



RETURNING & RETAINING TODAY'S WORKFORCE

MAY 25, 2023

BREAKOUT SESSION BIOGRAPHIES TABLE OF CONTENTS

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION	2
TRAINING A DIGITAL WORKFORCE	5
WORK-BASED LEARNING.....	9

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

FRIENDLY WORKSPACES.....	12
PRIORITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & WORKPLACE CULTURE.....	15
EXPERIENCES FROM THE FRONT LINES.....	17

Biographies written and provided by speakers.



RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS & DISCUSSION ON GROWING BUSINESS WITH STAFFING NEEDS IN MIND

CHRIS GRASINGER

HIGH COUNTRY REGIONAL MANAGER | MOUNTAIN BIZWORKS



Chris Grasinger serves as the High Country Regional Manager for Mountain BizWorks, overseeing economic development practices in all NWWNC counties for the organization. He also directs the Mountain BizWorks Market Advisors program, providing business brokerage and valuation services in 26 counties. With an MBA from Appalachian State University, Chris also manages a regional angel investment fund, the High Country Impact Fund, which focuses on investing in high growth startups and existing companies. He is an avid outdoorsman and the CEO of Center 45 Climbing & Fitness.





RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE

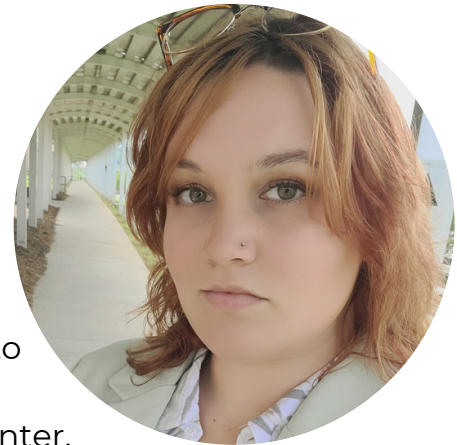


BREAKOUT SESSIONS: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS & DISCUSSION ON GROWING BUSINESS WITH STAFFING NEEDS IN MIND

LILY LARAMIE

SMALL BUSINESS CENTER DIRECTOR | WESTERN
PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Meet Lily Laramie, Director of the Small Business Center at Western Piedmont Community College. Her exceptional leadership skills have empowered aspiring entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of starting and growing their businesses. In addition to her role at the Small Business Center, Lily is also the proud owner of LaramiePhotos, a thriving photography business that showcases her keen eye for capturing moments of beauty and emotion. With her entrepreneurial acumen and artistic talent, Lily inspires others and makes a notable impact in her community.





RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



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DR. DAVID SHOWS
DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION |
WALKER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, APPALACHIAN
STATE UNIVERSITY



Professor Shows received his Doctor of Business Administration with a focus on Marketing and Analysis from Louisiana Tech University. He also received his Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Shows has held faculty positions at Auburn University at Montgomery, Spring Hill College and Appalachian State University and has taught undergraduate and graduate classes.

His teaching areas include Sales Management, Marketing Principles, and Marketing Strategy, among others. He has taught overseas as a visiting scholar, teaching graduate Marketing Strategy for Chonnam National University in Gwangju, South Korea. Dr. Shows is a member of the Academy of Marketing Science and the Society of Marketing Advances. He has presented yearly at conferences and will Chair the SEM session at the Society of Marketing Advances annual conference.

His research interests include restorative environments, escapism in atmospherics, entrepreneurial marketing, and research methodologies.





RETURNING & RETAINING TODAY'S WORKFORCE



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: TRAINING A DIGITAL WORKFORCE

HOW REGIONAL PARTNERS ARE WORKING TO ENHANCE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND PROVIDE BUSINESSES WITH A TECH-SAVVY WORKFORCE

CHRIS BECKWITH-TAYLOR FOUNDER & CHIEF STRATEGIST | GREENSTICK



Chris Beckwith-Taylor, the Founder and Chief Strategist at GREENstick Marketing INC, has become a prominent figure in the marketing industry by providing small businesses with the ultimate online marketing solution. But his journey to success was not always an easy one.

Chris began his professional career in 2006 as a leasing consultant in Richmond, VA, before quickly becoming Vice President of Marketing for a real estate developer and property management company based in Virginia Beach, VA. During this time, Chris recognized the need for businesses to have a solid online presence and stay competitive in the digital marketplace.

