

36th Annual Tennessee Labor-Management Conference



***Transforming Labor-Management Relations
Through Innovation and Best Practices***

August 17 – 19, 2026

**Embassy Suites
Murfreesboro, Tennessee**

Monday, August 17, 2026	
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Registration Golf and Bowling Registration are Available (Registration Desk) (Name Badges should be worn at all events.)
7:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC)
8:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.	Annual Tennessee Labor-Management Prayer Breakfast (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Welcoming Remarks Kim LaFavor, President Tennessee Labor-Management Foundation Invocation Victor Graves Insulators Local 52, ORNL Health & Safety Representative Oak Ridge National Laboratory Posting of the Colors Y-12 Fire Department Honor Guard CNS Y-12 National Security Complex National Anthem Victor Graves Insulators Local 52, ORNL Health & Safety Representative Oak Ridge National Laboratory Prayer Breakfast Speaker Common Ground: Finding Unity, Purpose, and Partnership in Time of Change Introduction by: Kim LaFavor Melva Tate, Ph.D., PHR, CLC President & CEO Tate & Associates Strategic Consulting
9:15 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.	Break / Networking
9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
	Uncommon Collaboration in Labor Management Relations (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Jan West Mark Kenny Hippo Solutions
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Lunch On Your Own
12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
	Challenges New Tech is Presenting to the World of Work, Workers, and Management (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by Jason Andrews: Joe Estey, Sr., Senior Performance Improvement Specialist Lucas Engineering and Management Services

Monday, August 17, 2026 (CONT.)	
12:45 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.	Cyber Security: Challenges and Preparedness (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Ray Parrish Matthew Lindsey, Lead - Defensive Cyber Operations Group Oak Ridge National Laboratory
1:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.	From Talent Gaps to Successful Transitions: Partnerships, Pipelines, and the 100-Day Playbook (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: A. J. Starling Antonio Adams Chief Operating Officer City of Memphis
1:45 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Break / Networking
2:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
	Burnout Isn't a Personal Problem: Rethinking Employee Well-Being at Work (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Kim LaFevor Cassie Shropshire, MS, LPC-S, NCC Save It for Therapy, LLC
2:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	An Overview of VPP (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Donnie Walker Christian Arroyo-Torres, Birmingham Region VPP Manager OSHA
3:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.	Break / Networking
3:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
	Nashville MC3 Apprenticeship Readiness Program (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Billy Dycus Sam Petschulat, MC3 Coordinator Nashville Central Labor Council
4:15 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Pioneer Award Enhancing the Labor-Management Partnership in Tennessee Through Innovation (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Presented by: Bill Robbins XR Technologies in Nuclear Workforce Development Julian Guerra Austin Arnwine Hunter Spencer XR Developer Instructional Technology Supervisor Field Training Specialist Consolidated Nuclear Security Y-12 National Security Complex
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.	Break / Networking

Monday, August 17, 2026 (CONT.)	
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.	Tennessee Labor-Management Conference Scholarship Banquet (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Welcoming Remarks Kim LaFavor Tennessee Labor-Management Foundation President Blessing of the Meal Victor Graves Insulators Local 52, ORNL Health & Safety Representative Oak Ridge National Laboratory 2026 Senior Sponsorship / Participant Recognition Presented by: Tyler Robbins 2025 & 2026 Scholarship Award Presented by: Tyler Robbins At the conclusion of the Banquet, there will be a presentation of the movie <i>A Life and Legacy: Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act</i>. Anyone interested in viewing this movie is welcome to attend. There will be a second opportunity to view this movie on Tuesday afternoon while others are participating in the bowling and golf activities.
Tuesday, August 18, 2026	
	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	The Four Essential Pillars of a Negotiator: Stories and Lessons Learned by UAW and Labor Relations Leaders at Ford Motor Company (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Jared Kesterson Gail Southwell, PhD, Executive Coach, Author Ford Motor Company Labor Relations (retired)
9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.	Building a Future Ready Workforce (Panel Forum) (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Chad Wallace Jason Thrasher, HR Director SimTech Mallory Watkins, Vice President Listerhill Federal Credit Union
9:45 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	Break / Networking
	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Employment Law Update: What you Need to Know (Location: Conference Center-Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Terrance Donnell Dr. Tina Camba, J.D. PhD Athens State University Dan Gilmore, J.D., Founder Squire Strategies
10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	Not If, but When: Best Practices and Application of AI in Today's Workplace (Location: Conference Center-Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Sanchez Anthony Dr. Tammie Bolling, Technology Faculty Pellissippi State Community College

