



## **FPA 2021 50<sup>TH</sup> Education Conference Sessions**

### **FORWARD WITH HOPE**

#### **Welcome to FORWARD with Aysha E. Schomburg, J.D., Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau**

Aysha E. Schomburg, J.D., is the associate commissioner in the Children's Bureau in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, located within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As associate commissioner, she heads the Children's Bureau.

Schomburg joined the Biden Administration in March 2021 after serving as the senior administrator for program oversight for New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS). There she worked collaboratively with agency leaders to develop and implement plans for the operational infrastructure of ACS, while also developing and coordinating comprehensive organizational capacity-building strategies across programs. In addition, during the COVID-19 public health crisis, she worked closely with New York City's Department of Education and Department of Homeless Services to create and coordinate guidance for frontline staff. She also worked with the New York City mayor's office to coordinate a platform for listening to nonprofits and social services agencies regarding COVID-19 challenges and proposed solutions. She provided counsel to New York City's Office of Equity Strategies regarding the implementation of the ACS race equity plan and has provided recommendations to the agency on how to tackle inequities and racism in child welfare. In 2019, she was awarded the ACS Distinguished Service Award for "Assisting Children Separated from their Families at the Border."

Prior to joining ACS, Schomburg held a number of key leadership positions with the New York City Council, including assistant deputy director. Under this title, she managed the legislative activities of 13 committees in the human services division and provided legal counsel to the speaker and council members. Prior to that, she served as senior counsel and counsel to the Committee on Education.

Schomburg began her career at ACS as the director of parent recruitment where she focused on supporting foster and prospective adoptive parents. She also served as the director of youth development initiatives for the agency, where she developed a number of critical programs including pioneering the implementation of the nurse family partnership program for parenting youth, and the preparing youth for adulthood plan.

Associate Commissioner Schomburg, who has bar admissions in both the states of New York and New Jersey, received her B.A. from the University of Virginia, her M.A. from New York University, and her J.D. from New York Law School.

To learn more about the work of the Children's Bureau, please visit <https://acf.hhs.gov/cb>.

### **Forward with Hope, a Conversation with Chan Hellman, PhD**

Chan Hellman, PhD is internationally renowned for his work on building a hope-centered response to trauma. With over 150 scholarly publications and countless workshops in the areas of child maltreatment, domestic violence, homelessness, etc., Chan has focused his work on sharing the science and power of hope in our ability to overcome trauma and thrive.

Chan has trademarked Hope Centered and Trauma-Informed as the evidence-based framework to guide individual practice and coordinated community responses to trauma.

Learn more about Dr. Chan Hellman [here](#).

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**Children Hope Scale:** The Children's Hope Scale (CHS) is a six-item self-report measure of children's perceptions that their goals can be met. [Read More](#)

**Adult Hope Scale:** The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) measures Snyder's cognitive model of hope which defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)." [Read More](#)

**Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life:** *Hope Rising* is a clarion call to apply the science of hope in daily life and overcome the trauma, adversity, and struggles everyone must face. Hope is the most predictive indicator of well-being in a person's life in all the research done on trauma, illness, and resiliency. Based on nearly 2,000 published studies about hope, including their own research, Casey Gwinn and Chan Hellman call for rising hope to be the focus not only in personal lives, but in public policy in education, business, social services, and every other part of society. Hope is measurable. Hope is malleable. Hope changes lives. *Hope Rising* provides a roadmap to measure hope in your life, assess what may have robbed you of the power of hope, and then provides strategies to increase hope. It challenges every reader to be transparent and honest about their own stories of struggle and adversity, calls for the end of shame and blame in addressing the struggles of those who have experienced trauma, illness, or abuse, and provides practical ways to increase your Hope score and thrive because of it. [Get a Copy of Hope Rising](#)

## **FASD Through a Lens of Hope with Barb Clark**

Parenting a child with a disorder on the fetal alcohol spectrum can present many challenges for foster and adoptive families. It is vital for these families and the professionals who support them to understand the reasons behind the learning and behavioral challenges so they, together, can “try differently.” Participants will be able to:

1. Explore risk factors when illicit drugs, tobacco, and alcohol are used during pregnancy;
2. Describe FASD and connection between brain impairment and behaviors;
3. Explore diagnoses under the FASD umbrella;
4. Identify “red flags” for FASD diagnosis;
5. Consider co-morbid conditions, including the impact of trauma;
6. Discuss reframing and other strategies

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[FASD from a Trauma Lens](#) on the National Foster Parent Associations Training Institute.

