

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S SMALL BUSINESS ACADEMY

BIOGRAPHIES

APRIL 30 – MAY 3, 2023

APRIL 30 IN-PERSON Agendas for each location will be emailed to all registered participants.

MAY 1 VIRTUAL



Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, State of Wisconsin

Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, MSN, MPH, RN, was sworn in as Wisconsin's 46th Lieutenant Governor on January 3, 2023. A working mom, wife, and proud Wisconsinite, Lt. Gov. Rodriguez was elected on November 8, 2022. Before her election, she served in the Wisconsin State Assembly, representing Assembly District 13, comprised of a portion of Waukesha and Milwaukee Counties. While serving as a state representative, she worked on the Committees on Health, Insurance, Energy and Utilities, and Science, Technology and Broadband. Lt. Gov. Rodriguez is an experienced healthcare executive who has worked in various leadership roles for over 20 years, including founding her own small business. Prior to serving in the Wisconsin State Assembly, Lt. Gov. Rodriguez was the vice president of Population Health and Integrated Care Management at one of the largest healthcare systems in the Midwest. Before running for office, Lt. Gov. Rodriguez built a career in public health and population health management. She held positions with public health departments at the local, state, and federal levels, including serving as an epidemic intelligence service officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the chronic disease director for the state of Colorado, a healthcare systems consultant, and a vice president at a Fortune 100 Company. Lt. Gov. Rodriguez graduated from Brookfield East High School and earned master's degrees in public health and nursing from Johns Hopkins University. She is passionate about community service as a returned Peace Corps volunteer and Girl Scout Troop leader.

Links to join sessions can be found in your registration confirmation. Or, email Neelagangap@wispro.org.
For questions about the in-person events, email sbdc@uwlax.edu



Missy Hughes, Secretary & CEO, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

Missy Hughes is the secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the state's lead economic development organization. She was appointed to the post by Governor Evers in September 2019. Prior to joining WEDC, she was chief counsel and chief mission officer for Organic Valley, a Wisconsin-based, nationwide cooperative of organic dairy farmers. In her role at WEDC, Secretary Hughes oversees efforts to attract businesses to Wisconsin and help existing businesses expand, meet current and future workforce needs, promote global trade and investment, support thriving communities and small businesses, encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, address the unique needs of rural residents, and advance the economic well-being of every resident.



David Friedman, Senior Vice President | Small Business Banking Leader – Midwest Region, U.S. Bank

David Friedman leads the Small Business Banking team for the Midwest Region at U.S. Bank. With 23 years of experience in banking and financial services, 20 of them at U.S. Bank, his roles have included serving consumer, small business, and wealth management clients. In his current role, he leads a team of (number) small business bankers across eight states who support clients at every stage of starting and growing their business. David excels in developing partnerships and teams that work together for a common purpose. David lives in Green Bay with his wife, Shannon, and his son, who is a college freshman. David currently serves as a board member for the Wisconsin Policy Forum.



Isabel Guzman, U.S. Small Business Administrator

Isabel Casillas Guzman is the 27th Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration and serves in President Biden's Cabinet as the leading advocate for America's 33 million small businesses and innovative startups. Guzman has made advancing entrepreneurship her life's work. Growing up, she worked alongside her father in his chain of veterinary hospitals, an experience that shaped her understanding of entrepreneurship and its transformative effect on customers and on communities. She went on to launch her own businesses across a range of industries and advise other founders in paving their way to the American Dream of business ownership. She served as SBA's Deputy Chief of Staff in the Obama-Biden Administration and then led the California Office of the Small Business Advocate. In early 2021, President Biden asked her to lead the SBA, and her nomination was confirmed by a bipartisan vote in the U.S. Senate. Under Guzman's leadership, the agency manages a \$500 billion portfolio

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and deploys \$50 billion in funding annually to America's small business owners. As administrator, she spearheaded key agency initiatives to deliver essential pandemic assistance to the most vulnerable small businesses and underserved communities. She has also implemented effective strategies that help small businesses and innovative startups gain unprecedented access to capital, contracting, professional networks, technical training, digital tools and disaster support. As a result, more than ever before, millions of America's entrepreneurs have the resources they need to start, grow and build resilient businesses.