After years of honing his marketing skills and gaining valuable experience, Chris founded GREENstick Marketing in 2019, offering small business owners and marketers the ultimate solution to help local businesses succeed online. His expertise and dedication to his craft have made him a trusted partner for businesses in various industries.

Chris' motivation behind founding GREENstick Marketing: "I wanted to help small businesses succeed by providing them with the tools and strategies they need to enhance their online presence and reach their target audience. Every business deserves a chance to thrive, and I am passionate about helping them achieve their goals."

When Chris is not working, he enjoys spending time with family and friends, supporting community theater, and exploring the local food and beverage scene. He is also a devoted supporter of local businesses in his hometown, saying, "Supporting small businesses is important to me because they are the backbone of our communities. They create jobs, foster local economies, and bring people together."

Chris Beckwith-Taylor is an expert marketer and respected leader who has dedicated his career to helping businesses succeed. With his passion for marketing and commitment to the community, it's no surprise that GREENstick Marketing has become the ultimate online marketing solution for local businesses looking to grow and thrive.





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NATHAN BORN TECHNOLOGY OPERATIONS MANAGER | LOWE'S COMPANIES, INC



Nathan Born is a Technology Operations Manager with over 25 years of experience in IT. He is passionate about mentoring entry-level applicants and technology students and has helped many new professionals get started in their careers.

He is currently the Manager of the Store Software Support Team within the Lowe's IT Service Desk, which supports over 300,000 Lowe's store associates. In his 17 year tenure at Lowe's, he has led both Technical Support teams and Workforce and Analytics teams.





RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



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CARL GILBERT
SR. DIRECTOR, TECH LAUNCHPAD | LOWE'S
COMPANIES, INC



Carl Gilbert created and leads Tech Launchpad, Lowe's immersive onboarding program for traditional and non-traditional emerging talent in technology. Through Launchpad, new Associates kickstart their careers with a deep orientation to operations, bootcamps to hone and apply their skills, and rotational assignments to discover the breadth of career paths available to them at Lowe's.

Carl has been with Lowe's for 13 years, holding leadership positions in eCommerce, Customer Order Management, Supply Chain and Technology Business Operations. He received his BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Michigan and his MBA from Carnegie Mellon Tepper School of Business.





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ARIANA WILLIAMSON DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS | NC TECH PATHS



Ariana Williamson is a dedicated professional serving Wilkes Recovery Revolution, Inc., an accredited Recovery Community Organization in the foothills of the North Carolina Mountains. She is the project coordinator for workforce development and educational attainment programming, as well as the advisor for Recovery Friendly Wilkes County. She is also leading the research and development process for Recovery Friendly NC, a statewide effort to create recovery-friendly communities for all.

Ariana also co-chairs the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at Wilkes Recovery Revolution, Inc., working with an advisor at Appalachian State University. She is an alumna of Appalachian State, a nationally certified recovery coach, a wife, and a mother.





RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: WORK BASED LEARNING

WHAT'S THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO KEEP STAFF UP TO DATE ON TRAINING, TECHNICAL UPDATES, AND NEW PROCESSES? HEAR EXAMPLES OF LOCAL PROVIDERS THAT ARE OFFERING INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC TRAINING INSIDE THE WORKPLACE.

SHERRY BAIRD

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT
COORDINATOR, HIGH SCHOOL CAREER
DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR, INTERNSHIP
COORDINATOR | WILKES COUNTY SCHOOLS



- 5 years as Curriculum & Instructional Management Coordinator and Internship Coordinator
- North Carolina CTE Middle School Classroom Business Educator for 20 years
- Previous Work Experience
 - Banking Industry for 7 Years
 - Fiber Optic Cable Industry for 5 Years
- Education: Catawba Valley Community College: Associate Degree in Business Administration
 - Gardner-Webb University: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
 - ASU: Appalachian Transfer to Teaching Program





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TED OLLIS

DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRY TRAINING & CAREER DEVELOPMENT | MAYLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE



I grew up in Avery County and am a 1984 graduate of Appalachian State University. I have over 20 years' experience in manufacturing, having spent most of that time as the Production/Scheduling manager for Ethan Allen Interiors in Spruce Pine. I also worked as an Inventory Specialist for Professional Materials Management, which afforded me the opportunity to work with many different companies across the country. For the last 12 years I have been the director of the Customized Industry Training program at Mayland Community College. I currently live in Bakersville and enjoy farming and spending time with my 2 grandchildren.