Tuesday, August 18, 2026 (CONT.)	
11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Lunch On Your Own
12:00 p.m.	Golf – Old Fort Golf Course Bowling – Main Event Movie/Popcorn – Hospitality Room
Dinner On Your Own, Enjoy Murfreesboro!	
Wednesday, August 19, 2026	
8:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
	Stirring the Alphabet Soup - Changes at the NLRB, EEOC and DOL Impacting HR and Labor (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Brad Odom Mike Perkins, CEO Frontline HR
8:45 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.	Federal Mediation and Conciliation (FMCS) Services Update (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Lee Adkisson David Rose, Commissioner FMCS Beth Schindler, National Representative, FMCS Jimmy Valentine, Field Operations Manager Western Region, FMCS
9:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.	Is Your Organization ‘Safety Culture’ Ready?: Decoding Cultural Maturity (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Donnie Walker Dr. John W. Wells, Jr. EdD, MS, CSP, CMIOSH ESH Consultant, Assistant Professor Athens State University Dr. Bill Murray, EdD, MS, CSP Board Certified Professional
9:45 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	Break / Networking
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.	Door Prizes (Must be present to win.)
	Arbitration Topics Discussion: Violence in the Workplace (Location: Conference Center-Oakleigh ABC) Introduction by: Chad Mee Arbitrator Mark C. Travis Arbitrator Bradley A. Areheart
11:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.	Passing of the Gavel Conference Wrap-up (Location: Conference Center Oakleigh ABC) Kim LaFavor, President TLMF Chris O’Keefe, President-Elect TLMF

**Following the wrap-up, stick around for presentation of
Golf, Bowling, & Door Prizes and the 50/50 Raffle!!!**

Have A SAFE TRIP HOME!!



Keep updated on events by finding us on-line and on Facebook:

On-line: <http://www.tlmf.us>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/tnlmf>

2026 Speaker Bios



Antonio Adams
Chief Operating Officer
City of Memphis

Antonio Adams was appointed Chief Operating Officer on August 6, 2024. Mr. Adams previously served as Interim Chief Operating Officer from January 2024 through August 2024. Mr. Adams has served in multiple roles during his 19-year tenure at the City, including Equal Employment Opportunity/Labor Relations and ADA Compliance Coordinator, Deputy Director of General Services, General Services Director, Interim Total Rewards Officer, and Deputy Chief Operating Officer. Mr. Adams also previously led the Memphis-Shelby County Joint COVID Taskforce Emergency Response Team (ESF-7) and led the installation of Continuous Improvement and Lean Process methodology for cross-functional teams.

Mr. Adams holds a Bachelor of Science degree from East Tennessee State University, a Master of Science degree in Sociology from Middle Tennessee State University and a Juris Doctorate degree from Thomas Cooley Law School.



Christian Arroyo-Torres
Birmingham Region VPP Manager
U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Mr. Arroyo-Torres is a native bilingual from Puerto Rico and received his Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from the University of Puerto Rico – Mayagüez Campus in 2013. Mr. Arroyo-Torres moved to Jackson Mississippi as a recent graduate in 2016 to work for OSHA.

While employed with OSHA Mr. Arroyo-Torres has conducted numerous accident investigations in general industry and construction industry. Mr. Arroyo-Torres' duties also include managing OSHA's Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) by coordinating site evaluations, overseeing application and recertification processes, and ensuring participating employers maintain OSHA's safety and health management system requirements. During his tenure with OSHA Mr. Arroyo-Torres has served the agency as a Safety Engineer and is currently serving as the Birmingham Region VPP Manager.



Tammie Bolling, PhD
Former Computer Information Technology Chair
Pellissippi State Community College

Dr. Tammie Bolling is a tenured professor and is the former Computer Information Technology Chair at Pellissippi State Community College (PSCC) in Knoxville Tennessee (USA). She is a 2022 Fulbright recipient to Atlantic Technological University in Ireland, where she was a guest lecturer in Digital Healthcare, Master of Research True Research, Big Data Analytics,

BSc (Hons) Healthcare Innovations and Technology programs, consulting with various organizations, conducting research, and guest speaking at other universities in Ireland. Dr. Bolling is also a PSCC Mobile Fellow and an avid mobile technology researcher. She has previously designed various courses to be delivered via mobile technologies. Dr. Bolling constantly reviews and tests technologies to be used in a wide variety of instructional and business settings.



Joe Estey
Senior Performance Improvement Specialist
Lucas Engineering and Management Services

Joe Estey has over 40 years' experience training and consulting first line workers, foremen, supervisors, department managers and executives in Human Performance Improvement and effective leadership and management principles and practices. He works routinely with forest management and paper production, nuclear materials and chemical manufacturing, food processing, power generation and transmission, engineering, and construction companies and public agencies. Joe has been awarded three National Public Service Outreach Awards from the White House Leadership Executive Council from two Presidential administrations. His book, the Tomorrow

Tapestry: Life Woven on the Fabric of Change (2003) was one of Publish America's Best Selling business books in 2008. Joe has been honored to work with like-minded professionals from a variety of industries and interests while serving on the Board of Directors for the Community of Human and Organizational Learning the past five years.



