



# Health Leadership Fellows

## The Tenth Cohort



The leadership program of the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York

## Health Leadership Fellows, Class of 2022 - 2023

### **Andrea Aldinger**

**Director – Wyoming County Office for the Aging**

**Early Intervention Office & Pre-School Special Education Director – Wyoming County**



Andrea Aldinger is currently the Director of the Wyoming County Office for the Aging and the Youth Bureau. She is also the Early Intervention Official and Pre-School Special Education Director. Andrea is a 2002 graduate of Leadership Genesee and a 2007 graduate of Leadership Wyoming.

Most recently Andrea was the Board Chair for the Wyoming County United Way and is now a part of the Regional Advisory Taskforce for the United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes. She is the Board Chair for the Foundation for Community Care of Western New York (Homecare & Hospice) and a Corporate Board Member. Andrea also is the Board Chair for the Cattaraugus Wyoming Head Start.

Andrea lives in Attica, New York and is married to her husband Tom for 32 years and is the mother of two grown children, Tyler and Tristan.

### **Christopher Allaire**

**Director of Investigations – Housing Opportunities Made Equal**



Chris Allaire is the Director of Investigations at Housing Opportunities Made Equal, a civil rights organization that focuses on critical housing issues throughout Western New York. In this capacity, Chris carries out fair housing projects for the NYS Attorney General's Office, NYS Homes and Community Renewal Agency, and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Chris earned a bachelor's degree from Ithaca College in History, with a minor in African Diaspora Studies. He also holds a master's degree in History from the University at Buffalo, where he wrote his M.A. thesis on public housing in the city of Buffalo.

**Marie Andersen-Strait**  
**Senior Educational Specialist/Regional Office Project Associate –**  
**The Research Foundation for the State University of New York**



Marie Andersen-Strait is currently the Sr. Educational Specialist/Regional Office Project Associate at the Research Foundation for the State University of New York.

Marie has over 20 years of experience in human services specializing in strengthening individual and family populations involved in the systems of child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health and health. She works in partnership to enhance services in Western New York related to safety, permanency and well-being to children and youth. Marie is a strong advocate of evidence based practices and quality improvement. She is trained in Solution Focused Trauma Informed Care and is a certified yellow belt in Six Sigma. Marie is a former advisory board member of the Multisystemic Therapy Services for Network Partners.

Marie holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology and sociology from Randolph-Macon Woman's College as well as a master's degree at the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Social Work. Marie is a New York State licensed master social worker.

**Thomas Beauford, Jr.**  
**President & CEO – Buffalo Urban League**



Thomas Beauford, Jr. is President and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League.

He served as vice president at M&T Bank from 2014 - 2020. Formally, he joined HSBC Bank in 2000, and was selected for HSBC's International Seconded Programme, where he led business growth in Bengaluru, India and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, followed by relocation to Buffalo, NY in 2006. In 2013, he joined Citi, as a senior vice president.

He holds an MBA and a master's degree in Operations and Supply Chain Management from University at Buffalo, and a bachelor's degree from Saint Peter's University.

**Dean Bellack**

**Volunteer Executive Director – The United Way of Orleans County**



Dean Bellack is a 38 year resident of Medina, New York. He and his wife Carol have fraternal twins Adam and Aleena who are both married and doing well. Dean is now a for profit guy in a nonprofit world. He owned a manufacturers' rep company but has many decades of community service including the YMCA, Lions, Scouts, and others.

Dean volunteered to be the Executive Director of The United Way of Orleans County after one board meeting. During the last two years, very positive changes have occurred.

He is looking forward to the new learning experiences ahead.

**Jordan Bellasai**

**Program Officer – The Health Foundation for Western and Central New York**



Jordan Bellasai joined the Foundation in 2018 as program manager and became a program officer in 2021. He is based at the Foundation's Syracuse office.

Jordan has seven years of measurable advocacy-related experience, as well as extensive involvement in community organizing, grassroots mobilization, and legislative process.

Jordan served as the project director for the Working Families Party in the Capital District and ran top-tier campaigns for over six years. Jordan was the project coordinator for Livable Communities of Oneida County, which is a partnership between Oneida County's Office for the Aging, the Parkway Center and The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties to become part of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Jordan grew up in central New York and resides in Syracuse.



**Michelle Bork, DNP**  
**Assistant Professor – Niagara University**



Dr. Michelle Bork is a nurse educator who previously served on the faculty of D'Youville College's School of Nursing and was a registered nurse at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. She earned her bachelor's degree in registered nursing from D'Youville, and a master's degree in nursing education and a Doctor of Nursing practice from Grand Canyon University.

