



Thursday, April 18, 2024

Pre-Conference & Conference Day 1

8:30am-9:00am	Arrival/Registration/Networking (Little Crow)			
<b>PRE-CONFERENCE</b>				
<b>Rooms</b>	<b>Grand Ballroom 1</b>	<b>Chaska 1</b>	<b>Winona 1</b>	<b>Chaska 2</b>
9:00am – 12:00pm	No Session	<u><a href="#">The LEGO Game: Reducing Organizational Waste &amp; Increasing Productivity</a></u>  Edwin Boon The Lean Six Sigma Company	<u><a href="#">The Strategic Playground: Cultivating &amp; Sustaining a Strategic Mindset</a></u>  Mary Rapaport Xcelerate	No Session
12:00pm-1:00pm	Lunch (Little Crow)			
1:00pm – 4:00pm	No Session  <div style="background-color: #90EE90; padding: 5px;"> <b><i>Sharing Insights, Best Practices (3:00-4:00)</i></b>             Sector Roundtables            (open to all “main conference” participants)         </div>	<u><a href="#">Create a Culture of Productivity, Starting at the Top!</a></u>  Jan Lehman CTC Productivity	<u><a href="#">Excellence is About People!</a></u>  Michael Garner Momentum	<b>Leading Excellence &amp; Achievement Program (LEAP)</b> <i>Private Event</i>
<b>MAIN CONFERENCE – “SOFT START”</b>				
4:15pm – 5:00pm	Main Conference Opening Session: Let’s Play ignite-A-Feud! (Grand Ballroom 1)			
5:00pm – 6:30pm	Reception – Happy Hour & Networking (Grand Ballroom 1)			
6:30pm – 7:30pm	Performance Excellence Award Ceremony (Grand Ballroom 1)			

- Notes:**
- Those sessions shaded in green are open to all “main conference” participants.
  - This year’s conference features four powerful half-day pre-conference workshops – highly interactive, engaging sessions that are focused on tools & best practices. The two in orange are focused on productivity and the two in blue on leadership/strategy – so you can select the designated track or you can mix & match to meet your needs! Registration fees are separate from the conference fees, but you get a \$50 discount if you attend a workshop(s) and the main conference! Full abstracts and separate registration linked to each session title ([or found here](#)).



**Friday, April 19, 2024**

**Conference Day 2**

7:00am – 8:15am	Registration, Networking and Breakfast			
8:15am – 8:30am	<b>Welcome, Opening Comments</b>			
8:30am – 9:15am	Opening Keynote <b>Change is Inevitable; Progress is Optional – Facilitating Cultural Change – Phyllis Braxton</b>			
<b>Rooms</b>	<b>Minnetonka Ballroom</b>	<b>Minnetonka 1</b>	<b>Minnetonka 4</b>	<b>Minnetonka 7</b>
9:30am – 10:15am	<b>No Session</b>	<b>The Shift...</b>  Michelle Nelson, OD Specialist, St. Louis County	<b>The Secret to Igniting Customer Service Excellence</b>  Kathy Pykkonen, Sr Manager, Training & Stds, Jet Aviation	<b>Adjust Your Lens to See Differently</b>  Dr. Sandra Ogunremi, VP of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Monument Health
10:15am – 10:30am	<b>Break – Visit Exhibitors!</b>			
10:30am – 11:15am	<b>Organizational &amp; Community Resilience: The Next Dimension of Performance Excellence</b>  Bob Fangmeyer, Director of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program  Stephanie Norling, Executive Director, Communities of Excellence 2026	<b>From Sci-Fi to Reality: A Gentle Introduction to Artificial Intelligence</b>  Matt Redlon, Principal Technologist, Generative AI, Mayo Clinic	<b>No Session</b>	<b>Navigating Staffing Challenges</b>  Penny Bellville, Executive Director, Talent, Mary Greeley Medical Center
11:15am – 11:30am	<b>Break – Visit Exhibitors!</b>			
11:30am – 12:15pm	<b>Managing Change: A Panel Discussion</b>  Karly Hall, OD Consultant, Cargill and MNCMN  Stacey Mueller, ED Experience Mgmt, Froedtert Health  Tara Tierney, Sr Communications Manager & Global Exec Development, Amazon	<b>Best Practices in Leadership: A Panel Discussion</b>  Chace Anderson, Superintendent, Wayzata Schools  Bill Lloyd, Director, Univ of Iowa  Marshall Smith, CEO, State of MN Direct Care & Treatment  Mara Stelzer, Director, Center for CI, General Mills	<b>The Journey to Excellence Using Baldrige: A Panel Discussion</b>  Jennifer Houtman, Chief Optimization Officer, Iowa Donor Network  Tom Henry, CEO, Episcopal Homes  Terra Carey, Chief Quality Officer, Direct Care & Treatment	<b>Excellence in Education</b>  Denise Wood, Director of District Leadership & Improvement, Urbandale Community School District  Kaleem Caire, Founder & CEO, One City Schools  Klint Willert, Superintendent, Pipestone Schools
12:30pm – 1:45pm	Lunch & Closing Keynote <b>Ignite Your Shift: Thriving through the Chaos of Change – Anne Bonney</b>			
1:45pm – 2:15pm	<b>igniteEX Unscripted – Danger Boat Productions</b>			
2:15pm – 2:30pm	<b>Closing Comments</b>			



## **Conference Session Abstracts**

### **The LEGO Game: Reducing Waste & Increasing Productivity (Pre-Conference Workshop)**

Edwin Boon, The Lean Six Sigma Company USA  
Thursday, April 18 9:00 - 12:00PM

It will be a unique, fun, and powerful experience, focused on the principles of continuous improvement and the tools of Lean Six Sigma, but delivered in part through a LEGO simulation.

