different advocacy campaigns throughout the nation at Voices for Healthy Kids, as her day to day is to oversee communications to the mass media, including preparing articles, press toolkits, press releases, and any other content initiatives. She also guides and supports grantees on how to strategically cultivate and manage relationships with media representatives in order to advance public policy initiatives.

Before joining the American Heart Association, she emphasized the intersection of media and public affairs, as well as the rapid digital transformation of media industries by managing media efforts for the Louisiana Association for Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU) which is a statewide nonprofit association who represents Louisiana's 10 regionally accredited nonprofit private colleges and universities.

Laura holds a Master's in Strategic Communications with an emphasis on Public Relations from Louisiana State University. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communications with a minor in Speech from Jackson State University.

While she is always working to support public policy change through media, in her free time Laura loves spending time with her family, participating in community service and sisterly relations events with her sorority sisters, going to the gym, fashion, traveling, and trying new foods. Quick! Send her an email of a new restaurant she should try.

**Lori Poag, Associate Marketing Communications Manager, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**



Lori Poag is the Associate Marketing and Communications Manager for Voices for Healthy Kids. In her role, she manages the organization's social media presence, creating and scheduling content, collaborating with partners on campaigns, and designing eye-catching graphics that bring advocacy to life. She works to engage diverse audiences and inspire action through creative, strategic storytelling.

Lori joined Voices for Healthy Kids from the American Heart Association's National Marketing Communications team, where she focused on online newsroom operations, writing and distributing scientific journal and news releases, managing the @HeartNews Twitter account, and supporting digital content and multimedia production.

Before that, she served as the Public Information Officer for the Guilford County Sheriff's Office in North Carolina, where she managed media relations, crafted speeches and press releases, hosted news conferences, and developed social media content to engage the community. She also spent a decade as the Marketing Manager at the First Horizon Coliseum in North Carolina, one of the largest arenas on the East Coast, promoting entertainment events ranging from Prince and Beyoncé to Disney On Ice and Cirque du Soleil, designing marketing materials, managing VIP events, and creating daily content for the venue's social media platforms.

Lori graduated magna cum laude with a BA in Mass Communications and Advertising and a minor in Marketing and Public Relations from Winston-Salem State University. She lives in North Carolina with her husband, son, and daughter. Outside of work, Lori enjoys traveling, attending concerts, visiting museums, and spending time with her family—preferably somewhere with good food and great music. Lori has a deep passion for working with children, which she channels in part through co-owning a children's party venue with her husband. Together, they create joyful, memorable experiences that foster fun, creativity, and community connection for families.

**Terra Hall, Senior Marketing Communications Manager, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**



Terra Hall is the Senior Marketing Communications Manager for Voices for Healthy Kids and the National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers (NCIT). She leads marketing and communications strategy across advocacy campaigns nationwide. She works closely with grantees and partners, offering technical assistance, training and strategic guidance to help them build strong relationships with journalists to move public policy forward.

With nearly two decades of communications experience, Terra brings a perspective shaped by her early career in journalism. She worked as a broadcast journalist for CNN, as well as NBC, CBS, and FOX affiliates from New York City to Los Angeles. She also reported internationally from Lima, Peru, covering politics and travel.

Terra earned her M.S. degree in journalism from Columbia University and holds dual B.A. degrees in Mass Communications and International Affairs, with a minor in Spanish Language and Literature.

When she's not working to advance public policy, Terra loves traveling the world with her family – including her parents, husband, and son – chasing new adventures as an adrenaline junkie, volunteering in her community, and spending time with her two cats, Chifa and Noodle.

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## **STORIES OF RESILIENCE THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS**

***Tou Saiko Lee, Public Speaker, Hip Hop Artist, Storyteller and Spoken Word Poet from St. Paul***



Tou SaiKo Lee, a Public Speaker, Hip Hop Artist, Storyteller, and Spoken Word Poet from St. Paul, Minnesota, is known for his intergenerational collaboration with his late grandmother, Youa Chang, who practices the traditional art of Hmong Poetry Chanting. He founded Street Stops and Mountain Tops, an organization that connects teaching artists and organizers from the U.S. to work with Hmong students in villages and orphanages in Southeast Asia. Lee received the Bush Foundation Leadership Fellowship in 2016 to research the Hmong diaspora in Vietnam, Australia, China, and Thailand, focusing on how Hmong communities use traditional arts to preserve culture. He was selected as a speaker by TEDx Minneapolis in 2021 and co-featured in Justin Schell's international Hip Hop documentary, "We Rock Long Distance," alongside artists Maria Isa and M.anifest. Lee's TEDx Talk, titled "Reclaiming cultural identity and language through hip hop," is available on YouTube.