She also holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education and teaching from Canisius College.

**Tara N. Burgess**  
**Executive Director – Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)**



Tara N. Burgess, Executive Director at EPIC – Every Person Influences Children, oversees Buffalo's leading parenting and family engagement organization, helping families and communities raise responsible and successful adults. Under her leadership, the organization moved to fully virtual program delivery; launched the *Parenting Doesn't Stop* program; and increased revenue, particularly through its Triple P program and *Ready, Set, Read!* programs.

As the President of the Care Management Coalition, Tara collaboratively led a \$3.5 million capital campaign and the construction of office and training space that houses ten nonprofit agencies and moved EPIC into the new space.

### **Jana Capaccio**

#### **Director of Clinical Initiative Implementation – Horizon Health Services**



Jana Capaccio is the Director of Clinical Initiative Implementation at Horizon Health Services in Western New York. She has a master's degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling from the University of South Florida and is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor.

Jana has over 18 years of experience in the delivery of behavioral health services. Jana is responsible for developing and implementing new or qualitative enhancements to existing clinical services, including assisting in the development and implementation of applicable policies and procedures, quality assurance measurements, and development of processes supporting new implementations.

### **Ashleigh Cieri**

#### **Director of Youth Services – Compeer of Greater Buffalo**



Ashleigh Cieri is the Director of Youth Services at Compeer of Greater Buffalo. Originally from Canada, she has supported youth and families at various nonprofit organizations in Michigan and Western New York for over 14 years.

She holds a master's degree in social work from the University at Buffalo. Her responsibilities include oversight of 1:1 youth mentoring, as well as school-based mentoring in local school districts. She is also a certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor.

Ashleigh resides in West Seneca, New York with her husband and daughters.

**AnnMarie Correa**  
**Program Director – Healthy Families of Buffalo**



AnnMarie Correa is currently the Program Director for the Healthy Families Buffalo Program which is part of the Healthy Families New York system. As the Program Director, she provides leadership to Healthy Families staff and maintains quality programming as set by the Healthy Families America Credentialing Standards. Her duties are to coordinate and implement Healthy Families Buffalo in Erie County, provide advocacy to local and state leaders, report the program's progress to community partners and state funders, and ensure that the program maintains fidelity to the Healthy Families

model.

Ensuring the safety of children has always been at the forefront of her career. She began working at Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network 25 years ago as a home visitor in the Healthy Families program and has been leading the program for the past 17 years.

**Leah Angel Daniel**  
**Institute Administrator – UB Community Health Equity Research Institute**



Leah Angel Daniel never imagined the endless possibilities that would be in store for her life. As an alumni of foster care, Leah discovered at an early age that education would be the key to her success to overcome the daunting statistics that many foster care youth face, which encouraged her leadership and educational journey.

Leah is currently pursuing a doctorate in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. Leah serves as the Institute Administrator at UB Community Health Equity Research

Institute.

She is also the founder of Fostering Greatness Inc which is non-profit organization that assists foster care youth, young adults and alumni who have aged out of the child welfare system with access, opportunities and community support.

## **Stacy Dean**

### **Vice President of Clinical Operations – Neighborhood Health Center**



Stacy Dean brings more than 20 years of nursing and clinical leadership experience to her current role as Vice President of Clinical Operations at Neighborhood Health Center. As a board-certified Adult Nurse Practitioner, Stacy continues to see patients.

In addition to her clinical background, Stacy has obtained an executive master of business administration from the University at Buffalo and brings a variety of experience, including primary care, geriatrics, wound care and quality management.

Stacy's primary responsibility is enhancing the practice's quality of nursing care and patient care programs, assuring efficient and effective coordination and delivery in day-to-day patient care services.

## **Chantel Eckert, DNP**

### **Supervising Public Health Nurse – Oswego County Health Department**

### **Program Manager – Healthy Families Oswego County**



Chantel Eckert was born in Oswego, New York, and obtained her doctor of nursing practice degree from Walden University. Dr. Eckert has over 25 years of experience in the healthcare field and specialized training in forensic nursing. Child abuse prevention is her area of focus. Her passion for education has led her to mentor students at all education levels from various universities. She has worked for over 12 years in local public health, demonstrating her commitment to improving the lives of others. Chantel is passionate about improving her community, for her child, grandchild, and the greater public.



**John Ehrbar**  
**President & CEO – YMCA Buffalo-Niagara**



John Ehrbar serves as president/CEO of YMCA Buffalo Niagara where he provides strategic vision and leadership to deliver high quality programs and services to strengthen the community. John's professional experience spans over two decades and includes various leadership roles at YMCAs in Ohio and Washington.