The Lean Six Sigma methodology has been used to streamline processes to provide services or products to customers, patients, citizens, or stakeholders faster and with fewer errors. Often, the projects take place within the organization, where several people work together (for example, a billing process, licensing process, logistics-, or production processes). The people who run the projects are called Green Belts and Black Belts, but they are dependent on the input and cooperation of their team members to succeed. This workshop explores the process and tools needed to improve process performance and results.

What will I be able to do after this course? Here are the learning objectives:

- Understanding the Lean Six Sigma philosophy and translating it to their own working environment
- Optimizing and improving processes using the DMAIC structure (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control are the 5 phases of Lean Six Sigma)
- Identifying customer requirements
- Recognizing improvement potential and selecting projects; better analyze problems, discover root causes and optimal solutions

The workshop explores ways to reduce operational costs, improve quality, decrease lead-times and increase customer satisfaction, equipping you with a toolset that will help you drive value in your organization. The workshop is ISO-certified and includes simulations, interactive exercises, videos, and much more!

#### **Biography**

Edwin Boon is the CEO of The Lean Six Sigma Company USA and a GE Certified Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt. Edwin is a former Vice President Lean Six Sigma and Customer Experience for Sleep Number in the USA. Prior to Sleep Number Edwin Boon was a Master Black Belt for GE Capital in the USA and CFO for Hertz Leasing in The Netherlands, Germany and the UK.

Edwin has executed hundreds of projects in improving customer experience, services, manufacturing, sales, supply chain, product design, warranties and technology always generating real tangible P&L savings. His experience spans a variety of industries including financial services, healthcare, government, manufacturing and retail.

The Customer Experience/NPS (Net Promoter Score) program at Sleep Number is ranked among customer experience leaders like Apple, Amazon, Costco and Southwest. This and the Lean Six Sigma initiative received honorable mention in the 4Q 2010 earnings call for Sleep Number for driving tangible P&L and customer benefits, as well as significant improvements in process efficiencies and product quality. The program generated millions of dollars of savings and a 5x Return on Investment. Edwin has a proven track record of developing business cases and strategic rationales, and achieving companywide buy-in for transformative improvement initiatives, including large IT ERP implementations. A testimonial to this is protection of the Lean Six Sigma program by the Board of Directors of Sleep Number during massive layoffs at the height of the 2008-2009 recession.

Edwin holds a Dutch Finance and Accounting degree ("Accountant Administratie-Consulent") and has 30 years of global work experience in the Netherlands, UK, Germany, Switzerland, France and the USA.



## **The Strategic Playground: Cultivating and Sustaining a Strategic Mindset (Pre-Conference Workshop)**

Mary Rapaport, Xcelerate

Thursday, April 18 9:00 - 12:00PM

The Strategic Playground is an opportunity for leaders to recharge, reflect and rethink by immersing themselves in a strategic thinking experience. This interactive workshop includes activities, exercises and discussions all designed to elevate your thinking and challenge you to find ways your contributions can have more impact. We'll cover topics including what strategic thinking is, and why we are all too often focused on execution in the workplace. We'll uncover the systemic barriers and obstacles to strategic thinking, and we'll challenge your thinking about the level of impact you can have in the workplace. We'll also explore how to prevent biases and assumptions from limiting your strategic thinking. Participants will come away from the session with new insights and several useful tools and frameworks that can help them activate and channel their strategic thinking.

### **Biography**

Mary Rapaport is on a mission to democratize strategic thinking. She believes it's not just for the elite few, but for everyone in an organization. When everyone channels a strategic mindset, the business culture thrives, teams become more creative, and employees lean in and engage more. Cultivating this mindset helps leaders create a better (and more fun) place to work, fostering a stronger culture of creativity and innovation.

As a strategic thinking architect, Mary empowers leaders and teams across all functions and levels to think, act, and lead more strategically. As the founder of Xcelerate, she builds learning strategy, designing, and delivering immersive learning experiences that ignite "aha moments" and drive tangible business results.

Mary's signature program, the Strategic Playground Workshop, is a unique blend of immersion, play, and practical application. Participants engage in reflection, peer learning, and scenario learning to awaken and channel their strategic mindset, helping them solve complex challenges and have a greater impact.

As a trusted strategic thinking coach, Mary partners with individuals and teams at leading brands to develop customized learning and development strategies. She works closely with clients to identify blind spots, refine critical thinking skills, and translate strategic insights into actionable plans for tangible ROI.

Mary's passion extends beyond individual development. She champions inclusive growth through the Minority Business Growth Alliance, a non-profit providing invaluable coaching and support to BIPOC entrepreneurs. She holds an MBA, a BA in International Business and French, and is a certified leadership and sales trainer. Mary has extensive experience in marketing, transformation, and strategic initiatives. She also serves as the current president of the Twin Cities chapter of the Association of Talent Development.



## Create a Culture of Productivity, Starting at the Top! (Pre-Conference Workshop)

Jan Lehman, CTC Productivity  
Thursday, April 18 1:00 - 4:00PM

Create a culture of productivity that eliminates unnecessary interruptions, emails, and non-essential work. Get everyone in your company focused on their most important priorities and stop the highly reactionary behavior that has become the norm in business today.

Since productivity and employee engagement are tightly linked this is a win-win for the organization and your employees. Lead by example by defining and following effective communication protocols across platforms and learn how to leverage your technology fully.

Learn how the technology you are using every day is evolving and what you need to do now to be prepared for that transition. Join us for a tactical and strategic discussion on how to optimize your organization's time, talent, and technology and help everyone work more effectively.

### Learning Objectives:

- Learn time, and task management techniques that will revolutionize your business's operations and begin to lay the foundation for an effective business communication strategy to drive company-wide efficiencies.
- Gain a high-level understanding of how the software you are already paying for can be leveraged to significantly improve communication, collaboration, and accountability across your organization.
- Learn how to effectively manage email so you can stay focused on your most important priorities.