Victor Graves
Insulators Local 52, ORNL Health & Safety Representative
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

A dedicated union insulator since 1999, Graves began his career at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and joined the Atomic Trades and Labor Council (ATLC) in 2004. His commitment to advocating for workers and strengthening workplace safety led to his selection as Chief Steward in 2014 and appointment as ATLC Health and Safety Officer in January 2025. Graves is also a proven leader, including his service with the Tennessee Labor Management Foundation (TLMF),

which further extends his contributions to labor-management relations on both a state and local level. He considers it both a privilege and an honor to serve working people and remain deeply committed to protecting, supporting, and advocating for the workforce.



**Mark Kenny,
Keynote & Strategist
Principal-Hippo Solutions**

You don't need another team-building or communication session. You need someone who actually helps teams work better together. Mark Kenny is a former software company founder who saw organizations try to solve collaboration problems with systems and tools, while the real issues were happening in how people and teams worked together. Now, Mark helps organizations and teams realign and move forward together again, especially when pressure is high and uncertainty is normal. Through highly interactive keynotes, retreats, and leadership experiences, Mark helps teams experience practical, human, immediately usable shifts in how they communicate, collaborate, and move forward together. Rather than teaching models in isolation, Mark uses them as tools in service of real conversations, clearer decisions, and healthier ways of working together. Everything he brings into the room is designed to be practical, usable, and relevant to the challenges leaders are facing. Mark is also an author, sharing practical insight on teamwork and collaboration grounded in real-world leadership experience.



**Dr. Kim LaFevor, TLMF President
Business Innovation Strategist
Higher Education Consultant
Professor of Business and Human Resources Management**

Dr. Kim LaFevor has spent 42 years between dual career paths in the automotive industry and higher education. Although she entered the workforce at the age of 15 while attending high school, as a daughter of a UAW union organizer and district committeeman, she followed in her father's footsteps beginning her adult working career with General Motors at the age of 21. Early in this career and after a transfer to the Saturn-GM Manufacturing complex under construction in the late 1980s and her completion of both bachelors and masters degrees in human resources, she was mutually encouraged by UAW leadership and GM Management to move into a management position in labor relations.

Her automotive career spanned over 21 years and included progressively responsible positions in labor relations, including multiple roles for Saturn GM Manufacturing to include Organizational Development Consultant, People Systems Training Leader, Leadership Development Advisor, Labor Relations Manager, and the last 7 years of her GM career as Plant Personnel Director Sales, Services & Marketing for Saturn Service Parts Operations in Spring Hill, Tennessee. As a first-generation college graduate, she decided to leave General Motors and retire in 2005 from a thriving career in the automotive industry. She describes this move to this second career in higher education as a step to "pay it forward" by serving a central role in preparing pipelines of human resource leaders who would best understand the value proposition of effective labor-management relations for collaborative cultures and sustainable organizations.

As of this year in 2026, Dr. LaFevor is in her 35th year in higher education teaching at the associate, bachelors, masters and doctoral levels, specializing in the areas of advanced human resource practices, labor relations and employment law, business strategy, leadership, and workplace complexities. In addition to her work as a higher education consultant, business strategist, she has also previously served in several other capacities in higher education to include roles as Global Envoy for International

University Initiatives, Interim Vice President of Global, Corporate, and Community Relations, Special Envoy to India, Senior Executive to the President for Strategy & Innovation, Interim Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Dean for the College of Business, as well as Department Chair, HRM & Management of Technology. She is an ACBSP Site Accreditation Chair and Accreditation Mentor to newly accredit or lead to university business school reaccreditation at colleges and universities both in the United States and all over the world. Collectively, this aforementioned work allowed her to guide efforts towards innovation and reimagining the academe for positive change for the benefit of students and employers alike.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, LaFevor has a Bachelor of Science Degree with dual majors in Psychology and Industrial and Personnel Psychology, a Master's of Science Degree in Human Resources Management, and a Doctorate of Business Administration with dual majors in Management and Education. She holds certification as a GM Internal Development Consultant through the UAW-GM Human Resource Center and holds professional HR certifications through the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), a Certified Human Capital Management Qualified Advisor (HCMQA) and Senior Certified HR Professional (SHRM-SCP) with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and a Public Sector Human Resources Professional Senior Certified Human Resource Professional (PSHRA-SCP) through the Public Sector Human Resources Association (PSHRA), along with other industry certification and credentials. LaFevor has been heavily engaged in professional organizations and civic roles to include President for the Tennessee Employee Relations Research Association (TERRA) for two different terms, State Director-College Relations for the Alabama Society for Human Resource Management (AL-SHRM), Board Member & Legislative Officer-Shoals Society for Human Resource Management (Shoals SHRM), Foundation Chair for the Tennessee Valley Chapter of SHRM, Advisory Council for Cyber Huntsville, President for the Alabama Association for Higher Education in Business (AAHEB), Labor Employment Relations Association (LERA) University Dean Council of Industrial Relations and Human Resource Programs (UCIRHRP), Board Member with the Alabama Labor Employment Relations Association (ALLERA), Accreditation Council for Business School Programs (ACBSP) National Legislative Affairs, National SHRM Advocacy Team, and several roles with the Tennessee Labor Management Foundation over the past decade to include Advisory Council, Board Member and now President.