## **FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION: TURNING DAY ONE INSIGHTS INTO DAY TWO IMPACT**

***Shelby Pierce, Facilitator, Pierce Porter Facilitation***



Shelby Pierce, owner of Pierce Porter Facilitation, is a Technology of Participation (ToP) Facilitator and Trainer. She helps groups and organizations create meaningful and productive plans for the future. Before becoming a full-time facilitator, she had 10 years of experience in the financial services and healthcare sectors. In addition to this work she is an active community volunteer and has served in leadership on several local and national nonprofit boards.

She is passionate about supporting groups and organizations to move forward in life and community as we all continue to adapt and forge paths in this unique time. Since the start of the worldwide pandemic, she has worked with over 75 groups, ranging from local community initiatives and nonprofits, to nationwide groups including healthcare, city governments, Collaboratives, education and training groups specializing in international student recruitment. Most recently, she has worked extensively with the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers as they build a movement to ensure our youngest children and their families have what they need to thrive.

## **SHIELDING YOUR MISSION: LEGAL STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S NONPROFIT CHALLENGES**

***Allen Mattison, Lawyer, [Trister, Ross, Schadler & Gold](#)***



Allen Mattison helps nonprofit organizations to mitigate legal risks while maximizing their ability to advocate effectively for their public-policy missions. He helps nonprofit leaders succeed in all phases of their organizations' lives. For nonprofit leaders who want to influence elections or pass new laws, he explains the available options and works with them to tailor their tactics to the relevant federal or state lobbying and campaign-finance regime.

For grant-funded section 501(c)(3) organizations, Allen teaches managers the line between educational and lobbying activities, so they can stretch their non-lobbying funds strategically to maximize their advocacy impact – saving scarce lobbying dollars for when they will have the biggest bang for the buck.



## POWER IN PARTNERSHIP: ENGAGING NONTRADITIONAL ALLIES IN POLICY CHANGE

### Brenda Bandy, Executive Director, [Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition](#)



Brenda Bandy is the Executive Director of the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, where she oversees the KBC's programs, which include work with employers, child care providers, families, public health, hospitals, and community organizations. Brenda is an appointed member of the Kansas Maternal Child Health Council and the Early Childhood Recommendation Panel. She has been an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) since 2010. She is an active member and a former Board member of the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee. She has a passion for bringing people together to remove barriers to breastfeeding and to improve policies as far "upstream" as possible so that families can thrive. She is a mother to four adult children, and in her spare time, she reads and does puzzles while waiting for her children to text back.

### Cordel Bostic, Communication & Legislative Policy Coordinator, [West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition](#)



Cordel Bostic serves as the Communications and Legislative Policy Coordinator for the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition. In this role, he travels the state engaging in grassroots and coalition building, working directly with farmers to ensure legislation supports their initiatives and strengthens agribusiness in West Virginia. He also collaborates with state officials to shape policies that work for, rather than against, food insecure communities.

Cordel is passionate about connecting the food we eat to the farms and people who provide it, and believes that strong local farms are the foundation of food security. When he's not advocating for West Virginia's farmers, you can often find him on the pickleball courts advocating for fair calls and fewer unforced errors.

### Danielle Patterson, National Senior Advocacy Consultant, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)



Danielle Patterson is a proud long term AHA employee, Danielle began her career at the AHA as a Government Relations Director in Indiana before becoming a Regional Lead, directing Michigan and Missouri in addition to her work lobbying at Indiana's capitol. Danielle's successful work in Indiana included better nutritional standards in schools, AED placement at fitness centers, CPR training in schools, Complete Streets in Evansville and Indianapolis; CPR requirements for 911 operators, maternal post-partum extension for Medicaid recipients, Self-Measured Blood Pressure policy for Medicaid recipients and numerous other community policies.