[FASD Hope Podcast](#): FASD Hope is a podcast series about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), from the lens of parent advocates with over eighteen years of lived experience.

[The FASD Success Show](#): Jeff Noble is the Founder and CEO of FASD Success, an organization that provides hope and education to people caring for someone living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) through online applications and in-person training sessions, demonstrations, and consultations.

## **Building Relationships Filled with Hope with Amanda Cruce, Tecoria Jones, Jennifer Rhodes, and Kara Georgi**

Amanda Cruce is a foster and adoptive parent and has welcomed more than 50 children from Florida’s foster care system into her home. Most have been teenagers. She learned early on that loving foster children as your own kids and then seeing them return to their biological family is a complicated experience, but that’s the goal of fostering. Amanda discovered that being able to share such an experience with a community of supportive foster parents was invaluable. Today, she serves as the president of the [Florida FAPA](#), a special community that lifts up all parents who experience the joy, and sadness, of serving as a foster family.

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It is always better for children and youth to remain with their birth families if it is safe to do so. When foster care is necessary, the goal is to provide a temporary safe, stable, and nurturing environment for children and adolescents while actively seeking and supporting reunification with their families. A robust relationship between a child or youth's birth parents and foster parents or kinship caregivers can help achieve this outcome and reduce trauma for everyone. These relationships are best nurtured when child welfare staff, parent partners, court and legal personnel, court advocates, foster parent organizations, and other service providers are supportive and help facilitate early and ongoing communication.

The Birth and Foster Parent Partnership (BFPP) was formed in 2016 to support birth parents, foster families, kinship caregivers, and staff in improving relationships building connections, and using their collective voices to transform systems, culture, policies, and practices to improve outcomes for children and families. The partnership is being managed through a collaboration between Children’s Trust Fund Alliance (formerly known as the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds), Youth LawCenter’s Quality Parenting Initiative, and Casey Family Programs. As a collective group, the partnership is working together to accomplish the following goals:□

- Identify strategies to help birth parents, foster parents, and kinship caregivers work together to keep children and youth safe at home whenever possible and to facilitate reunification and prevent re-entry when foster care is necessary.□
- Increase involvement of birth parents, foster parents, and kinship caregivers in advocacy for improved policies and practices that benefit families, children, and youth.□
- Change culture and practice in child welfare systems to recruit and retain foster parents and kinship caregivers eager to and capable of partnering with birth parents.

Children and youth are most likely to benefit and thrive when the important adults in their lives cooperate with each other and share responsibilities and decision-making. Through the BFPP, we are working to promote lasting relationships between birth and foster parents and kinship caregivers to support families and to help child welfare systems improve their practices around supporting these relationships. In 2019, birth and foster parents/kinship caregivers from across the country worked with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center, and Casey Family Programs to create two complementary documents – one that is most useful for birth and foster parents/kinship caregivers working to build and sustain relationships and another that is most useful for staff and administrators working to create systems that will best support these partnerships.

### **A Fireside Chat with Justin and Alexis Black, Authors of Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat the Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness, and Love.**

Both Justin and Alexis are proud foster care alumni as well as recent graduates, authors, and business owners. Together, they've created ROSE (Rising Over Societal Expectations) Empowerment Group, a company structured to close the information gap for young adults as well as The Scholarship Expert, where they support students to graduate debt-free while obtaining the skills needed to be successful. Now, they have released Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness and Love to share their story of how they've had to redefine what love and healthy relationships look like.

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### **Growing up, they didn’t believe they had a future. Together, they are building forever.**

Alexis Black was six when her mother died and thirteen when her father went to prison for child endangerment. After subsequently surviving a long and abusive relationship, the college junior promised her foster parents that she would avoid romantic entanglements for at least a year. But when she met incoming freshman Justin on the first day of their scholarship program, they both felt the world melt away, leaving just the two of them in the room.