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PAM WILSON CENTER MANAGER | NCWORKS CAREER CENTER, AVERY, MITCHELL, YANCEY COUNTIES



Pam Wilson has been involved in various workforce development activities for more than 29 years. She currently functions as director of programs through the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act (WIOA). In addition, she serves as center manager of the NCWorks Career Centers in Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties. Throughout her years in workforce development, Pam has also experienced being an assistant case manager and has served as a past President of Yancey County Chamber of Commerce.





RETURNING & RETAINING TODAY'S WORKFORCE



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: FRIENDLY WORKSPACES

POLICY DISCUSSION AROUND FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND RECOVERY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES.

LISA FINALDI
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LEADER | THE NORTH CAROLINA EARLY CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION



At NCECF, Lisa supports community collaboration and business leaders to build a strong foundation for lifelong success for North Carolina's children. Her focus is the Family Forward NC and NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading initiatives. Family Forward NC is an innovative initiative to improve children's health and well-being and keep North Carolina's businesses competitive through family-friendly workplaces that improve productivity, recruitment and retention and grow a strong economy.

Lisa has worked with communities around the world, on environmental health issues, across Europe and here at home in places like Calcasieu Parish in Louisiana and Stanly and Bladen counties in NC. She has fostered healthy and safe communities through many lenses, from changing policy focused on prevention of environmental health threats to enhancing what works.





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BREAKOUT SESSIONS: FRIENDLY WORKSPACES

POLICY DISCUSSION AROUND FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND RECOVERY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES.

DEVIN LYALL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | WILKES RECOVERY REVOLUTION



As an individual directly impacted by Substance Use and Mental health, Devin Lyall brings the lens of lived experience to her work. She is a dedicated community organizer and educator based out of Wilkes County, NC, with passion and practical knowledge of mobilizing and organizing directly impacted people. Devin’s dedication and advocacy efforts have earned her the Great State Hero Award for Crisis Assistance, the 2021 Chairman’s Award from the Wilkes Chamber of Commerce, the 2020 Recovery Champion Award through NC One Community in Recovery, the 2022 Harm Reduction Hero Award from Addiction Professionals of North Carolina, and most recently, the Todd E. Whitworth National Humanitarian Award.

Her story and work have been featured in The Economist, the Winston-Salem Journal, NC Health News, Spectrum News, VICE Media, and WRAL Television, and she recently presented her first TEDx Talk. Devin is an avid dog lover, who is the prime definition of “rescue foster failure,” and she takes the most pride in enjoying adventures with her children and family. One of Devin’s favorite quotes comes from the movie Patch Adams ‘You treat a disease, you win, you lose. You treat a person, I guarantee you, you’ll win, no matter the outcome.’





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RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



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POLICY DISCUSSION AROUND FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND RECOVERY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES.

LINDSEY SULLIVAN HEALTH STRATEGIST | STABLE WORKPLACES, APPHEALTHCARE



Lindsey Sullivan works with AppHealthCare as the Health Strategist. Lindsey is also the chair for STABLE Workplaces, a new initiative based in Watauga with a vision of thriving workplaces sustained by a stable workforce. STABLE Workplaces stands for 'Staff Training and Business Leadership for Evolving Workplaces'. The initiative was born out of a convening of area partners alongside Watauga employers to discuss the possibility of collaborating toward more resources in the workplace. STABLE is exploring ways to help mitigate local recruitment and retention challenges by better delivering resources to employers through unified messaging, collaborative training efforts, toolkit development and incentivized participation.





**RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE**



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: PRIORITIZING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & WORKPLACE CULTURE

WHAT ARE THE GENUINE CIRCUMSTANCES AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO GROW WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS?