Dr. Eugene Manzanet, Ph.D., MBA, Senior Director, Diverse Business Development, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

Eugene Manzanet, after serving eight years in the United States Marine Corps Reserve has dedicated his time and energy to serving the Milwaukee area as resource of information for financial education, community, and economic development. As a current resident and homeowner of the near northwest side of Milwaukee, he was born in New York City and raised in the heart of the "South Bronx." He is currently the Senior Director of Diverse Business Development for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. He is responsible for providing strategic leadership to the Diverse Business Development (DBD) team that supports diverse businesses and communities statewide. His last position was Vice President of Community Lending at US Bank Home Mortgage Wisconsin. Before rejoining US Bank for fourteen years, he served as the Vice President of Community Development Banking for PNC Bank.



Eric Ness, Wisconsin District Office Director, U.S. Small Business Administration

Eric Ness is the director for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Wisconsin District Office, one of 68 SBA field offices nationally. He's responsible for the delivery of SBA programs and services throughout the Badger State, helping small businesses start, grow, expand, and recover from adversity. Ness began his SBA career in 1990 as a commercial loan officer, working on both processing and servicing of loans. He has served as finance chief and assistant district director for economic development. He was selected for his current position in December 2001. In spring 2014 he served as acting regional administrator for the SBA's six-state Great Lakes region for several months. Eric worked in northwestern Wisconsin before joining the SBA, first for Impact Seven as a business analyst and then as general manager of Western Wisconsin Development Corporation. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering and later obtained an MBA from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.



Sam McDaniel & Jessica Benish, 2024 SBA Wisconsin Small Business Persons of the Year, Fortune Favors Nuts

Sam McDaniel and Jessica Benish (pictured with founder Eric Rupert, center) of Fortune Favors Nuts in Cottage Grove are the 2024 SBA Wisconsin Small Business Persons of the Year. This small company, producing candied pecans that chef Eric Rupert describes as “the pinnacle of my career,” opened in 2018 and has grown to a million-dollar business with ongoing mentorship from the SBDC at UW-Madison and the use of several SBA loan programs.



Theo Iyasele, 2024 SBA Wisconsin 8(a) Graduate of the Year, Toki and Associates

Theo Iyasele of Toki and Associates in Milwaukee is the 2024 SBA Wisconsin 8(a) Graduate of the Year. Theo launched the company in 1987 and took on construction, architectural, and engineering projects throughout Wisconsin helped by the SBA’s 8(a) small business development program and SBA surety bonds and lending.



Jenny Birgitta Ulbricht, 2024 SBA Wisconsin Emerging Small Business of the Year, East View Coffee

Jenny Birgitta Ulbricht of East View Coffee in Kenosha is the 2024 SBA Wisconsin Emerging Small Business of the Year. She founded East View Coffee in 2020 to roast coffee and primarily purchases from woman-owned coffee growers and producers. With advising and a loan from the Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corp, she has expanded to include a tasting room and plans to hire more staff.



Amanda Roman, 2024 SBA Wisconsin Minority Small Business Champion, Domina Consulting

Amanda Roman of Domina Consulting in Racine is the 2024 SBA Wisconsin Minority Small Business Champion. She started her business in early 2021 as a WWBIC client with the goal of helping other small minority-owned businesses, and now collaborates with them and other SBA partners. Along with assisting startup and existing businesses, she guides those eligible to attain MBE, DBE, WBE, and VOSB certifications.



Joseph Davis, Sr., CBG Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Development Director, Construction Business Group

Joseph L. Davis, Sr. is the Construction Business Group's DBE Development Director. He desires to empower people through building solid businesses that fuel the construction industry. That passion to empower has been the driving force behind a lengthy and successful public service, law enforcement, disaster management, and construction career. He has worked on various multi-million dollar projects and has created international relationships through creative thinking of long-term economic growth strategies. He has vast experience in global trade, international relations, and capacity building in the construction industry. He has worked with top domestic and international architects, developers, engineers, and contractors throughout his career. But his most important passion is building existing and next generation DBE construction companies in the State of Wisconsin.