Justin Black lived in abandoned houses in the poorest section of Detroit before his parents surrendered him to CPS at the age of nine. He stayed in the child welfare system until he was graduated from high school. Determined to be the first in his family to pursue higher education, Black attended Western Michigan University, where he met beautiful third-year Alexis. At first, their past traumas--and their age difference--conspired to complicate their attraction. But the joy each took in the other eventually conquered those obstacles, and these two survivors journeyed hand-in-hand toward healing.

In their stark and often shocking story, Alexis and Justin reveal how two people brutalized in childhood managed to defy the odds, get healthy, and build a new life together. Guided by hope and a sense of purpose, as well as a desire to help others who have similarly suffered, they learned to reject the abusive patterns of their past, thereby breaking the cycle of generational violence and neglect.

Written in alternating accounts, Justin and Alexis offer a thoughtful exchange of ideas and personal experiences illustrating how anybody, no matter their background, can heal and find joy.

Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds and Discovering Healing, Happiness, and Love is a page-turner of a memoir that will restore readers' faith in dreaming big. Honest and vulnerable, this story is raw, wrenching, and necessary. Once you've read Redefining Normal, you will never perceive the plight of foster youth as an abstract statistic again. Justin and Alexis take you into the rooms where things happened, and their searing accounts will stay with you.

[Buy Redefining Normal](#) with the **coupon code 50offRN** to claim victory over harmful pasts today!

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### **ROSE from Concrete Podcast**

What are the expectations set before your race, gender, or social group? We discuss a shift in mindset and how individuals and communities can overcome the labels placed upon them by society. Justin Black is an author, keynote speaker, and Founder of the ROSE (Rising Over Societal Expectations) Empowerment Group and Co-founder of the Redefining Normal Company. Black became a best-selling author after co-authoring Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds And Discovered Healing, Happiness and Love, with his wife. He started the ROSE Empowerment Group and the ROSE From Concrete podcast with a vision to close the information gap for Black, Brown, and marginalized people after his experiences as a Black male in the foster care system.

### **Foster Welcome, A Message from Our Partners at Ritz Crackers**

The fan favorite cracker is partnering with the National Foster Parent Association to recognize and celebrate foster parents who welcome youth into their families.

The RITZ brand, one of America's favorite crackers, launches a campaign titled "Foster Welcome" to celebrate foster parents this Mother's Day and Father's Day. In collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, the program shines a light on foster moms and dads and their role in helping children in need feel welcome. "Foster Welcome" is the next iteration of the RITZ purpose platform, "A Taste of Welcome," which aims to promote

inclusivity and a sense of belonging by recognizing underrepresented groups of people and highlighting their unique experiences.

As a continuation of the brand's mission to make the world a more welcoming place, RITZ is celebrating and raising awareness around foster parents and the impact they have on the children they welcome into their lives. In the U.S., there are approximately 424,000 foster children<sup>1</sup> supported by foster parents who assume an immense responsibility and open their homes to give children a sense of home.

"Mother's Day and Father's Day are the perfect occasions to celebrate all the foster parents who might not get the recognition they deserve during this time of year," says Santiago Gomez Bernal, Associate Marketing Director at RITZ. "Through our collaborative with the National Foster Parent Association, we've learned there is much more to be done to help and support the incredible work these parents do every day. We hope to elevate their inspiring stories and raise awareness around how meaningful it is to be a foster mom or dad, from large families to single parents to same sex parents, they are truly the ultimate welcomers, and we are honored to share their stories."

As part of the program, RITZ released a long form video, titled "Foster Welcome," which illustrates the emotional, but exciting experience of welcoming a new foster child into the family. Created in collaboration with The Martin Agency and the National Foster Parent Association, the team worked together to ensure the story brought to life the authentic and real emotions foster parents and children experience during this first meeting. The video encapsulates the nervousness and excitement a foster parent often feels, and allows the viewer to appreciate the important role these parents play in supporting children's lives.

"At the National Foster Parents Association, we prioritize the education and advocacy for foster parents across the country," said Irene Clements, Executive Director of the National Foster Parents Association. "We are thrilled to have the support of RITZ Crackers and know their work to celebrate foster parents means so much to the foster community. We hope that this program from RITZ and our partnership will inspire those interested in making a difference to join us in welcoming children into their families."