He is active in the community, having served in a public capacity on a board of education and as a volunteer for several nonprofits over the years.

John's commitment to lifelong learning is evident as he has earned doctorate and master's degrees in sports management in addition to a master's degree in strategic leadership.

**Barbara L. Ganzel, Ph.D., LMSW**  
**Director of Community Programs – Clinical Associates of the Southern Tier**



Barbara L. Ganzel, PhD, LMSW, is a lifespan neuroscientist and hospice-trained clinical social worker with 25+ years of experience in the study of stress and psychological trauma, and its impact on brain, body, and behavior. She is currently the director of community programs at Clinical Associates of the Southern Tier, a safety net mental health agency. Before that, she was director of the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute. Dr. Ganzel has subject matter expertise in trauma-informed eldercare and end-of-life care, as well as behavioral interventions to reduce the impact of stress/trauma in adults, especially those who are seriously ill or dying.

**Ben Hilligas****Executive Director – Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY**

Ben Hilligas is the Executive Director of the Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY. The Matt Urban Center provides affordable and supported housing to a variety of vulnerable populations including many individuals exiting homelessness as well as services to youth, seniors, landlords, tenants, and homeowners across a broad spectrum of program offerings.

Ben has also worked for the Erie County Department of Social Services where he served for six years as Senior Youth Bureau Director in the Division of Youth Services; and with Say Yes Buffalo and Compass House youth shelter.

Ben has served on the NYS Partnership for Youth Justice, on the executive board of the NYS Youth Bureau Association, as Vice President of the WNY Association of Youth Bureaus and has coordinated numerous juvenile justice system reform initiatives on behalf of Erie County Family Court and the Department of Social Services. Ben received his master's degree from the University at Buffalo and is licensed to practice social work by the State of New York.

**Tisha Hollenbeck****Senior Divisional Director of Behavioral Healthcare – Liberty Resources**

Tisha Hollenbeck, RN, MHA has been a Registered Professional Nurse for more than 20 years, working predominantly in the community and public health fields for most of her career. Ms. Hollenbeck has spent the last 10 years in a healthcare administration role serving as a Senior Divisional Director for a large, non-profit human services agency. During her tenure she has developed, and implemented several integral community programs across central New York assisting vulnerable populations to receive person-centered, high-quality behavioral healthcare, and the social supports they need to work towards their goals while becoming inclusive, positive contributing members of their community.

**Nicole Keyser**

**Supervisor of Programs for Children with Special Needs – Herkimer County**



Nicole Keyser is the Herkimer County Supervisor of Programs for Children with Special Needs which encompasses the Early Intervention, Child Find and Preschool Programs.

She worked with children and their families for 15 years in a variety of community settings including BOCES Programs, Head Start, and local school districts. Work experiences include time as a teacher's aide, teacher, center director, playground director and senior service specialist.

Nicole's education culminated with a master's degree from Northcentral University. She was nominated multiple times and won the Cornell Cooperative Extension's Friend of Children Award Teacher of the Year for Herkimer County.

**Nikki Kmicinski, MS, RD, CDN**

**Executive Director – Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative**



Nikki Kmicinski is the Executive Director for Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative (WNYICC), a regional network of 28 social care agencies working to sustainably integrate with health care.

A Registered Dietitian for 20+ years, Nikki has a master's degree from Rochester Institute of Technology in Service Management with a career spanning numerous healthcare and business settings including: hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, private practice, real estate, property management, schools, amusement park, hotels, Area Agencies on Aging, and community-based organizations.

Nikki has been married for 24 years to her husband, Greg, and is a mom to two amazing college students.

**Michael La Flair**

**Director of Community and Government Relations – Housing Visions Unlimited**



Michael La Flair, currently serves as the Director of Community and Government Relations at Housing Visions Unlimited. A nonprofit affordable housing developer located in 14 cities across NY and one in Pennsylvania. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, as well as a Master's in Business Administration, with a focus on Leadership & Finance from Le Moyne College.

Michael currently serves on several boards while also volunteering with various local agencies. He has a deep understanding of community, economic and property development having worked for many years in a variety of senior management roles in the private, nonprofit and government sectors.

**Jennifer Levesque, MA LMHC**

**Director of Licensed Services – Recovery Options Made Easy**



Jennifer Levesque has dedicated her career to the development, facilitation, and evaluation of programming that addresses mental health needs across the Western New York region, as can be seen with her previous work with the Erie County Department of Mental Health, the Erie County Medical Center, and a number of other nonprofit organizations in the area.