### Biography

Jan Lehman is a globally recognized productivity expert, international speaker, and best-selling author that has been featured in *Forbes*, *Business Journal*, and *Entrepreneur*. She is dedicated to creating real relationships and curating a meaningful and relevant presentation for each of her clients. Combining a thoughtful blend of proven productivity practices and real-life examples, Jan offers a welcoming, engaging, inspirational, and high-energy space for personal growth.

Audience members will leave with actionable steps they can immediately incorporate into their work and personal lives. The examples Jan provides will allow individuals to imagine the best way to apply the productivity practices and tools to their own routines. Jan is passionate about creating a place of empathy and empowerment for her audience members, so they leave feeling energized and ready to make the most of their time.



## **Excellence is About People! (Pre-Conference Workshop)**

Michael Garner, Momentum

Thursday, April 18 1:00 - 4:00PM

This session takes a deeper look at three categories in the Baldrige Framework - Leadership, Customers, and Workforce - and the crucial role they play in achieving and sustaining excellence. For each category, we'll examine how high performing organizations use systematic approaches to drive great results; you'll be encouraged to share your experience in these three areas with others in the session, as well. We'll look at current data and trends around leadership effectiveness, the principles of customer engagement, and the principles for workforce development, among other topics.

We'll consider the Baldrige Core Values and Concepts, the Organizational Profile, Processes, and Results, and how the best practices represented in the Baldrige system impact an organization's journey toward excellence. This session is appropriate for anyone, regardless of your knowledge of the Baldrige Framework - no experience necessary! Just bring your passion for improvement and people, and get ready to learn and share in this interactive, content-packed environment.

### **Biography**

Michael Garner is President of Momentum, a consulting firm based in Kasson, MN. Michael has over 30 years' experience and education in Adult Learning and Human Resource Development, over 15 years of experience as a Baldrige practitioner, and is a Gallup-Certified CliftonStrengths Coach. In addition to eight years spent implementing the use of the Baldrige framework for a regional organization, Michael has trained and served in multiple Baldrige-based assessment programs in various roles, including evaluator/examiner, team leader, judge, and assessment process designer. Michael is a Minnesota native and in addition to his professional pursuits, he enjoys camping, bicycling, photography, and live concerts and music festivals.



## Conference “Soft Start” Opening Sessions

Thursday, April 18 3:00 - 7:30PM

This year’s conference “soft start” opening sessions begin at 3pm with a chance for conference attendees who are arriving early to network with others inside and outside of their sectors. Following the Pre-Conference Workshops, join us for even more networking, fun, and laughter along with amazing food and beverages before we celebrate the 2023 latest award recipients. Join us when you can throughout the afternoon and evening, we look forward to seeing you.

### **3:00 - 4:00**

#### **Sharing Insights, Best Practices: Sector Roundtables**

Participate in an informal but facilitated dialogue with your peers to share ideas, tools, and best practices related to continuous improvement and performance excellence. We will divide into five subgroups (business, healthcare, education, nonprofit, and public sector) and explore concepts that will set the stage for the rest of the conference.

### **4:15 - 5:00**

#### **ignite-A-Feud!**

Network and have fun with other leaders and professionals interested in improvement & excellence! This interactive and entertaining simulation of “Family Feud” is informal, intended to facilitate networking and relationship building. Yes, we will open the bar a little early to help “grease the skids” – so come prepared to *ignite* a little fun to start off the conference!

### **5:00 - 6:30**

#### **Reception**

Meet and network with other conference participants! Heavy hors d’oeuvres served; cash bar provided.

### **6:30 - 7:30**

#### **Award Celebration**

Recognizing and celebrating the 2023 recipients of the Minnesota Performance Excellence Award and the Iowa Recognition for Performance Excellence! Hear their stories; celebrate excellence in the region!



## **Change is Inevitable; Progress is Optional – Facilitating Cultural Change (Opening Keynote)**

Phyllis Braxton

Friday, April 19 8:30 - 9:15AM

Leaders today know the importance of recognizing human differences. But the research is clear: differences alone do not increase outcomes. It takes leaders who are culturally self-aware and who are willing to create organizational cultures that value and foster workforce engagement, safety, diversity, and inclusion. Facilitating culture change requires to develop five intercultural skills – withing themselves and their teams: 1) cultural self-awareness, 2) empathy, 3) tolerance for ambiguity, 4) authentic curiosity, and 5) cognitive flexibility. Drawing on over 25 years of international experience, Phyllis will introduce you to proven frameworks for greater effectiveness in leading across cultural differences and creating cultures that enable high performance.

In addition to sharing excerpts from her upcoming book, *Good Intentions. Bad Results* (June 2024), Phyllis will introduce you to the Intercultural Development Continuum. In this interactive experience, you will have time for intentional reflection, self-assessment, and strategizing your next steps for increased intercultural competence. Examine how your life experiences and culture help or hinder your interactions and successes. The world needs empathic and inclusive mental health professionals — the intercultural awareness you gain in this session will help you become one. You will leave this workshop with a higher level of understanding about the Intercultural Development Continuum, a clear description of what stage your organization may be in, and a developmentally appropriate prescription for the key skills needed to engage, support, and challenge the status quo in order to promote institutional change.

### **Biography**

Mother, wife, artist, interculturalist, Amazon bestselling author (“Be Right Or Be Effective: A 30-Day Journal to Master Life’s Messes and Unexpected Challenges” and “Good Intentions, Bad Results: A Practical Guide to Build Intercultural Confidence and Healthier Relationships at Work, Home, and School”), and a world-renowned Miraval Thought Leader bridging theory and practice in the DEI and self-care space. Phyllis has over 25 years of international touchpoints with tens of thousands of people with experience in trauma-informed diversity, equity and inclusion training and facilitation, leadership coaching, conflict communication, intercultural competence, and organizational development.