RITZ has also created fun and playful Instagram stickers for foster parents to use when sharing photos of their family. For privacy reasons, in some states, foster parents are unable to share the identity of their foster kids when posting on social. They have had to resort to editing photos with censor bars or other icons, like hearts, which often block the child's joyful smile. With these stickers, RITZ is providing an alternative and letting users access these stickers simply by typing in #FosterWelcome into the sticker search bar on Instagram Stories to share photos of their families.

For more information, visit [TasteofWelcome.com](https://TasteofWelcome.com) and follow RITZ on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

# FORWARD IN CARE

## Welcome to FORWARD with Santiago Gómez Bernal, Associate Director, Ritz

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## **Forward in Care, a Conversation with Bessel van der Kolk, MD**

Bessel van der Kolk MD spends his career studying how children and adults adapt to traumatic experiences and has translated emerging findings from neuroscience and attachment research to develop and study a range of treatments for traumatic stress in children and adults.

In 1984, he set up one of the first clinical/research centers in the US dedicated to study and treatment of traumatic stress in civilian populations, which has trained numerous researchers and clinicians specializing in the study and treatment of traumatic stress, and which has been continually funded to research the impact of traumatic stress and effective treatment interventions. He did the first studies on the effects of SSRIs on PTSD; was a member of the first neuroimaging team to investigate how trauma changes brain processes and did the first research linking BPD and deliberate self-injury to trauma and neglect in early childhood.

Much of his research has focused on how trauma has a different impact at different stages of development, and that disruptions in caregiving systems have additional deleterious effects that need to be addressed for effective intervention. In order to promote a deeper understanding of the impact of childhood trauma and to foster the development and execution of effective treatment interventions, he initiated the process that led to the establishment of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), a Congressionally mandated initiative that now funds approximately 150 centers specializing in developing effective treatment interventions, and implementing them in a wide array of settings, from juvenile detention centers to tribal agencies, nationwide.

He has focused on studying treatments that stabilize physiology, increase executive functioning and help traumatized individuals to feel fully alert to the present. This has included an NIMH-funded study on EMDR and NCCAM-funded study of yoga, and, in recent years, the study of neurofeedback to investigate whether attentional and perceptual systems (and the neural tracks responsible for them) can be altered by changing EEG patterns.

His efforts resulted in the establishment of Trauma Center (now the Trauma Research Foundation) that consisted of a well-trained clinical team specializing in the treatment of children and adults with histories of child maltreatment, that applied treatment models that are widely taught and implemented nationwide, a research lab that studied the effects of neurofeedback and MDMA on behavior, mood, and executive functioning, and numerous training nationwide to a variety of mental health professional, educators, parent groups, policymakers, and law enforcement personnel.

## **The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of**

**Trauma:** Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; one in three couples have engaged in physical violence. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world's foremost experts on trauma, has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he uses recent scientific advances to show how

trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments—from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga—that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity. Based on Dr. van der Kolk's own research and that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score* exposes the tremendous power of our relationships both to hurt and to heal—and offers new hope for reclaiming lives. [Buy a Copy](#)

### **The Good News: What You Do Matters with Christina D. Bethell, PhD**

For the past 35 years, Dr. Bethell has built her work and career around an intentional goal to catalyze health care and public health transformation at the policy, systems, and practice levels. This has been driven by an unwavering focus on advancing a whole-person, whole-family, and whole-community model of care that engages patients and the public, is transparent, continuously learning, and collaborative. Dr. Bethell has been a national leader in the development of policy, practice, and research applications of population health and systems performance measurement and family and community-centered improvement methods. As founding director of the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI) and the National Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health ([www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org)), a project supported through HRSA's Maternal and Child Health Bureau, she has initiated and led the collaborative development, validation and national, state and local implementation and IT based public reporting of child, family and community health and health systems performance and outcomes.