Matt Lindsey
Defensive Cyber Operations Group Lead
Chief Threat Intelligence Analyst
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

Matt Lindsey is the Defensive Cyber Operations Group Lead and Chief Threat Intelligence Analyst for Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He is also a long time cyber education enthusiast in and out of work. A twenty-year veteran of the security industrial complex, he spends much of his time doing incident response and tracking emerging threats throughout the IT and Government worlds. When he's not manning the thin blue line between federal networks and the Internet, he enjoys the traditional nerdy pastimes of podcasts, Firefly, and Pokemon.



Christopher O'Keefe

Business Manager for Iron Workers Local 384

President of the Tennessee State Building & Construction Trades Council

President of RESET ARP Knoxville

Christopher O'Keefe serves as the Business Manager for Iron Workers Local 384, President of the Tennessee State Building & Construction Trades Council, and President of RESET ARP Knoxville. Born in South Florida and raised in East Tennessee since 2000, Christopher graduated from Morristown West High School in 2003 and later entered the union ironworker apprenticeship program in 2010.

As a Union Ironworker, Christopher has worked across the country on projects ranging from bridges and skyscrapers to TVA power plants and Oak Ridge laboratories. In 2017, he hired on with Iron Workers Local 384 as Local Organizer, where he focused on membership growth, contractor relationships, apprenticeship opportunities, and strengthening the local workforce. He was first elected Business Manager in 2020 and has continued serving the members of Local 384 by protecting strong wages, benefits, safety standards, and opportunities for working families.

In 2024, Christopher was elected President of the Tennessee State Building & Construction Trades Council, where he works with labor leaders, contractors, elected officials, and community partners to advance apprenticeship, workforce development, and responsible construction across Tennessee. In 2025, he also became President of RESET ARP Knoxville, partnering with Knoxville inner-city communities through CONNECT Ministries to create pathways into the skilled trades.

Christopher believes East Tennessee has a unique opportunity to develop and retain a skilled local workforce for future generations. His work is centered on the principle of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and the belief that strong communities are built by skilled workers with real opportunity, good standards, and dignity on the job.



Mike Perkins, JD

Frontline HR

Mike is a versatile, "in the trenches" Legal, HR and Labor Relations professional who has worked as an internal leader and as an outside consultant helping companies build productive, engaged and legally compliant workplaces. Mike's easy-going, "people-first" approach helps him develop strong relations with employees and managers at all levels. He also has the unique ability to maintain respectful, trust-centered relationships with union officials and representatives despite the often adversarial nature of the bargaining and grievance process. He is a credible and effective communicator, negotiator, trainer, and strategist. Mike's extensive background in law, HR, labor relations, mediation and leadership training make him adept at leading organizations through all aspects of the people management spectrum.

As an employment attorney, HR executive, corporate employee relations manager in the rail manufacturing and service industry, and as a successful employee and labor relations consultant and trainer for manufacturing, government contract services, logistics, tech, medical, non-profit, professional, retail, hospitality and service companies, Mike has counseled and trained hundreds of owners, managers and supervisors around the country and abroad on how to lead more effectively in any work environment.

Mike is also an experienced workplace investigator. He has conducted hundreds of workplace investigations for many well-known private and public companies, as well as non-profit organizations, on a wide range of issues including discrimination, harassment, whistleblower claims, workplace threats and violence, employee theft, wage and hour issues, and more. Mike is a certified EEO investigator, a member of the AAA Workplace Investigations Panel and a member of the Association of Workplace Investigators (AWI).

Mike is a licensed attorney (FL), a Senior Certified Professional in Human Resources (SHRM-SCP), a John Maxwell Certified Coach, a Certified EEO Investigator and a Certified Circuit Civil Mediator (FL) and Registered Mediator (AL). His greatest accomplishments and blessings are his 43-year marriage to Kim, three grown (self-sufficient) children and two wonderful grandchildren.



Sam Petschulat
Executive Director
Music City Construction Careers

Program operations leader with 8+ years building and scaling public sector workforce development programs. Experienced across program management, operations, grant development, partnership building, and stakeholder engagement.

As Executive Director of Music City Construction Careers, I lead all operations for a workforce development nonprofit that connects underemployed adults and high school students to skilled, living-wage careers through union apprenticeships. In my first year I scaled participant volume by 284%, built program evaluation and case management infrastructure from the ground up, and grew our funding to \$500,000 across four municipal, private philanthropic, and federal funders.

My work spans designing and improving programs, owning multi-funder grant portfolios, negotiating institutional partnerships with unions and employers, managing staff and budgets, and reporting to a board of directors. I've cultivated working relationships with senior leaders at the U.S. Department of Labor, Tennessee Department of Human Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and Metropolitan Nashville Government, along with union and apprenticeship leadership across the building trades locally and nationally.

I've been recognized nationally for this work with the NABTU Mark Ayers Award for Community Service (2024) and the TN AFL-CIO Humanitarian Award (2026). I serve on the national TradesFutures Apprenticeship Readiness Program Advisory Board and the Metropolitan Nashville Property Standards Board.