**John Mazzello**

**Director of Community Services – Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County**



John Mazzello is the Director of Community Services at the Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County (HSC).

In this role, John serves as the program director for the 2-1-1 Tompkins/Cortland Helpline. He also manages HSC's grant funding review processes on behalf of multiple funders, works with the Tompkins County Health Planning Council, and sits on numerous local and regional advisory groups.

John has worked in the nonprofit sector for his entire career, beginning as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester and a master's in public administration from Iowa State University.

**Ann-Marie Orlowski**

**Chief Executive Officer – Cradle Beach**



Ann-Marie Orlowski is a distinguished social worker, educator, consultant and non-profit executive, empowering the WNY community for 30 years. Spending seven years in foster care and adopted at age 14, she has since dedicated her personal and professional journey to help children and families rise above, and far beyond, adverse life experiences.

Ann-Marie currently serves as Chief Executive Officer at Cradle Beach, Inc. In addition to her trauma-informed initiatives, she has mentored and educated generations of social workers, serving 10 years as Adjunct Faculty in University at Buffalo's Graduate School of Social Work.



**Tara Pace**  
**Executive Director – Envision Wellness WNY**



Tara Pace is a licensed mental health therapist with almost two decades of experience providing treatment to individuals and families with a variety of presenting concerns, empowering them to achieve wellness in all areas of life. She received her master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Canisius College where she continues to teach.

She has worked at multiple not-for-profits and area colleges where she provided clinical training and supervision to staff and students due to her expertise in clinical mental health treatment. She brings this expertise to Envision Wellness WNY in her role as Executive Director where she supports and believes passionately in the mission and vision of the agency.

**Caitlin Powalski**  
**Director, Advocate Department – Erie County**



Caitlin Powalski began her work at Crisis Services in 2015. Presently, Caitlin is the Director of the Advocate Department, serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence. As Director, Caitlin is responsible for all aspects of the 24-Hour operations of Erie County's certified Rape Crisis Center and licensed Domestic Violence Service Provider. Prior to Crisis Services, Caitlin worked on college campuses, in women's health, and on research grants.

Caitlin holds a master's of public health from the University of Rochester. She is a Buffalo native and can often be found hiking with her family, including the dogs.

## **Chandra Redfern**

### **Chief Executive Officer – Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers (BFNC)**



Chandra Redfern, the CEO of the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers (BFNC), is known as a compassionate, creative, and visionary nonprofit leader. Her extensive BFNC career included serving as the Chief Operating Officer, Director of Residential Services, Coordinator of Adult Case Management, Director of Support Services for Buffalo Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services.

Chandra is a graduate of Canisius College, earning a master's degree in Counseling and a bachelor's degree in Psychology & Criminal Justice. She also received a certification from Houghton College in Pastoral & Christian Ministries.

Her community service includes volunteering with several organizations that focus on filling community needs and uplifting by providing programs that help people overcome life's obstacles.

## **Digna Saad, Ph.D.**

### **Vice President of Training and Strategy – Gallup Dominicana**



Digna Saad is a social scientist who brings the strong combination of operational acumen and learning/talent development expertise. She has held leadership positions in Fortune 100 companies, academia, and several non-profits. Digna is proud of being able to bridge the gap between ideas and results.

Dr. Saad is also the founder of a non-profit that hopes to empower BIPOC to attain and retain executive positions to impact change.

She holds a doctorate and two master's degrees: an MBA from Boston University, a master's degree in Education and a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. Digna is a polyglot – able to speak Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, English, and basic Arabic. Her life's mission is to help underserved populations breathe better.

**Margery Stanton**  
**Vice President of Intensive Mental Health Treatment & Rehabilitation Services –**  
**BestSelf Behavioral Health**



Margery is the Vice President of Intensive Mental Health Treatment and Rehabilitation Services at BestSelf Behavioral Health where she manages unique adult clinic treatment solutions. She holds a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and Psychology.

In addition to her work at BestSelf, she teaches graduate level courses at Medaille College's Mental Health Counseling program. Margery's favorite thing is identify gaps of care and locating new initiatives in which to provide treatment to that population.

On a personal note, Margery is an avid board game player and enjoys hiking in her spare time.

**Kim Stewart**  
**Early Childhood Director – PEDALS at CCNY / Help Me Grow WNY**



Kim Stewart, Early Childhood Director at CCNY for PEDALS and Help Me Grow WNY, has dedicated her life to uplifting children, their families, and the communities that nurture them.