Dr. Bethell has maintained a consistent focus on assessing and building knowledge related to positive health development, social and emotional well-being, and family and community health. She also advocates for policy reform and is currently advocating for positive health development, healing-centered and trauma-informed approaches nationally and in state and local areas. Dr. Bethell is passionate about enabling data-driven partnerships and translating the new brain sciences, mindfulness, and other mind-body methods to transform health and related services, with a focus on promoting self and community-led healing, addressing childhood trauma, promoting positive health, and advancing High Reliability Organizations. She earned an MBA and MPH from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD in public policy from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Bethell's current areas of focus include:

1. Promoting early and lifelong health of children, families and communities using patient/family centered data and tools that inform and drive transformational partnerships, innovation and improved health and well-being nationally and in state and local areas.
2. Integrating the sciences of human development, neuroscience and thriving into the training and practice of medicine. Specifically, to advance a relationship-centered, positive construct of health that fully engages patients, families, youth and communities to impact the social, emotional and behavioral determinants of health and improve health outcomes.
3. Putting patients, families and communities at the center of health services quality measurement and improvement and population health and equity improvement.
4. Advancing payment, performance measurement and systems reform to support a transformed health care system focused on population health, equity and well-being at all levels

5. Building research and evidence based advocacy resources and building capacity of the workforce to advance continued knowledge and innovations effective in promoting a whole-person, whole-family and whole-community construct of health and well-being.

### **Caring for Your Relationships with Marcus Stallworth, LMSW**

Marcus Stallworth, LMSW, Owner of Stallworth Counseling Services LLC, operates with a strength-based, hands-on approach. Spending close to 15 years providing Child Protective Services, he is recognized by the State of Connecticut as an expert witness for giving testimony. He has spearheaded several initiatives to promote the engagement of Fathers, the prevention of abuse and neglect, and the dangers of Social Media. He has direct experience educating and supporting Human Trafficking and Sexually Exploited victims, including those in Foster Care. He played a leadership role in Connecticut's Disaster Behavioral Health Response Network and oversaw recovery efforts in Newtown CT after the events on December 14, 2012. Marcus works with for Child Welfare League of America as a national consultant, trainer, and curriculum developer. He has had multiple articles published in CWLA's Children's Voice magazine, co-wrote the acclaimed Supervision for Success training curriculum, and is recognized in the "Acknowledgments" section of globally utilized New Generation PRIDE published in 2016. He was also a former member of the Board of Directors for the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA).

### **Paying It Forward: A Fireside Chat with Ángela Quijada-Banks, Author of The Black Foster Youth Handbook**

Ángela Quijada-Banks is an American author, spoken word artist, activist, and purpose coach. In 2016, she began publicly advocating locally and nationally for young people in foster care is right, interdependence, and overall revolution of the foster care system. In the spring of 2017, she worked alongside senator Tamara Barringer to pass house bill 630: Rylan's law, Family/ Child Protection & Accountability act. By the summer of 2017, she was selected out of 300+ applicants from all over the country to co-lead a group of over 100 young people and stormed the streets of Washington, DC. Together, meeting congressional members from their home district and coining the hashtag, #fosteryouthvoices.

In 2018, she met with federal and state stakeholders to continue speaking at events in collaboration with organizations such as Casey Family programs and individuals such as Jerry Milner while on the National Policy Council. In 2019, she collaborated with several organizations to support young people of color and those in foster care in their transition through photography, music, and poetry. At the beginning of 2020, she supported young people during the DAY at the capitol in Sacramento, CA speaking to over six different congressional members about how holistic stability is imperative for young people in foster care...

Now, she has created the BLACK FOSTER YOUTH HANDBOOK to help young people successfully AGE-OUT of foster care and beat these, as well as other statistics placed upon them. This handbook is also to support the work being done by their supportive adults (CASAS, Foster/ Resource Parents/ therapists and other organizations, etc.) to ensure the holistic wellbeing and HEALING of young people to grow into productive, HEALED & successful members of society. Her mission is to empower as many people as possible to uncover their divine purpose, unapologetically evolve, holistically heal and reach a state of soulful liberation. [Read More](#)

**The Black Foster Youth Handbook: 50+ Lessons I learned to successfully Age-Out of Foster Care and Holistically Heal:** Foster Care is a whole other world that most of the world's population knows little to nothing about. Many people do not know the very low statistics young people endure in order to successfully age out of foster care. Less than 5% of young people with experience of foster care graduate post-secondary education. There are many youth who become prey to sex trafficking or susceptible to suicide due to homelessness, mental health challenges, and no support system. Now, couple the child welfare system with the element of racial injustices and the history of white supremacy, and the topic may even become taboo. Supportive adults such as foster/resource parents, case managers, GALs, therapists, and social workers will also find this to be helpful in their roles in young people's lives. Success is possible regardless of where you come from, you just have to know where to look, who to trust, and believe in the one person that can get you to the other side of pain and trauma, you. [Buy a Copy](#)

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# FORWARD TOWARD CHANGE

## **Forward Toward Change, Be the Change You Want to See with Chris James-Brown and Hope Cooper**

Christine James-Brown became President and Chief Executive Officer of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in April 2007, assuming the leadership of the nation's oldest and largest membership-based child welfare organization that works to improve the quality and availability of child welfare and related services through standard-setting and advocacy.