David Rose
Mediator
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

David Rose is the Commissioner (Mediator) assigned to the Nashville, Tennessee field office of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). In this capacity, he assists parties in contract negotiations and resolving workplace disputes. He is available to train labor and management advocates in collective bargaining, contract administration, forming and operating labor management committees, and other related topics.

Prior to joining FMCS, David was a field attorney for National Labor Relations Board assigned to the National Labor Relations Board's Philadelphia and later Memphis field offices. Prior to that, David worked in the private sector as an attorney and served in the active-duty United States Army.

David has over a decade of experience litigating and/or mediating labor law disputes. He has served as a mediator in numerous high stakes collective bargaining negotiations and employment disputes. He has designed and taught training on conflict management, traditional collective bargaining negotiations, interest-based collective bargaining negotiations, establishing labor management forums, mediation, and communications skills.

David received his Bachelor of Science and International Relations from the United States Military Academy. He earned his Juris Doctorate from the University of New Hampshire School of Law (Franklin Pierce Law School).



Beth M. Schindler
National Representative – Field Operations
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

Beth M. Schindler is the National Representative of Field Operations for FMCS. Ms. Schindler provides direct mediation services in high profile and complex negotiations, as well as multi-party bargaining disputes. In 2022, as Associate Deputy Director, Ms. Schindler provided oversight, coordination, and support for Field Operations and Client Services programs throughout the

US. This includes local and national collective bargaining mediation in the private, federal, and public sectors.

Between 2002-2020, Ms. Schindler served as Regional Director with program management responsibilities for all service delivery in the Pacific Northwest. Prior to 2002, she worked with labor and management to effectuate contract settlements as an FMCS Commissioner. In addition, Ms. Schindler provided relationship assessments, training, and relationship development program delivery in all sectors, including a wide range of conflict resolution models and negotiation processes.

Before joining FMCS in 1996, Ms. Schindler worked for Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 8 as a Union Representative. She also has in-depth experience with Taft-Hartley employee benefit trust funds through her work at Welfare and Pension Administration, Inc.



Cassie Shropshire, MS, LPC-S, NCC
Save It for Therapy, LLC

Heart Encourager. DEI Advocate. Counselor. Disability Employment Specialist. Trainer. Public Speaker. Wearer of many hats with one common goal: To lift others up and watch them succeed.

Cassie Shropshire is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Alabama. She has been employed with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) since 2014. She has worked as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and currently works as Business Relations Consultant with the agency. As a Business Relations Consultant for ADRS, Cassie serves as a bridge for

employers, helping connect them with qualified applicants with disabilities. Cassie has partnered with many businesses to afford job seekers with disabilities with training, employment opportunities, and

workplace accommodations. Cassie also provides disability-related trainings to employers to help make the workplace more inclusive and accessible.

Cassie is the owner of Save It for Therapy, LLC: a counseling practice rooted in self-love and care. Cassie provides mental health counseling with a focus on depression, anxiety, self-esteem, workplace stress, relationship issues, etc. In her private practice, Cassie provides mental health and DEI trainings for professional development and public awareness. Her life motto is to leave people better than you found them.

Cassie is a proud graduate from Alabama A&M University where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology with a concentration in Rehabilitation Counseling.



Gail G. Southwell, Ph.D., PCC

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615-275-5587

Gail is an author, Professional Certified Coach, and negotiation expert with more than 30 years of experience across the corporate, manufacturing, and finance sectors. In her book, *Lessons in Leadership, Laughter and Love*, she shares negotiation insights inspired by a mentor who encouraged her to approach negotiation and life differently. Gail retired as Director of Human Resources at the Ford Division. She now coaches and consults with organizations undergoing complex change, helping them identify transformative behaviors to reinvent their business models.

Gail grew up in Detroit as one of eight children. She worked full-time on the assembly line while attending school to pay for college and graduated in 4 years. Managing work and studies sparked her interest in teamwork and workplace respect. She was among the first women in labor relations. Gail started her career in 1973 and, by 1976, had become a Human Resources professional at Ford Motor Company, working in various locations.

Her focus on labor relations led to her role as Director of Human Resources at Ford. She is an executive coach, works with their teams, and teaches Human Resources at Bethel University and Athens State University. Gail's background and education shape her work as an executive coach, writer, and negotiator. She helps leaders build strong relationships through clear, fair communication, aiming for systems that benefit everyone. Gail has a BA, MA, and PhD in Depth Psychology, with a focus on achieving success in negotiation. In her research, she uses stories and memories to show how to make lasting agreements. As a professor, she helps students learn the values and habits needed to become leaders who act on their principles.

Gail offers executive coaching grounded in hands-on experience leading HR and culture transformation at Fortune 100 companies during periods of rapid change. She is dedicated to helping clients achieve meaningful professional results and develop into leaders who inspire confidence and build cohesive, productive, and profitable teams. Gail has over 30 years of executive experience in manufacturing, finance, and the not-for-profit sector. She holds a Ph.D. in psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute and specializes in building sustainable relationships.