Phyllis received her BA from Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Ga., a Master of Adult Education from the University of MN, and a Master of Clinical Social Work from St. Catherine’s University. As a lifelong learner, Phyllis is a doctoral student studying Leadership for Change, specializing in Leadership Coaching. She resides in North Minneapolis and is determined to leave a legacy of generational transformation for racially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged women and girls through her nonprofit, [wholeSOUL, Inc.](#)

As the CEO and founder of PINK Consulting, LLC, nearly 2 decades, Braxton has conducted assessments and provided intercultural organizational development services for over 100 organizations, including Princeton University, Stanford, and the University of Minnesota. A former therapist, self-described “edutainer,” and “intellectual activist,” she believes in meeting people where they are without blame, shame, or judgment.





## **The Shift... (Breakout Session)**

Michelle Nelson, St. Louis County, MN

Friday, April 19 9:30 - 10:15AM

Recruitment, retention, workforce development strategies and employee engagement are critical to an organization's performance. Leaders, are you finding it more and more challenging to recruit, retain and develop your staff and teams? Everyone wants the best performing teams and individuals within their organizations, why is this becoming such a challenge to achieve? If you are in a position of Leadership and want to learn about "the shift" that is taking place in the workforce and why 2024 is forecasted to be "the year of the people" you will want to attend this training.

### **Biography**

Michelle has over 25 years of experience leading, managing and training professionals in the human service industry. In addition to her leadership skills, she is well versed in team, program, and organizational development to include strategic planning. She is a certified trainer for the Crisis Prevention Institute, The National Council for Behavioral Health, Motivational Interviewing, Thera International Rising (Drama Free Workplace) and Adverse Childhood Experiences. She has delivered numerous trainings at local, state and national conferences. Michelle also provides consultation services for several private and public businesses. Michelle's education includes a Masters in Management, Bachelors in Criminology/Sociology and certificate in Leadership and Change.



## **The Secret to Igniting Customer Service Excellence (Breakout Session)**

Kathy Pykkonen, Jet Aviation  
Friday, April 19 9:30 - 10:15AM

What is the secret to igniting customer service excellence? Who really comes first? Your customer, your people, or the bottom line? This presentation will not be your average customer service training session but an interactive (fun) exchange of best practices from some of the best in the high-end, luxury space.

In this session Kathy will share exactly where the secret lies within your organizational strategy and provide you five actionable practices to take back to your organizations. Implementing these practices will help cultivate a customer-centric culture within your organization and drive customer loyalty and satisfaction over the long term.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Uncover the secrets proven by successful organizations.
- Receive tools and tips to transform your culture.
- Ignite the passion to help your organization transform!

### **Biography**

Kathy Pykkonen is a dedicated leader, mentor and trainer with a passion for seeing individuals and teams succeed. She has served in roles as Director of Learning and Development and is currently the Sr. Manager, Training and Standards for Jet Aviation. Kathy's extensive 25-year training experience, particularly in luxury brands and catering to high-net-worth clients, has positioned her uniquely to catalyze cultural transformations within organizations.

Her passion for people and culture is invaluable in helping organizations enhance their customer experience. When employees feel valued, supported, and motivated, they're more likely to deliver exceptional service. Kathy's experience in this area guides organizations in fostering the positive culture that prioritizes both the team and customer.

A proud veteran, Kathy served in the active-duty Air Force for 8 years as a Master Trainer. Her undergraduate work at Western International University is in Behavioral Science and she has a Master of Science in Education from UW-Superior.

In her free time, she is a mom of identical twin boys, an avid boater, hiker and biker. Originally from Northern Minnesota, she now resides in Knoxville, TN with her Springer Spaniel, "Maverick".



## Adjust Your Lens to See Differently (Breakout Session)

Dr. Sandra Ogunremi, Monument Health

Friday, April 19 9:30 - 10:15AM

Have you ever wondered why you think the way that you do? Have you ever wondered why you make some of the decisions that you make or say some of the things you say? This session will help you adjust your lens to see things differently and help you gain a better understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

It is important to understand how we process information. We need to identify the biases we have acquired and recognize the impact biases have on decision making and perspective taking. Together we will learn to embrace diversity, be inclusive, help others have a sense of belonging, and promote psychological safety. We will build the knowledge necessary to move from awareness into action.

Objectives:

- Define diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.
- Understand how we process information.
- Identify and recognize the biases we have.
- Understand the impact biases have on decision making.
- Mitigate the impact biases have on decision making.

### Biography

Dr. Sandra Ogunremi, DHA is the Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging for Monument Health. In her role, she oversees Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging initiatives, Spiritual Care Services, Patient Experiences, Patient Relations, Guest Services, Volunteer Services and Valet Services. She has been with Monument Health since 2008. Her successful work led to Monument Health Rapid City Hospital being recently recognized as one of three healthcare systems to earn the 2023 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care (EOC) Award. She has been recognized nationally, in 2022, 2023 and 2024, by Women we Admire, as one of the Top 50 Women Leaders in Healthcare. She is a nationally sought out conference speaker because of her subject matter expertise.

Ogunremi earned a Doctorate in Health Administration from Central Michigan University (CMU) in 2009. She has a Master of Science in Administration from CMU and a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. She is a Certified in Diversity Management with the American Hospital Association's Institute for Diversity and Health Equity. She is a Cornell Certified Diversity Practitioner and holds several other certifications that enable her to deliver her best.

Rev. Sandra Ogunremi is an Assemblies of God ordained minister and is the published author of the books, "Casting Down Disruptive Imaginations" and "Overcoming Threats, Thoughts and Triggers". She has taught throughout the United States, Canada, Africa, and England. She is most fulfilled when being used as a conduit to positively impact lives. She has served on several boards since 2008. She has been married to Dr. Ayodele Ogunremi, a Board-Certified Nephrologist and Board-Certified Internist, since 1993 and they are blessed with three adult children.