During her tenure with CWLA, Ms. James-Brown has overseen the refocusing of the organization's business model and service strategy to maximize the impact of its member and partner network and further strengthen its capacity to anticipate and respond to the needs of children and families that are vulnerable.

Prior to her leadership role with CWLA, Ms. James-Brown served as President and CEO of the United Way International (UWI) for five years and was responsible for the efforts of UWI's worldwide network of United Way nonprofit member organizations—spanning six continents and five regions, and serving communities in 45 countries and territories.

For ten years prior to her time with UWI, Ms. James-Brown served as President and CEO of United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA), where she guided Philadelphia's largest private nonprofit organization for health and human services. She directed a staff of 130 that managed an annual fundraising effort raising of over \$50,000,000, and distributed funds to over 2,500 community-based agencies.

Throughout her career, Ms. James-Brown has worked tirelessly to help nonprofit health and human service organizations grow and expand their ability to serve children and families through the foundation and corporate philanthropy.

Ms. James-Brown has served as a member of the boards of the School District of Philadelphia, Community College of Philadelphia, the Samuel S. Fels Fund, the William Penn Foundation, the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, Citizens Bank, Public/Private Ventures, and the Pennsylvania Bar Association Judicial Evaluation Commission. She is currently a member of the advisory boards for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the Council on Accreditation and serves on the National Academies Committee on Building an Agenda to Reduce the Number of Children in Poverty in Half in 10 Years.

A native Philadelphian, Ms. James-Brown holds a BA in Cultural Anthropology from Rutgers University. In 1996, Drexel University awarded her an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

Hope Cooper is the Founding Partner of True North Group. She brings twenty-five years of public policy experience focused on improving outcomes and opportunities for vulnerable populations. She directs the national CHAMPS campaign to improve foster parenting policies and advises major foundations on child welfare policy and practice.

Before founding True North Group, Hope served as Vice President for Public Policy at Child Trends, a child development research center in Washington, D.C. Prior to that, she was a

senior program officer at The Pew Charitable Trusts where she designed and directed public policy initiatives, including Pew’s foster care reform initiative.

Hope spent ten years on Capitol Hill and held senior policy positions, including on the Senate Finance Committee and Senate Special Committee on Aging where she steered multiple pieces of legislation through the policy process. Hope has also worked in a senior government relations position at the national headquarters of the American Red Cross. Hope is a reform-minded advocate for children and families with a proven record of achieving policy change. She has testified before Congress and has been quoted in multiple national news outlets. Hope is based in Seattle.

True North Group directs the national CHAMPS campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting.

CHAMPS builds on research that shows that loving, supportive families – whether birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children.

CHAMPS calls on policymakers to prioritize foster parenting and strengthen policies and programs. CHAMPS offers a policy playbook and related tools to assist policymakers and child welfare leaders in making improvements.

CHAMPS partners have been key catalysts for change in nearly 40 states, CHAMPS is proud to be partnering with organizations and individuals that are leading efforts to make quality foster parenting a top priority, with statewide CHAMPS campaigns being led in New York, Vermont, Ohio, Georgia, Virginia, Oregon, Maine, Maryland, West Virginia, and Nebraska. Advocates, legislators, agency and program leaders, and others are leveraging CHAMPS resources and utilizing an array of strategies to promote thoughtful policy improvements.

### **Advocating for Homes for Youth in Care with Ruth Anne White, PhD, Christopher Patterson, and Jamole Callahan**

Ruth White is one of the nation’s leading experts on the nexus between housing policy and child welfare. She is co-founder and Executive Director of the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare and former director of Housing and Homelessness for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). At the Child Welfare League, she co-edited the landmark issue of the League’s journal, *Child Welfare*, documenting the extent to which children are needlessly held in foster care because their parents lack decent housing. Through White’s advocacy, over \$100 million in new funding for the Family Unification Program has been made available for families and youth in child welfare since 2009.