Micae Brown, Assistant Vice President, Business Access Advisor, U.S. Bank

Micae Brown is the Assistant Vice President, Business Access Advisor for U.S. Bank. As one of eleven positions nationwide, Micae addresses the three most prominent gaps that limit business growth and employment opportunities within the Black Business Community: information, connections, and capital. Micae works alongside U.S. Bank's various business units as an advocate for Black Business owners, assisting them in navigating the banking system to ensure they are set up for success.



David Gouwens, Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer (COO), Native Loan Fund

Mr. Gouwens has been in Operations Management roles for most of his career and has worked with WINLF for 12 years, first as an IT consultant and then as COO for the last five years. David has also performed the CFO role at WINLF for several years. David has a background in financial services, working as the IT Director and systems designer for a multi-state finance company for nine years. As such, he developed most of the company's software and currently oversees all client and portfolio management software programs at WINLF. David is relied upon in the NCDFI Industry for his expert finance & accounting advice. David has bachelor's degrees in physics and theater and is a USDA-certified 502 loan packager.



Joe Kremer, Director of Tech Council Investor Networks, Wisconsin Technology Council

Joe Kremer is director of the Wisconsin Technology Council's Investor Networks, which focuses on increasing early stage capital for Wisconsin's entrepreneurs. He has more than 25 years of experience launching businesses, commercializing products and creating entrepreneurial organizations. Joe has led start-up teams in various markets including electric vehicle battery charging, life-saving medical devices and consumer apps. He is the founding director of the Wisconsin Angel Network (now the Tech Council Investor Networks), served as the economic policy advisor in the Wisconsin assembly during the creation of Act 255 (Wisconsin's early stage investment tax credit), and worked at the European headquarters for PepsiCo Restaurants and Kraft Foods. Joe holds an MBA in Finance from the University of Wisconsin, along with undergraduate degrees in Philosophy and International Relations. In addition to his work at the Tech Council, Joe consults in the development and funding of solar installations and was recently certified as a PV Associate by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP). [linkedin.com/in/joekremer](https://www.linkedin.com/in/joekremer)

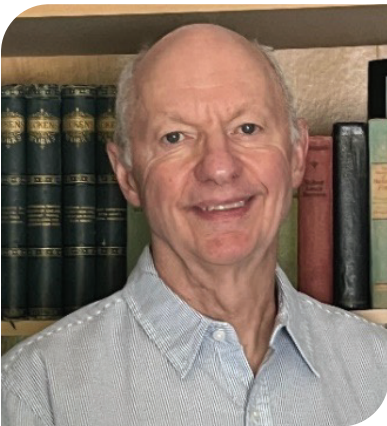


Wendy Baumann, President/CVO, Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation

Wendy Baumann serves as President/CVO of The Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC), a statewide economic development corporation. Baumann accepted this challenging position in the community in 1994, providing the leadership required to ensure the achievement of WWBIC's mission and to uphold the philosophy of serving businesses owned by women, minorities and low wealth individuals in Wisconsin. Former Director of Small Business Development at The Milwaukee Enterprise Center (MEC), Wendy previously served as Executive Director of The Hispanic Chamber Of Commerce of Wisconsin in 1987 and 1988. During that time, the Chamber was honored as "Hispanic

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Chamber of the Year” by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Under her direction, the membership organization was recognized on a state and national level, increasing membership by over 500%. Baumann has also worked at The Council for the Spanish Speaking as Director of Development and Research and prior to that, as a Program Coordinator for a job placement program for disadvantaged individuals at Goodwill Industries. Wendy serves on numerous national and local Boards. Baumann received both Masters and Baccalaureate from the University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee. She was honored by UW–Milwaukee as The Graduate of the Last Decade in 1998, Professional Dimension’s - Sacajawea Award in 2014, BizTimes Media’s Woman Executive of the year in 2017, and Association for Enterprise Opportunity Impact Award for Innovation on Main Street in 2022.