## **Organization & Community Resilience: The Next Dimension of Performance Excellence (Breakout Session)**

Bob Fangmeyer, Baldrige Performance Excellence Program and Stephanie Norling, Communities of Excellence 2026

Friday, April 19 10:30 - 11:15AM

Success in today's ever-changing, globally competitive environment demands agility and resilience. Agility requires a capacity for rapid change and for flexibility in operations; resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and recover from disasters, emergencies, and other disruptions, and – when disruptions occur – to protect and enhance workforce and customer engagement, supply-network and financial performance, productivity, and community well-being. Simply defined, resilience is the ability of organizations and communities to “bounce back better” from their prior state after a disruption. Resilience is so critical for organizational and community performance that the Baldrige Performance Excellence Award is now focused on resilience and long-term success.

In this session, we will hear from two speakers: Bob Fangmeyer, Director of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, and Stephanie Norling, Executive Director, Communities of Excellence 2026. Each will share some prepared remarks on how resilience is defined and applied, both in terms of organizations and communities. Bob will share how the Baldrige Award Criteria is shifting to more fully address resilience, and Stephanie will share examples of how communities are designing systematic processes to remain agile and resilient. The session will conclude with dialogue from participants.

### **Biographies**

Bob Fangmeyer joined the Baldrige Program in 1997 and, after serving in numerous roles over the years, was named Deputy Director in 2011 and Director in 2013. Since then, Bob has been focused on strengthening strategic partnerships, expanding the reach and impact of Baldrige, providing new and improved products and services, ensuring efficient and effective operations, planning for strategic capability and capacity needs, and leading the Program through change and transformation. Bob has a background in owning and managing small businesses and received his MBA from the University of Maryland.

Stephanie Norling has been Executive Director of Communities of Excellence 2026 since 2014. In this role Stephanie has participated in the development of the Baldrige-based Communities of Excellence Framework and launched a National Learning Collaborative of communities to support their use of the framework. Stephanie serves as Learning Collaborative faculty and mentors several of the 28 communities currently participating. After graduating with a BA in Anthropology from Tufts University in 1999, Stephanie joined the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in Boston as a Project Coordinator. In 2012 Stephanie graduated from the University of San Diego with a Master's in Business Administration and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management. Stephanie also participated as a National Baldrige Examiner for three years and serves on the board of the Alliance for Performance Excellence. In 2023 Stephanie received the Baldrige Foundation's Award for Leadership Excellence in the nonprofit sector.



## **From Sci-Fi to Reality: A Gentle Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (Breakout Session)**

Matt Redlon, Timber Wolf AI & Mayo Clinic

Friday, April 19 10:30 - 11:15AM

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an exciting, emerging technology that offers both incredible possibility, but also potential risk. What is AI exactly and how can leaders leverage its advantages while guarding against its potential downsides?

In this session, Matt Redlon will explore the different types of current and emerging AI: machine learning, deep learning, generative AI, natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics. For each type, he'll provide practical examples of that technology being leveraged in business and consumer settings. We'll also explore how leaders can leverage AI to support business practices.

According to Gartner, 37% of US organizations have already implemented AI in some form and Servion projects that 95% of customer interactions will be powered by AI in the next few years. With the rapid acceleration of AI in so many of our business and personal applications, leaders need to understand what it is, how it can be used to create value for customers and stakeholders, and how it should be managed to limit risk.

### **Biography**

After spending almost 25 years applying machine learning and artificial intelligence to complex business challenges across a range of industries, Matt knows how daunting these technologies can be for business leaders. His superpower lies in his first principles approach, bridging high-level strategy with hands-on technical implementation, and in his ability to translate between all constituencies. Whether he's advising senior executives or teaching graduate students, his goal is to demystify modern technologies and integrate them into groundbreaking products and services.

Matt is currently a Principal Technologist for Generative AI at Mayo Clinic. He's the founder of Timber Wolf AI where he writes about applied artificial intelligence for business leaders. He teaches graduate students about technology strategy and the management of technological innovation at the University of Minnesota's Technology Leadership Institute. Previously, Matt was co-founder, CTO, and then CEO for many years of Clario, a customer and marketing intelligence platform that automates audience engagement. Matt resides in Minnesota with his family and can often be found planning his next trip to the Boundary Waters.



## **Navigating Staffing Challenges (Breakout Session)**

Penny Bellville, Mary Greeley Medical Center

Friday, April 19 10:30 - 11:15AM

In this session you will learn Mary Greeley Medical Center's processes across the workforce lifecycle. We will share our best practices for strategic workforce planning into the future, methods used to increase talent pipeline through school collaborations and student experiences, programs developed to grow and support our existing workforce in their career development through career pathways, programs used to engage the workforce in achieving organizational goals, and our employee experience programs that support our goal of being the best place to work and practice.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Identifying workforce capability and capacity needs (strategic workforce planning)
- Building a talent pipeline (focus on schools/students)
- Growing and supporting our workforce (career pathways and growth and development program)
- Engaging our workforce in achieving goals (Big dot goal cascade to leaders and staff and engagement actions to make Mary Greeley the best place to work.)

### **Biography**

Penny Bellville, MS-HRD, SHRM-SCP, CCP, SPHR, is the Executive Director - Talent at Mary Greeley Medical Center since 2014. Prior to joining Mary Greeley, Penny spent the first 25 years of her career in Human Resource leadership roles in a variety of industries including financial services and commercial real estate. Penny's passion is in developing human resource programs that enable individuals and organizations to achieve their goals. Penny is a SHRM Senior Certified Professional, a World at Work Certified Compensation Professional and an HRCI Senior Professional in Human Resources. Penny received her Bachelor of Business Administration from Iowa State University and her Master of Science in Human Resource Development from Villanova University.