Kim grew up as a troubled orphan whose teachers served as positive role models; this motivated her to earn her master's degree in Education and Leadership and to become an expert in Trauma-Informed Care.

Kim was honored as the 2019 recipient of the Western New York Educator Award; she continues to share her expertise as an adjunct professor at Niagara University and as a local, regional, and national conference presenter.

**Millie Tomidy-Pepper**  
**Executive Director – YWCA of Genesee County**



Millie has been the Executive Director of the YWCA of Genesee County for the past three and a half years. Prior to that, she served seven years as Assistant Executive Director and 12 years as the Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Genesee County respectively.

Millie holds an associate's degree in Human Services from GCC and a bachelor's degree in Organizational Management from Keuka College. She is a 2003 graduate of Leadership Genesee, earned her private pilot's license in 1992 and been the recipient of several leadership awards.

Millie lives in Stafford with her husband Dave. They have five children.

**Michael Weidrich**  
**Executive Director – South Buffalo Community Association**



Michael Weidrich has been an activist and advocate for over 30 years, fighting for the marginalized. Michael has spent his career helping people in the community through grassroots work with nonprofit organizations across Upstate New York, having served as Executive Director of the Pride Center of the Capital Region, the Lark Street Business Improvement District, Young Audiences of Western New York, and currently at the South Buffalo

Community Association.

An alumnus of the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, Michael earned a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University, and an master of business administration in Nonprofit Management from Albany's College of Saint Rose.

**Shari Weiss, Ph.D.**  
**Executive Director – Cayuga Community Health Network**



Dr. Shari Weiss has been working in the field of Public and Behavioral Health for over two decades. She has a Ph.D. in Public Health, a master's in Public Administration, and has been a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Use Counselor (CASAC) for twenty-two years.

Her past work includes HIV/AIDS Prevention, several Homeless and Behavioral Health housing programs, and working in the field of addiction treatment. She is currently the Executive Director for the Cayuga Community Health Network, in Auburn, New York. Dr. Weiss also teaches for Southern New Hampshire University.

Her hobbies include gaming, volunteering on an alpaca farm, and acting.

**Margaret Wells, Ph.D.**  
**Dean, Purcell School of Professional Studies – Le Moyne College**



Margaret (Meega) Wells is Dean of the Purcell School of Professional Studies at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. She is a registered nurse and nurse practitioner with a Ph.D. in Rural Nursing. She worked in various nursing positions early in her career in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Syracuse, and has held various academic nursing positions at St. Joseph's College of Nursing and SUNY Upstate Medical University prior to Le Moyne.

She volunteers as a nurse practitioner at the Poverello healthcare clinic in Syracuse. She serves on boards at Oneida Health and the Upstate Family Health Center in Utica.



**Jeffrey Williams**  
**Chief Operations Officer – FeedMore WNY**



Jeffrey Williams is the Chief Operations Officer at FeedMore WNY, where he directs and oversees all warehouse operations in all locations for FeedMore. Jeff also oversees all food safety, transportation and logistics for the organization in the counties that it services.

Jeff has worked with reputable partner agencies, including Salvation Army, Buffalo City Mission, and Catholic Charities, among others. Jeff believes in FeedMore's mission to offer dignity, hope and a brighter future by providing nutritious food, friendship and skills training to its Western New York neighbors in need.

Jeff enjoys spending time with family, golfing and riding motorcycles.

**Melanie Witkowski**  
**Executive Director – Prevention Works**



Melanie Witkowski is the Executive Director at Prevention Works, with a goal to increase Evidenced-Based Prevention Programming in Chautauqua. Since 2016, she gained momentum by increasing the agency budget from \$560,000 to \$1.4 million, doubling her staff and the services provided in local schools and organizations. She is a president-elect Rotarian, serves on several non-profit boards and steering committees. In her free time, she loves to go camping, dancing and kayaking.

In 2002, she received her master's degree in Education, and became a Certified Prevention Professional in 2015. Melanie Witkowski resides in Dunkirk, New York with her husband, two children, and two dogs.

**David Zapfel**  
**Executive Director – Gerard Place**



David Zapfel joined Gerard Place in 2002. By 2004, he was named executive director with a strategic goal of re-envisioning a section of Buffalo's east side called the Bailey-Delavan community. Gerard Place has since grown from a single program for homeless families to a three-building campus implementing programs and services for hundreds of people of all ages.

David serves on multiple boards in the community including: Crisis Services; Buffalo State College; and Family Promise.

In 2014, D'Youville College awarded David with an honorary doctorate for his service to the community. He was also the recipient of the Centennial Award from the Community Foundation

for Greater Buffalo.