As a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) with the International Coach Federation, she coaches leaders seeking to build high-performing teams. Gail also teaches Negotiations, Performance Management, and Human Resources at Bethel University and Athens State University. During times of division, Gail offers

practical advice. If you want real leadership that creates strong relationships and positive outcomes, she is someone to follow.



Dr. Melva Tate, PHR, CLC, AIC
Human Capital Strategist, TEDx Speaker, and Award-Winning Business Leader

Dr. Melva Tate is a Human Capital Strategist and serves as the President/CEO of the award-winning company, Tate & Associates, where she oversees three dynamic divisions: Strategic HR Partnerships, Tate Sports Strategies, and Melva Tate Speaks. Her firm delivers customized services in strategic planning, human resource consulting, business compliance, board governance, training & development, leadership and career coaching, and executive talent search to leading companies, universities, and nonprofit organizations across the United States and internationally.

Dr. Tate is a TEDx Speaker, best-selling author, credible activist, serial entrepreneur, and networking “Diva.” She is widely recognized for her ability to build and nurture authentic connections, living her mantra of “***Building Relationships Where Relationships Matter!***” With more than 30 years of proven industry experience, Melva brings creativity, strategy, and energy to every engagement. She infuses her enthusiasm for business, human resources, and career development with her passion for helping organizations thrive and empowering individuals to secure and enjoy the job of their dreams.

Before launching her firm in 2008, Melva served as the Director of HR & Administration for two start-up organizations, where she successfully leveraged her academic foundation and credentials: B.S. in Human Resource Management, Executive MBA, Ph.D. in Business Administration & Entrepreneurship, Professional in Human Resources (PHR), and Certified Life Coach (CLC). Most recently, she added certifications in DiSC Assessments for Teams and Artificial Intelligence Consulting, expanding the depth of expertise she brings to clients. Her thought leadership is featured in leading publications including *HR Magazine*, *Black Enterprise Magazine*, and the *Birmingham Business Journal* on careers, leadership, diversity, workforce development, and strategic initiatives. She has received numerous accolades for her professional excellence and community service. Among them, she treasures most her Navy Achievement Medal for commendable military service and the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for volunteerism.

Known internationally as an engaging speaker and captivating facilitator, Dr. Tate combines humor, interactivity, and practical insight in her keynotes and workshops. Her audiences leave inspired, energized, and eager to apply what they’ve learned. After every session, she welcomes each handshake, hug, and follow-up with her signature appeal: “***Let’s Stay Connected.***”

Favorite Sayings: “Hey Y’all,” “Put In The Work,” and “This Too Shall Pass.”

Purpose: Connector **Superpower:** Fixer **Kryptonite:** Impatience



Jason Thrasher, PHR, SHRM-CP
Director of Human Resources
SimTech, Inc.

Jason Thrasher is a native of Red Bay, Alabama, and a graduate of the University of North Alabama (Class of 1997). After living in several cities, he relocated to Huntsville in 2000, where he has built a distinguished career in human resources. With more than 24 years of experience spanning government contracting, healthcare, and retail, Jason currently serves as Director of Human Resources for SimTech, Inc., in Huntsville, Alabama.

Jason is also the creator of BestLife50, a platform dedicated to helping individuals live their best lives through mentoring, and insights on leadership and personal growth. Passionate about developing both emerging and experienced professionals, he serves as a volunteer and mentor with the North Alabama Society for Human Resource Management and Leadership Greater Huntsville.

In addition to his professional responsibilities, Jason gives back to the community through his service on the Board of Directors for Leadership Greater Huntsville and as a member of the ALSHRM State Conference Committee. He is also a guest speaker at seminars and professional development events, where he shares practical insights on leadership, human resources, and stories about real life.



Jimmy Valentine
Field Operations Manager, FMCS

Jimmy Valentine serves as the Field Operations Manager for the Western Region of the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service (FMCS). In this capacity, Mr. Valentine oversees a distinguished team of field mediators located throughout the Western United States and Hawaii, as well as mediators assigned to Texas, Georgia, and Florida.

Mr. Valentine joined FMCS in May 2012 as a Commissioner in the Los Angeles Region. He is recognized for his expertise in conflict resolution, facilitation, and relationship development training within both the private and federal sectors, and he is known for delivering these services with unwavering professionalism, integrity, and competence.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Valentine has served as a mediator and facilitator for numerous nationally significant matters spanning aerospace, major utilities, manufacturing, transportation, entertainment, and healthcare, including Kaiser Permanente, Dignity Health, and Providence. He has conducted many comprehensive labor-management training programs, which have supported hospitals and unions, aerospace organizations, cultural institutions, manufacturing operations, transportation entities, and federal agencies, including the Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Navy, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Veterans Affairs. Internationally, Mr. Valentine was selected to join a U.S. delegation to Lesotho, Maseru in partnership with the U.S. Department of State and the International Labor Organization in 2015.