## **Managing Change – A Panel Discussion (Breakout Session)**

Karly Hall, Cargill & Minnesota Change Management Association

Stacey Mueller, Froedert Health

Tara Tierney, Amazon

Friday, April 19 11:30 - 12:15PM

The amount of change we're all had to navigate the last few years is fairly unprecedented: we've changed work environments and work structures; we've changed products and service offerings; we've redesigned supply chains. In some sectors and industries, entire business models have changed almost overnight. While the pace of change may have stabilized a little, the next year or two (or three or four) promises more of the same. But there are models, tools, and best practices for navigating this change, and organizations that manage change proactively and systematically will perform better than those forced to change reactively.

This session will feature three panelists, two from businesses and one from healthcare, and will explore the methods, tools, and best practices each of their organizations uses to systematically manage change. We will hear from:

Each panelist will share a brief outline on how they have systematically managed change the last few years, followed by Q&A and discussion. Come explore insights on how to better navigate change within your team and organization.

### **Biographies**

#### **Karly Hall**

Karly Hall is a curious and driven problem-solver who empowers others to take action and maximize their greatest potential in life and business. While most of her 20+ year career has been providing award-winning marketing and brand management, she also has almost a decade of experience as a certified change manager, coach, trainer, and published author. Karly believes in the incredible impact others can have within their organizations and communities.

#### **Stacey Mueller**

Stacey Mueller is a Certified Change Management Professional. Her experience includes leading organizational change workstreams for large technology implementations, training practitioners and leaders in change management, consulting in organizations and leading organizations in establishing organizational change management as a core capability. She has spent most of her career in health care and social services and currently serves as Executive Director, Experience Management for Froedert Health in Milwaukee. Her background includes certification in PROSCI and LaMarsh change management methodologies and a master's degree in organization leadership and quality.

#### **Tara Tierney**

Tara Tierney leads the strategic communications for Amazon's signature, scalable, and innovative learning experiences for worldwide executives in order to better connect leaders to Amazon's Day 1 culture, promote successful ways of working, and help leaders evolve to meet future organizational challenges and realities. Diving deep into the communications style, brand, and voice of Amazon, Tara educates Amazon's top-5,000 executives and brings leadership best practices to life. Prior to Amazon, Tara held communications and change management roles at multinational companies including Mayo Clinic, Cargill, and Land O'Lakes, Inc.



## Best Practices in Leadership – A Panel Discussion (Breakout Session)

Chace Anderson, Superintendent, Wayzata Schools

Bill Lloyd, Director, Univ of Iowa

Marshall Smith, CEO, State of MN Direct Care & Treatment

Mara Stelzer, Director, Center for CI, General Mills

Friday, April 19 11:30AM - 12:15PM

What's required for effective leadership has shifted considerably the last several years, due to so many factors – the pandemic, changing work environments, staffing shortages, and so forth. Leaders have needed to change how they communicate, how they maintain and nurture culture, how they optimize workforce engagement and performance.

In this discussion, we'll hear from a panel that includes perspectives from four distinct sectors — business, education, and government. The panel will explore how leadership systems have changed the last few years, including new and emerging methods for better communication, decision making, succession planning, and maintaining or enhancing organizational culture and workforce engagement. With so many things changing – remote or hybrid workforces, staffing shortages, process and business model changes due to the pandemic and supply chain issues – leadership itself needs to change. Explore some of the emerging best practices and methods leaders are using to maintain or improve their own performance as well as their teams'. The panel will be moderated by Tammy Krings of The Conversations that Matter.

### Biographies

#### Chace Anderson

Dr. Chace B. Anderson has served the Wayzata Public Schools (MN) as its superintendent since July of 2008. Prior to joining the Wayzata team, he served 16 years with Edina Public Schools (MN) as assistant superintendent, high school principal, and middle school principal and associate principal. He served as a junior high school associate principal with the Burnsville Public Schools (MN) for two years and as the administrator for the Rochester Montessori School (MN) for two years. Dr. Anderson began his career as a science teacher, high school football and track coach, and gifted education instructor with the Bellevue Public Schools (NE). He finished his time in Bellevue as a junior high school dean of students and athletic director. Dr. Anderson earned his B.A. at the University of Northern Iowa in Biology Education, his M.S. in Secondary School Administration from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and his Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instructional Systems at the University of Minnesota. In the spirit of being committed to life-long learning, he also earned his superintendent (2008) and community education licenses (2017) at the University of Minnesota. He and his wife Barb have two adult children, both alums of Wayzata High School. Paul is a 2017 graduate of Iowa State University and is currently employed with the University of Minnesota athletic department. Emily is a 2021 graduate of the University of St. Thomas and serves as a kindergarten teacher with Spring Lake Park Public Schools.

#### Bill Lloyd

Bill is a South Carolina native who moved to the Washington DC area to work after graduating from the University of South Carolina. Most of his professional career was in the human service arena, managing programs and agencies that serve persons of all ages with a wide array of disabilities. For over 25 years, Bill managed programs that include early intervention, K-12 education, day support, supported employment, residential, in-home supports and senior services. He has also worked for 10+ years in community development. He currently serves as the director for the UI REACH program at the University of Iowa. UI REACH is a leader among college programs that support students with intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities to have a full college experience alongside their peers.

#### Marshall Smith

Marshall Smith is health systems CEO in Direct Care and Treatment at the Minnesota Department of Human Services. In his role, Smith oversees state-operated facilities and programs that provide mental health and substance abuse treatment services, as well as residential and vocational services for people with disabilities. He is responsible for leadership aimed at improving patient care and outcomes, enhancing and strengthening quality and compliance and overseeing





medical services. Smith has a dual administrative and clinical background in health care. Before coming to DHS, Smith owned and operated his own consulting company and worked as an independent subcontractor in various organizations. He also brings experience serving as a top executive in a variety of public, nonprofit and for-profit hospitals and health care systems across the country, including roles as CEO, COO, vice president, service line administrator, consultant and interim executive. In addition, Smith worked with Regency Hospital Corporation in Golden Valley, Minn.; CentraCare Health System in St. Cloud, Minn.; New River Medical Center in Monticello, Minn.; St. Mary's in Jefferson City, MO.; St. John's Regional Medical Center in Joplin, MO; and McLeod Regional Medical Center in Florence, SC. Smith has a bachelor's degree in nursing from Winona State University and a master's degree in health care administration from the Medical University of South Carolina. He is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, a Registered Nurse and a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator in the state of Minnesota.