Prior to Danielle's tenure at Heart, she managed a team of five at the Indiana's Office of Minority Health. In this role, Danielle managed a \$3M state program, secured funding from the US Department of HHS for the HIV/AIDS demonstration program which awarded mini-grants to churches and community organizations to develop HIV/AIDS Awareness programs. Danielle also secured funding from HHS for a State Partnership Project which included \$40k to help local health departments meet the needs of the Latinx community. Danielle co-authored the 2001 Indiana Minority Health Report and the Healthy Indiana Minority Health Plan.

Danielle's early career included Director of Marketing and Minority Affairs Information Specialist for the Indiana State Department of Health. Danielle also served in an elected official's office as Press Secretary for the Mayor of Gary, Indiana.

### Katie Bishop-Kendrick, National Senior Advocacy Consultant, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)



Katie Bishop Kendrick, MS, MPH, is the senior national advocacy consultant on the Voices for Healthy Kids team at the American Heart Association. Katie's passion in public health and her expertise is nutrition policy, with more than 15 years' experience, have helped to drive policy change the national, state, and local levels to improve people's ability to live a healthy life.

At Voices for Healthy Kids, Katie works with state and community campaigns focused on improving access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), establishing or expanding SNAP incentive programs, and funding produce prescription programs.

In previous roles at the Association, Katie has led development of key policy statements with national experts in nutrition and air quality. She also supported state and local campaigns to pass sugary drink taxes, healthy kids' meals in restaurants, early care and education requirements, as well as physical activity policy change.

Prior to joining the American Heart Association, Katie focused on food service guidelines and improving school foods at the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Earlier in her career, she served as an aide and legislative director for a Massachusetts state representative.

Katie holds two master's degrees, in nutrition and public health, from Tufts University and bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Rhode Island. Katie resides in western Massachusetts with her husband, two small children, and three-legged cat Felix. She enjoys getting outside with her kids and is learning firsthand the joys and struggles of starting kids off with healthy foods when they are young.

## **CASE STUDIES FROM PEERS: BUILDING STRONG COALITIONS USING INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO MAKE PROGRESS**

### **Carmen Ervin, Impact Program Manager, [Georgians for a Healthy Future](#)**



Carmen joins Georgians for a Healthy Future as the Impact Program Manager in the Impact Department. She brings extensive experience in supporting homeless youth, veterans, and underserved communities.

Carmen's commitment to these communities is rooted in her firm belief that change is always possible. She is passionate about creating opportunities and resources for those in need. Throughout her career, she has honed her skills in managing grants and developing impactful resources. Carmen has a strong background in coordinating events that drive positive outcomes and is focused on creating lasting change.

### **Carrie Feit, Senior Attorney, [Community Justice Project](#)**



Carrie comes from an extensive litigation career in which she zealously represented her clients in their disability claims against insurance companies. A founding board member of Women's March Florida in 2016, Carrie's activism led to her commitment to movement and powered systems and policy change. In 2023, she found her way to the Community Justice Project (CJP), where she helped build a county-funded Eviction Diversion Program in which CJP partners with Miami Workers Center and Legal Services of Greater Miami (LSGMI) to prevent the displacement of our neighbors through education of the eviction process and representation in court.

Carrie has led the direct representation of more than 100 tenants facing eviction, most of whom were able to remain housed or successfully transition to other housing, and all of whom were able to navigate the eviction process with dignity. For the last year and a half, Carrie and her LSGMI co-counsel have been litigating the attempted closure of a mobile home park in which they have prevented displacement of approximately 90 households.

Carrie is also involved in legislative efforts led by CJP's grassroots organizing partners around housing and workers' rights, most recently assisting in the prevention of Florida's repeal of its Labor Pool Act. Carrie is a mom and a dog mom and was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York.

### **Ben Schmauss, National Senior Advocacy Consultant, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**

### **Petra Morrison, National Senior Advocacy Consultant, [Voices for Healthy Kids](#)**

Petra Morrison is a National Sr. Advocacy Consultant and provides support and strategic guidance to policy campaigns across various issues within the preemption and SNAP policy portfolios. Their expertise in environmental and housing justice, public health, and advocacy engagement campaigns significantly benefits the diverse needs of the preemption portfolio.

They bring a rich background in health and social sciences, coupled with extensive experience in community and barrio organizing, to the advocacy campaigns space. They are passionate about health and disability justice, approaching every campaign with the social determinants of health at the forefront of their work. In their downtime, Petra enjoys caring for their elders, niblings, and neighbors alongside their partner.