DANIELLE STILWELL

HRD & RECRUITMENT MANAGER, COLUMBIA FOREST PRODUCTS



- Native of NC – Catawba County
- Proud 2000 Alum of LRU – BA in Sociology / Business Administration
- Strategic, proactive HR Professional with 24 years of service in the Manufacturing, Health Care Skilled Nursing / Rehabilitation and In Home Care for Developmentally Disabled sectors.
- Service to Community – Board Member for LRU College of Business and Economics Advisor Committee, VP of McDowell Chamber Board of Directors, and various partnerships volunteering to help in community efforts as needs arise such as the Corpening YMCA in McDowell, Child Care Coalition of McDowell
- Married to Allen Stilwell, 19 years. Allen serves as a real estate appraiser for AgSouth/Farm Credit in WNC. We reside in Morganton with our Labrador, Stella.
- I enjoy investing time with family, friends, exploring nature, volunteering in community efforts, and reading inspirational material.
- My life’s purpose is simple. I find joy in helping others. Wherever I serve, my goal is to be a connector of resources and cultivator of sustainable relationships.





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RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



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LEAH PERKINS
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER | WATAUGA
OPPORTUNITIES, INC



Leah serves as the Director of Finance/HR at Watauga Opportunities; a Boone-based non-profit providing vocational, residential, and community opportunities to individuals with barriers to employment and community involvement. She is a graduate of Appalachian State University and has over 12 years of comprehensive experience in Finance and Human Resources. Leah has worked in multiple roles with various non-profits throughout her career and has 20 years of experience in the non-profit industry.





RETURNING & RETAINING TODAY'S WORKFORCE



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: EXPERIENCES FROM THE FRONT LINES

HEAR DIRECTLY FROM RECENTLY HIRED YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN THE REGION ABOUT WHAT THEY PRIORITIZED WHEN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

KELSEA DIXON TEAM COORDINATOR WNC | SPANGLER RESTORATION



My name is Kelsea Dixon. I am originally from Shelby, NC, but the High Country is where I call home. I moved to the mountains almost 9 years ago and I'm confident it was the best decision I've ever made.

What started out working as preschool teacher in Boone, turned into becoming a full time nanny for a family in Blowing Rock. Who would have thought that the connections I made through that preschool would pave the way for life changing introductions and opportunities for me? Though I don't work with kids daily anymore, in my "free" time you can find me coaching t-ball, spending time with my niece and nephews, or maybe even having a drink at The Tavern with some of my best friends.

Ultimately, those connections and relationships lead me to my position with Spangler Restoration. I hope to grow and learn within the company to make a lasting impact on Western North Carolina, and beyond.





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ALLISON DODSON CHIEF OF STAFF | MANANALU, LLC



Allison Dodson is fueled by a passion for problem-solving and growth-development by building authentic relationships. She leads with vulnerability and uses an empathetic foundation of challenge and support to anchor her work.

After a transformational college experience nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Appalachian State University, Allison developed a passion for Higher Education. She continued her studies at the University of Virginia, where she earned a Master's in Student Affairs. She spent over 10 years of her career at several universities, teaching and leading students and families along impactful milestones throughout their collegiate journey. In 2021, she left the world of Higher Ed to join a purpose-driven water company, Mananalú; a company on a mission to eliminate single-use plastic bottles with a vision to save the planet for future generations.

As Chief of Staff for Mananalú, Allison utilizes a person-centered framework to cross boundaries and serve both employees and stakeholders through relationship building and development. Her passions thrive in a close connection to the pulse of the company in terms of bandwidth, morale, and growth potential. She supports Mananalú's Senior Leadership Team as a thought partner on the organization's priorities, challenges, special projects, and team culture.

While she's always championing the "unplastic" movement, you can also find her chasing new culinary pursuits, adventuring in the Blue Ridge mountains, and cheering for the (all-too-often-heartbreaking) Carolina Panthers. She lives in Blowing Rock, NC with her husband and their 5-year old daughter.





RETURNING &
RETAINING
TODAY'S
WORKFORCE



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PJ HENNESSEY SENIOR RISK ADVISOR | GRANITE INSURANCE

PJ Hennessey is a lifelong resident of the North Carolina High Country, born and raised in Blowing Rock. PJ graduated from Appalachian State in 2016 with a BSBA in Risk Management & Insurance.



Upon graduation, PJ worked as an underwriter for a local Excess & Specialty Lines broker for 4 years before joining the Granite Insurance team in 2020 as a Risk Advisor.

In 2023, PJ was promoted to Senior Risk Advisor, primarily working with individuals and businesses in the local community to provide comprehensive risk management analysis & solutions for personal and business insurance needs.

PJ currently lives in Boone with his wife, Melisa, and enjoys cheering on our Mountaineers & getting outside as much as possible to enjoy the place we call home.