**Mara Stelzer**

Mara Stelzer has worked at General Mills for almost 24 years. Most of her tenure was in Finance, but she has spent the last seven years in Global Shared Services. In her current role, she leads the Center for Continuous Improvement. Mara was born, raised, and educated in Minnesota (St. Ben's and U of M Carlson). She lives in Edina with her husband and two daughters, Rowan (15) and Neilah (8). Her son, Isaac, is serving in the US Navy as a Nuclear Engineer.



## The Journey to Excellence Using Baldrige – A Panel Discussion (Breakout Session)

Jennifer Houtman, Chief Optimization Officer, Iowa Donor Network

Tom Henry, CEO, Episcopal Homes

Terra Carey, Chief Quality Officer, Direct Care & Treatment (DCT)

Friday, April 19 11:30AM - 12:15PM

Today's environment is complex: leaders are navigating new and unique challenges, as most sectors and industries deal with staffing & talent shortages, continued supply chain disruptions, economic constraints, and ever-shifting customer & market expectations. While not a prescriptive "silver bullet," the now 37-year-old Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework provides leaders of any organization or any community a pathway – and some structure and evidence-based guidance – on priorities for improvement, such that they are focusing precious resources on the "right" things. Baldrige is about improving results.

In this session, we will hear from three leaders from several sectors, each exploring the value of Baldrige in helping their organizations improve outcomes, optimize resources, and better align operations.

All three organizations are on the journey to excellence, using Baldrige (and other frameworks, methods & tools) to guide their improvement efforts. All three have received recognition through their Baldrige-based state program (PEN and the Iowa Quality Council).

The discussion will start with each of the panelist outlining their improvement efforts: how and why they started using Baldrige; what other improvement systems and tools they use; and some context for their excellence journey. We'll then enter into a discussion, exploring the value they enjoy from using Baldrige as their management system; how they've mobilized resources and structured their approach; what impact it has had on actual results; lessons they've learned (and things they'd do differently); how they've sustained improvement.

Baldrige is more than just an Award: it's a validated management system that is being used by thousands of organizations nationwide (and worldwide) to improve outcomes, shape culture, align and optimize processes, and achieve and sustain high performance. Come explore the insights from these four organizations and see what it could do for your organization (or community!).

### Biographies

#### Jennifer Houtman

Jennifer Houtman is the Chief Optimization Officer at Iowa Donor Network (IDN), a non-profit organization that operates as the primary contact for organ, tissue and eye donation services for the state of Iowa. In this role she leads the Optimize the Gift work system which is responsible for leveling up the organization through the integration of human resources, training and development, continuous improvement, quality systems, and data reporting.

Jennifer has been a part of the donation and transplantation community since 2005 when she first joined IDN working with hospitals to strengthen their internal donation programs. Since that time, she has varied responsibilities including management of the hospital services program, director of quality systems, administration of the electronic donor record system, and has been responsible for coordination and implementation of the strategic planning process. Jennifer is also champion of IDN's Baldrige implementation and has served as lead writer for their Iowa Recognition for Performance Excellence (IRPE) applications.

Since 2013, Jennifer has been an active member of the IRPE program where she has served as an examiner, team lead, coach, and judge. She is currently a member of the Iowa Quality Center board of directors where she currently serves as vice-chair.

#### Tom Henry

Tom Henry is the recently appointed Chief Executive Officer for Episcopal Homes of Minnesota, A full continuum senior care community. Tom joined Episcopal Homes as Chief Financial Officer in 2015. Since that time, he has rebuilt a finance team and transformed financial systems. Seven years ago, he became the leader of the Episcopal Homes' Baldrige initiative and improved business systems in the areas of strategic planning, corporate compliance and leadership training.



In addition, he is the chief architect of Episcopal Homes' management incentive program, leadership training, and appreciative inquiry management tools. More recently, he has worked to improve Episcopal Homes' technology systems and human resource departments.

Prior to joining Episcopal Homes, Tom was the principal partner in Shannon Thomas Companies, where he assisted entrepreneurs in reaching the next level in their businesses. He has experience driving growth, building lasting business systems for companies facing transitions, and bringing new products to market. Tom spent his early career as a mental health practitioner, working in the areas of substance abuse disorders, serious and persistent mental health issues, and family therapy for people who suffer from these disorders. As his career progressed, his duties focused more on business systems, quality improvement and program development. This led to him graduate school to study public policy, nonprofit management and finance, discovering along the way that his passion was creating new and different approaches to building business systems that promote efficiency and continuously improve outcomes.

Tom is a summa cum laude graduate in interdisciplinary studies the University of Wisconsin. He holds a master's degree in public policy from The Hubert H. Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota, with concentrations in health care policy and nonprofit management. While a student, he played an instrumental role in transforming the nonprofit management concentration by petitioning to allow graduate finance courses from the Carlson School of Management and leading a team in designing a finance course for nonprofit managers within the Humphrey Institute.

Tom is married to Shannon, a therapist specializing in grief from traumatic death. He has five children who live in Colorado, New York, Wisconsin and Minnesota. He enjoys volunteering for the Performance Excellence Network, traveling, home remodeling, skiing, biking, and pursuing a new passion, pub curling.