Dave Chappell, Certified Mentor, SCORE

Dave Chappell enjoyed a 38-year multi-disciplined career at GE Healthcare before retiring in 2011. He has extensive financial leadership experience with global management roles in Marketing, Engineering, and Manufacturing. Dave made a course change to business operations which included global leadership roles in logistics, sourcing, and international market development. He taught finance and economics at Ottawa University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is also coaching small business owners including startup companies as well as ongoing enterprises. Dave earned his Bachelor and Master of Business Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He was also an Introduction to Accounting Teaching Assistant. Dave is a Vietnam and Cold War Air Force veteran and is a Veterans of Foreign Wars Post Commander. He is a SCORE Certified Mentor, Workshop Presenter, and leads the Veteran and Military Outreach Program for the Southeast Wisconsin Chapter. Dave and his wife, Sally, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and have two children and four grandchildren. He is an avid outdoor enthusiast, enjoying mountaineering, hiking, and biking.



Jack Warrick, Loan Officer, Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation

Jack Warrick is a Loan Officer at WWBIC. During his senior year at Edgewood College, Jack started working with WWBIC as a credit analyst. In this role, Jack discovered his passion for finance and his commitment to supporting underserved communities with responsible capital. Having been with WWBIC for four years, Jack has assisted clients from a variety of business backgrounds. In his free time, Jack enjoys researching unique companies, watching basketball, and spending time with friends and family.



Brandon Hawthorne, Co-Owner, Twisted Plants

The inception of Twisted Plants sprouted from a health scare. Recognizing the lack of plant-based/vegan choices locally, we embarked on a mission to satisfy guilt-free cravings, even attracting “meat and potato” enthusiasts. Despite initial doubts and debunking myths about vegan food, Twisted Plants expanded to two mobile units, two brick-and-mortar locations (with a third underway), and a sibling eatery, Planted Vibes. Daily challenges range from cost management to competitive market positioning, yet our firm belief in making a difference propels us. Honored with accolades like Milwaukee Business Journal’s 40 under 40, Shepherd Express’s Best Vegan Restaurant in Milwaukee for three consecutive years, and the Highest Rated Restaurant by the Black Restaurant Association, Twisted Plants has flourished into a cherished community gem. Aspiring to be a community pillar, we’re confident that each surmounted challenge fortifies us, fueling our resolve to positively impact the world, one cruelty-free meal at a time.

MAY 2 VIRTUAL



Stephanie Chang, Regional Business Manager – North Central WI, Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce

Stephanie Chang serves as the Regional Business Manager for North Central Wisconsin with the Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce (HWCC). In this role, Stephanie is dedicated to supporting and empowering small businesses within the Hmong community and beyond, focusing on fostering economic growth and development. In addition to her role at HWCC, Stephanie is an active community leader and serves on the Board for Central Wisconsin Hmong Professionals. Through her involvement, she is committed to fostering connections and opportunities for professional growth among Hmong professionals in the region. Stephanie collaborates closely with local entrepreneurs, providing them with invaluable resources, guidance, and support to help them thrive and succeed. She is passionate about building strong relationships within the community and works tirelessly to connect businesses with the tools and resources they need to achieve their goals. With a strong commitment to continuous learning and professional development, Stephanie actively seeks opportunities to expand her knowledge and stay up on the latest trends and best practices in business management, community engagement, and small business support. In her spare time, Stephanie enjoys volunteering and participating in community events that promote cultural awareness and diversity. She believes in the power of community collaboration and is always looking for ways to contribute positively to the growth and prosperity of North Central Wisconsin.