Chris Patterson is a passionate professional who spent his career over 25 years building companies in the field of Health & Human Services Arena, served as the HUD Regional Administrator for Region IX, an appointment of President Donald J. Trump, and later being appointed by Secretary Ben Carson as the National Lead for the (FYI) Foster Youth to Independence Initiative. He has been a Life-Long Resident of Spokane, Washington, and the Founder and CEO of [BreakThrough Inc.](#), a specialized residential youth treatment service agency with proven, competent, and compassionate professionals who provide a wide range of client-based services. Accredited with CARF, the agency employs over 100 FTE’s. Recently created a company called **SteadFast Supported Living Inc.** which supports Developmentally Delayed Adults who need unique services to “Support clients through and to self-sufficiency & independence for a better quality of life”.

Jamole Callahan is an international trainer and motivational speaker on topics ranging from child welfare system reform to housing and community development. Jamole is a co-host of The Daily JAM which highlights a variety of social and urban issues on a national stage. Over the past six years, Jamole led a group of current and former foster youth through the process of working with legislators and federal policy-makers to synchronize federal housing and child welfare programs to close the gaps through which youth fall into homelessness and human trafficking on their journey to adulthood. Jamole worked closely with the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to design the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities proposal – to align HUD’s Family Unification Program Vouchers with emancipation and eliminate geographic disparities in the program. Together, they created the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative. Since the creation of FYI in 2019, over 1000 youth have received vouchers and supportive services to prevent and end their homelessness. Jamole has trained thousands of professionals nationwide on FYI and has contributed to its expansion to every state in the U.S. Jamole serves on various private, non-profit Boards of organizations that promote better outcomes for foster and adoptive youth, and youth experiencing homelessness. Jamole’s vision for empowering foster parents, caseworkers, foster youth, and alumni to succeed is informed by his a 15 year career in child welfare training and development as well as the six years in foster care he spent moving through a variety of placement before finally aging out to independence at age 18. Jamole has a bachelor’s degree from Central State University.

### **Advocating for Community Support with Alison Caliendo, PhD**

Understand how your story is part of a larger shared experience and how to turn it into action. Dr. Caliendo will share her personal process for how she turns her stories and experiences into advocacy work that builds support for children and families in the broader community.

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Dr. Caliendo has long been passionate about at-risk populations and family systems issues and opportunities. In 2009 Alison moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, and began working in mental health care for children in foster care. While working with the foster families, she discovered the high number of kinship caregivers and their need for increased support. Upon further research, she realized that an astonishing number of children in Clark County were being raised by relatives, both formally and informally. She founded Foster Kinship to provide much-needed resources and peer-to-peer support for the dedicated individuals working tirelessly to raise their relative’s children, keeping these children both connected to family and safe from harm.

Ali holds a Ph.D. in Public Affairs from UNLV where she focused her research on how state child welfare policy contributes to the formation of kinship families. She received her Master’s Degree in Organizational Systems Renewal (OSR) from Seattle University, where she specialized in family systems and systemic trauma and healing, organizational consulting, and group facilitation. She holds an HR Masters Certificate from Villanova University. She graduated with honors with a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from the University of Chicago. Alison is a certified TIPS-MAPP instructor, Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, and has completed a certificate in Grandfamilies Leadership. She also on the board of the National Kinship Alliance.

Alison Caliendo, Ph.D., Executive Director, Foster Kinship

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### **A Special Message from Project Foster, Fostering Unity**

Project Foster is a program of Survivors and Victims Empowered (SAVE). Since the project's creation in 2016, Project Foster has supplied resource families across America with over \$1,000,000 in basic supplies and gifts. Now starting in 2019, after extensive research, we've found what we feel is the most effective way we can impact positive change within the foster care system.

We are creating a private network of family support groups (FAPA) for local foster, adoptive, and kinship (both official and unofficial) families, collaborative with but separate from the state, for-profit, and religious entities, to empower local families to build their own support systems, teach them to work hand-in-hand with local business to fulfill all needs big and small, uphold a strong foundation upon which your family can dream big about possible field trips and conferences (local, state, and national), and maintain an open environment where anyone can ask questions they might otherwise be afraid to ask. A place where your thoughts and ideas for a more harmonious family can become a reality.