Within FMCS, Mr. Valentine has contributed significantly to internal Agency initiatives. He co-facilitated a Regulatory Negotiation for the Department of Energy and was honored to serve as the Mentor for the 2020 New Mediator Class. In recognition of his exemplary service, Mr. Valentine received the FMCS Director's Award in 2020, the Agency's highest individual distinction.

Mr. Valentine holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Juris Doctor from Whittier School of Law. He was admitted to the California Bar in 2000.



Mallory Watkins
Vice President
Listerhill Federal Credit Union

Mallory Watkins serves as the Vice President of People Operations for Listerhill Credit Union, a nonprofit financial cooperative serving members through 18 branches across North Alabama and Southern Tennessee. With more than 15 years of human resources experience, she has held a variety of HR leadership roles and is passionate about building engaged workplace cultures, developing leaders, and creating positive employee experiences.

A graduate of the University of North Alabama, Mallory earned her Bachelor of Business Administration and has dedicated nearly nine years to Listerhill Credit Union. In her current role, she leads the organization's People Operations function, overseeing a team of HR professionals while supporting a growing workforce of over 300 employees. She also works closely with labor relations initiatives, including Listerhill's partnership with the United Steelworkers labor union, which represents the organization's full-time hourly employees.

An active leader within the HR profession, Mallory currently serves as President of Shoals SHRM and as Director-Elect for the Alabama Society for Human Resource Management (ALSHRM) Board of Directors. She also served as Chair of the 2026 ALSHRM State Conference, helping shape an impactful learning and networking experience for HR professionals across the state.

A lifelong resident of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, Mallory enjoys life with her husband, Dustin, their two children, Olivia and Tucker, and their beloved dog, Stormy. Her passion for serving others, advancing the HR profession, and supporting her local community continues to drive her both personally and professionally.

Pioneer Award Speakers



Austin Arnwine

Instructional Technology Supervisor

Master of Education in Instructional Technology

Julian is an XR Developer at the Y-12 National Security Complex within the Oak Ridge Enhanced Technology and Training Center (ORETTC). He specializes in digital twins, embedded systems, IoT, and artificial intelligence, leveraging these technologies to build interconnected industrial applications.

In his current role, Julian works on R&D initiatives that integrate extended reality (XR) directly with modern manufacturing workflows. His work spans virtual and augmented reality training systems, haptic force feedback

devices, tele-robotics, and the implementation of smart factory IoT simulations.

Through these integrated platforms, Julian is dedicated to modernizing technical training and advancing workforce development for complex industrial environments.



Julian Guerra

XR Developer

Master of Science in Computer Engineering

Y-12 National Security Complex

Julian is an XR Developer at the Y-12 National Security Complex within the Oak Ridge Enhanced Technology and Training Center (ORETTC). He specializes in digital twins, embedded systems, IoT, and artificial intelligence, leveraging these technologies to build interconnected industrial

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Hunter Spencer

Field Training Specialist

15 years in chemical, nuclear, and manufacturing

Associates Applied Science – Chemical

Y-12 National Security Complex

Hunter serves as a Field Training Specialist for the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge. He develops and delivers uranium process training to chemical operators.

As a member of the Production Activities Training (PAT) team, Hunter provides subject matter expertise input to the extended reality (XR) team at the Oak Ridge Enhanced Technical Training Center (ORETTC). This enabled the creation of scenario-based simulations that mimic high stakes uranium processing areas. These scenarios allow field based operators to be trained in real-world situations without real-world consequences. The team's combined innovative approach enhances workforce awareness, safety, and performance.

Safety Culture Panel



Dr. Bill Murray, EdD, MS, CSP
Board Certified Safety Professional

Dr. Murray has a bachelor's and a master of science in Safety Management from Murray State University, coupled with a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Maryville University, St. Louis, MO. A Certified Safety Professional with extensive experience in Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S). He is an award-winning safety leader with a proven performance record and comprehensive knowledge of regulatory compliance. A skilled behavior-based safety professional with passion and dedication to meet challenges associated with developing a habit-strength performance that brings value to an organization. While completing his Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Bill focused on groundbreaking research and the application of Locus of Control within the Safety Profession, discovering why clients plateau in their safety culture endeavors while creating solutions to address those hurdles. Bill has a broad-based background with measurable success in the Chemical, Manufacturing, Food & Beverage, and Energy sectors.



Dr. John W. Wells, Jr., EdD, MS, CSP, CMIOSH
EHS Consultant
Assistant Professor, Athens State University

Dr. Wells holds a Bachelor's and a Master's of Science in Safety Management from Murray State University, coupled with a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Union University, Jackson, Tennessee. Credited with the first-ever multi-generational research on moral and ethical decision-making among Safety Professionals (2012), having over thirty years in EHS management (Texaco, Goodyear, and more...) in manufacturing, petroleum, and chemical industries, experienced with OSHA's VPP, BST, Dow's Safe Working Styles, DuPont's STOP, along with numerous other programs. As a speaker, author, and practitioner, I continue to evolve my global philosophies, helping companies build sustainable safety cultures.