#### **Terra Carey**

Terra Carey is currently the Chief Quality Officer of the State of Minnesota, Department of Human Services Direct Care & Treatment, a position she has held since 2016. In her current role, Carey oversees quality, continuous improvement, and DCT's Baldrige-based performance excellence initiative. Prior to her current role, she held a few other positions within DCT and was Executive Director of Minnesota Doctors For Health Equity. She holds a Masters in Public Health from the University of Minnesota and her Bachelors from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



## **Excellence in Education (Breakout Session)**

Denise Wood, Director of District Leadership & Improvement, Urbandale (IA) Community School District

Kaleem Caire, Founder & CEO, One City Schools (WI)

Klint Willert, Superintendent, Pipestone (MN) Schools

Friday, April 19 11:30 - 12:15PM

As with many sectors and industries, educational institutions are going through significant change: parents and students are demanding more; learning environments continue to shift; technology continues to accelerate; funding and staffing continue to be constraints.

In this session, we will hear from three educational leaders, each sharing a summary of how their district or school are focused on continuous improvement.

Each will share tips, tools, and good practices in a 10-minute "TEDtalk" format, followed by questions, discussion, and further exploration with participants. Though this session is focused on education, the insights and ideas can translate to any sector or industry experiencing change!

### **Biographies**

#### **Denise Wood**

Denise Wood is the Director of District Leadership and Improvement for Urbandale Community School District (UCSD) in Urbandale, Iowa. Denise believes that using a systems approach to continual improvement is essential to ensuring success.

She has served as a teacher, teacher-leader, and district administrator for 27 years, the last 20 years for Urbandale Schools. UCSD achieved a gold level Iowa Recognition for Performance Excellence award in 2018 and utilizes the Baldrige Excellence Framework as the foundation for its continual improvement journey.

Denise holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Iowa State University (Go Cyclones!), a Master's in K-12 Teaching from Viterbo University, and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University.

#### **Kaleem Caire**

Kaleem Caire is the founder and CEO of One City Schools, the operator of three schools: One City Preschool, One City Elementary School and One City Preparatory Academy. Prior to One City, Kaleem was the President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Madison in Madison, WI, co-founder of the Urban League of Greater Madison Young Professionals organization, and chair of the National Urban League's Education Committee. Prior to the Urban League, Kaleem held other executive leadership positions with Target Corporation, Fight For Children of Washington, DC, Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), American Education Reform Council, Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Kaleem holds a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has a Grassroots License with the United States Soccer Federation and is a part-time volunteer coach with the Wisconsin Rush Soccer Club. He is also a Pahara-Aspen Institute Fellow, the founder and Board member of the Wisconsin Independent Charter School Advocates (WICSA) organization, a member of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Chancellor's Advisory Council, and a member of the Boards of Directors of the National Foundation of Black and Latino Male Educators (NFBLM) and the Wisconsin Technology Council.

Kaleem is the father of five children ages 16 to 30. His life commitments are to create opportunities in places where people need them the most, to move people from poverty to prosperity, and to raise strong and caring children. His work in education has been chronicled in local, national and international news articles, research papers and books over the last 30 years.



**Klint Willert**

Klint Willert has been recognized as a leader in workplace culture, continuous improvement, and the implementation of effective tools to improve leadership effectiveness and employee engagement. Currently the Superintendent of Pipestone (MN) Schools, Klint also is an experienced consultant, speaker, and coach for leaders who want to improve workplace culture, leadership, continuous improvement, innovation, and teamwork.

Prior to serving as the superintendent of Pipestone, Willert served as superintendent of Brookings (SD) Public Schools, Brainerd School District, and Marshall Public Schools. He graduated in 2013 with an Educational Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of St. Thomas. His study was on leadership practices in Baldrige Award recipient organizations. He provides consistent leadership of community and regional initiatives, which is possible through his in-depth understanding of public and private partnerships to foster regional growth and success.



## Ignite Your Shift: Thriving through the Chaos of Change (Closing Keynote)

Anne Bonney

Friday, April 19 12:30 - 1:45PM

Change is hard. It's all around us: new ideas, organizational and market changes, new business models, new technologies, and even personal changes. And it isn't going away. In fact, it's accelerating. So having the tools to navigate change will improve your effectiveness and resilience – as leaders, as professionals, as human beings! Anne Bonney will spark your courage and ignite some action, sharing ground-breaking concepts from her red-hot book *Get Over It!*

In this engaging (and fun!) opening keynote, **Anne Bonney** – Change Management authority and author – will spark your courage with the ground-breaking concepts from her red-hot book, ***GET OVER IT!*** Explore strategies to extinguish the burning inferno that constant change and transitions have caused on your teams.

### Key Takeaways:

- Learn how to better navigate change in your life with more confidence, courage and resilience.
- Reduce the burden of stress that constant change causes.
- Explore how to turn change into a unifying factor that motivates, inspires, and improves productivity and other results!

### Biography

Anne Bonney, Change Management Authority & Author, CSP® grew up with “talks too much” on all of her report cards, so she made it a career and now collects passport stamps on her way to share her extensive knowledge and experience in thriving through change with audiences of often overwhelmed professional adults. She is an engaging conference Emcee, a two-time author, host and creator of *Dancing in the Discomfort Zone Podcast* and a certified virtual and in-person presenter. After 20 years in highly successful corporate and non-profit leadership positions, she now uses her experience, education and expertise to ignite YOUR courage to build resilience in change, conquer challenging conversations and lead with emotional intelligence.



## **igniteEX Unscripted**

Danger Boat Productions

Friday, April 19 1:45 – 2:15PM

*EX*perience a fun, hilarious, and impactful end to igniteEX 2024 with [Danger Boat Productions](#), a comedy improv group that will summarize insights from the day in a series of improv sketches that will have you laughing as you leave!

### **Biography**

Danger Boat Productions LLC's mission is to engage and educate audiences about complex social issues through improvisational theater and to teach improvisational theater skills that develop individual and community resilience. Since 2011, we've produced over 500 shows combining the art of improv with informative, educational conversations on topics ranging from racism in affordable housing, to municipal bonds versus levies, to education reform. Our workshops teach improvisational theater as a way to learn and practice interpersonal skills like listening, collaboration, and empathy.