Learn More at [www.projectfoster.org](http://www.projectfoster.org)

### **Going Forward: Nothing for Us, Without Us. A fireside chat with April Rivera-Curtis**

April entered the foster care system at age three and cycled through foster homes and kinship care until she aged out at 21. While growing up in the system, she noticed that among the many issues related to foster youth, sibling rights are a cause she promotes most passionately. In August 2002, April co-sponsored a Sibling Symposium to draw attention to the importance of maintaining sibling connections and gather feedback for a Sibling Bill of Rights. She was instrumental in helping pass in 2012 in Illinois a sibling law with a great group of advocates (Public Act 97-1076). That law seeks to preserve sibling relationships when in a child/youth's best interest.

April provides leadership guidance and advisory services to organizations and foundations with a focus on cross-system collaboration. Collaboration is a critical element of trauma-informed well-being and organizational well-being for child welfare, mental health, recovery, and juvenile justice.

### **Foster Welcome, A Message from Our Partners at Ritz Crackers**

The fan favorite cracker is partnering with the National Foster Parent Association to recognize and celebrate foster parents who welcome youth into their families.

The RITZ brand, one of America's favorite crackers, launches a campaign titled "Foster Welcome" to celebrate foster parents this Mother's Day and Father's Day. In collaboration

with the National Foster Parent Association, the program shines a light on foster moms and dads and their role in helping children in need feel welcome. "Foster Welcome" is the next iteration of the RITZ purpose platform, "A Taste of Welcome," which aims to promote inclusivity and a sense of belonging by recognizing underrepresented groups of people and highlighting their unique experiences.

As a continuation of the brand's mission to make the world a more welcoming place, RITZ is celebrating and raising awareness around foster parents and the impact they have on the children they welcome into their lives. In the U.S., there are approximately 424,000 foster children<sup>1</sup> supported by foster parents who assume an immense responsibility and open their homes to give children a sense of home.

"Mother's Day and Father's Day are the perfect occasions to celebrate all the foster parents who might not get the recognition they deserve during this time of year," says Santiago Gomez Bernal, Associate Marketing Director at RITZ. "Through our collaborative with the National Foster Parent Association, we've learned there is much more to be done to help and support the incredible work these parents do every day. We hope to elevate their inspiring stories and raise awareness around how meaningful it is to be a foster mom or dad, from large families to single parents to same sex parents, they are truly the ultimate welcomers, and we are honored to share their stories."

As part of the program, RITZ released a long form video, titled "Foster Welcome," which illustrates the emotional, but exciting experience of welcoming a new foster child into the family. Created in collaboration with The Martin Agency and the National Foster Parent Association, the team worked together to ensure the story brought to life the authentic and real emotions foster parents and children experience during this first meeting. The video encapsulates the nervousness and excitement a foster parent often feels, and allows the viewer to appreciate the important role these parents play in supporting children's lives.

"At the National Foster Parents Association, we prioritize the education and advocacy for foster parents across the country," said Irene Clements, Executive Director of the National Foster Parents Association. "We are thrilled to have the support of RITZ Crackers and know their work to celebrate foster parents means so much to the foster community. We hope that this program from RITZ and our partnership will inspire those interested in making a difference to join us in welcoming children into their families."

RITZ has also created fun and playful Instagram stickers for foster parents to use when sharing photos of their family. For privacy reasons, in some states, foster parents are unable to share the identity of their foster kids when posting on social. They have had to resort to editing photos with censor bars or other icons, like hearts, which often block the child's joyful smile. With these stickers, RITZ is providing an alternative and letting users access these stickers simply by typing in #FosterWelcome into the sticker search bar on Instagram Stories to share photos of their families.

For more information, visit [TasteofWelcome.com](https://www.tasteofwelcome.com) and follow RITZ on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

# SESSION CLOSING

Thank You, Until Next Time

Thank you for joining, and supporting, the 50th education conference of the National Foster Foster Parent Association, **FORWARD**.

Support of our members helps make it possible to accomplish all that we do.

Consider joining the NFPA today at [www.NFPAonline.org](http://www.NFPAonline.org).