Employment Law Panel



Dr. Tina Camba, PhD, JD, SHRM-CP, PHR
Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management
Athens State University

Dr. Camba is an Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management at Athens State University, where she brings a dynamic blend of legal expertise, executive leadership experience, and academic scholarship to the classroom. Before transitioning into academia full time, she practiced law as a labor and employment attorney, representing educators and employees in a wide range of workplace matters. As a member of the Tennessee Staff Organization, she negotiated wages and employment terms directly with executive leadership, gaining firsthand insight into the complexities of labor relations and the foundations of effective employment relationships.

Her discovery of the strategic power of Human Resources led her to a distinguished career in HR leadership across the public, private, nonprofit, and higher education sectors. She has served in multiple executive roles, including Executive Vice President of Human Resources for a private company and Chief Human Resources Officer for the City of Chattanooga. She also led Total Compensation at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She has successfully negotiated collective bargaining agreements with employee represented groups, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Throughout her career, she has managed multi state HR teams and guided organizations through complex labor, employment, and organizational challenges.

In academia, Dr. Camba teaches courses in Human Resources, Business Law, and Ethics, and has served as an instructor for HR Certification Exam Prep programs. She is an active researcher, HR consultant, and freelance writer, committed to advancing the fields of labor relations, HR strategy, and workplace ethics. She is the College Relations Director for Southeast Tennessee Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). She also serves as Co Advisor to the Athens State University SHRM Student Chapter, supporting students in their professional development and encouraging engagement in the HR community.

Dr. Camba holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of California, Berkeley; a Master of Public Policy in Education and Labor Policy from Vanderbilt University; a Master of Business Administration in Management from Southern Adventist University; a Juris Doctorate in Labor & Employment Law from the University of San Francisco School of Law; and a PhD in Business Administration from the University of South Alabama. She is SHRM CP and PHR certified and is a Rule 31 Trained Mediator.

Her professional memberships include the Academy of Human Resource Development, Academy of Management, Southern Management Association, Society for Experiential Education, Southeast Tennessee SHRM Chapter, National SHRM, the Tennessee Bar Association, and the American Bar Association. She has served on the Board of Directors for the Southeast Tennessee SHRM Chapter as the Communications Director and the College Relations Director.



Dan Gilmore, JD

Founder-Squire Strategies

Dan graduated from Baylor University and Baylor Law School before serving as a Judge Advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps. As chief trial counsel at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, he received the Navy Commendation Medal for meritorious legal service.

Dan entered private practice in Chattanooga in 1990 with Miller & Martin, PLLC. During nearly twenty years with the firm's labor and employment practice group, he advised management at companies of all sizes, including Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE), the firm's largest client. In 1996, Dan was selected as captive counsel for CCE's West Group in Los Angeles, where he managed labor and employment matters across 14 states. After ten years in that role, he returned to Miller & Martin's Nashville office before joining Chambliss, Bahner & Stophel, P.C. in Chattanooga in 2009.

Licensed to practice in Tennessee, California, and Texas, Dan has represented employers in state and federal courts and before administrative agencies. His experience includes equal employment opportunity matters, management and employee training, alternative dispute resolution, and traditional labor law, including representation elections, arbitrations, and collective bargaining agreement negotiations and administration.

Dan remains actively engaged in supporting entrepreneurs and the business community. He serves as an instructor for the Tennessee Small Business Development Center, the Better Business Bureau's Business Breakthrough Accelerator, and Proof Incubator's Tennessee Statewide Food & Beverage Accelerator. He also mentors entrepreneurs through The Company Lab and serves as an instructor and advisor for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Veterans Entrepreneurship Program. As an adjunct professor at UTC's Gary W. Rollins College of Business, he teaches Government Regulation of Human Resource Management and Labor Relations and Negotiations.

Dan has held leadership roles with numerous community organizations, including the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce, Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, and the Chattanooga Regional Manufacturers Association.

In 2013, Dan founded Squire Strategies with a mission rooted in the traditional role of the squire—to protect and support the knight – which Dan applies to his clients. He helps companies avoid costly litigation, improve workplace effectiveness, and build stronger organizations through proactive, practical employment strategies.

Arbitrator Panel



Bradley A. Areheart

Professor of Law

University of Tennessee

Brad Areheart is a Professor of Law at the University of Tennessee, where he teaches contracts and all of the labor and employment courses at the law school. He is also an experienced labor and employment arbitrator. Prior to his time as a law professor, he worked in commercial litigation for half a decade at the law firms of DLA Piper and Jenner & Block. Professor Areheart has written extensively on labor and employment law, especially in the areas of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, genetics,

and pregnancy.



Mark C. Travis

Travis ADR Services, LLC

Mark Travis practiced labor and employment law for 25 years before becoming a full-time neutral in 2009, and thereafter served as Director of the Tennessee Labor-Management Center. Mr. Travis is a member of the National Academy of Arbitrators and serves on the neutral panels of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the American Arbitration Association, and as an administrative law judge for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.