**Jay Olson, Workshop Presenter,
Branding SME & Co-Mentor, SCORE**

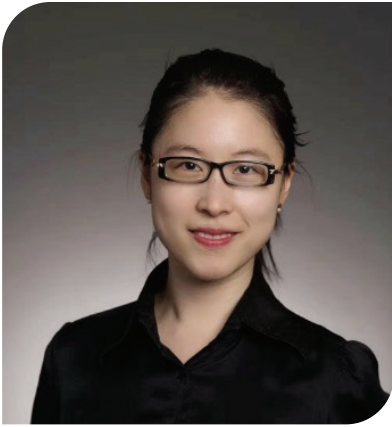


Jay Olson's multifaceted career spans 40 plus years as a brand strategy consultant and marketing communications leader working with Quad/Graphics, Northwestern Mutual, Ralston Purina and other leading companies. He has consulted with B2B and B2C organizations of all sizes in diverse industry settings with repeat success driving sustainable growth and brand equity. Now retired, Jay pays it forward as a SCORE volunteer guiding clients as a branding SME, workshop presenter and co-mentor. He passionately inspires and empowers entrepreneurs and business owners to build vibrant, purpose-driven brands and realize their potential.

**Ziming Wu, Executive Director,
Wisconsin Chinese Chamber of Commerce**



Since arriving in the United States in 1998 with a master's degree in Electrical Engineering, Ziming Wu has navigated a remarkable path from IT professional to entrepreneur and community leader. In June 2009, he founded a company that specializes in waterjet machine distribution, showcasing his ability to seamlessly blend technology with business to enhance operational efficiency across industries. In October 2017, Ziming's journey took a significant shift as he became a founding member of the Wisconsin Chinese Chamber of Commerce (WCCC), signaling his deep commitment to fostering growth and collaboration within the business community in Wisconsin. Through the WCCC, he has led initiatives aimed at bolstering small businesses' online presence, with a particular focus on digital marketing. This effort reflects his understanding of the critical role digital strategies play in contemporary business success. In the beginning of 2024, Ziming was appointed as the Executive Director of WCCC, a move that further solidified his reputation as a visionary leader. His tenure is characterized by a commitment to uniting people, disseminating knowledge, and equipping small businesses with the digital tools necessary for thriving in the modern marketplace. Ziming's leadership is defined by his genuine concern for community welfare and his unwavering commitment to ensuring business growth and prosperity. Ziming's narrative encapsulates a transition from a tech-savvy entrepreneur to a community-centric executive, highlighting the impact of innovative thinking, community service, and dedicated leadership on fostering a vibrant business ecosystem. His story is a testament to the powerful synergy between technological expertise and community engagement in driving forward the aspirations of the business community.



Kaiping Chen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in Computational Communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Kaiping Chen (PhD, Stanford University) is an Assistant Professor in Computational Communication from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research expertise is in science and technology communication and computational social science methods. Dr. Chen teaches social media analytics and research methods in the communications industry at UW-Madison. Her work is supported by the National Science Foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and the American Family Insurance. She was the invited speaker at the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine and EPA to share her research on stakeholder engagement and technology equity.



Jessica Williams, Founder & CEO, True Colors Marketing Firm

Jessica Williams is a TV Host and Producer on CBS WANE 15, where she hosts her daily talk show called 'Living Local 15'. In addition, she is an entrepreneur, emcee, speaker, and experienced marketing professional. A proud Dallas, Texas native, Jessica graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington, with a bachelor's degree in Broadcast Communications and a minor in Advertising. She also became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Jessica interned at news stations, worked in corporate management and then as Communications Director for a non-profit, before managing her own Marketing Firm in LA for many years. She's a skilled graphic designer, video editor and digital marketer. While living in Los Angeles, Jessica gained experience as an entertainment correspondent, red carpet host and content creator. She is also an emcee and speaker, emceeing various business/tech conferences, music festivals and events around the country. In 2022, Jessica relocated to Indiana to create WANE's lifestyle show from scratch. When she's not working, Jessica loves to cook, dance, binge her favorite TV shows, travel, and attend Broadway and live music events. You can catch her every morning at 9AM on WANE 15, talking all things food, finance, fitness, and entertainment in Northeast Indiana, taking you inside of the best restaurants and sharing the stories of local businesses and non-profits.



Benjamin Blanc, Government Contract Specialist, Wisconsin Procurement Institute

The Wisconsin Procurement Institute (WPI) serves all 72 of Wisconsin's counties as Wisconsin's APEX Accelerator, assisting Wisconsin businesses compete in the government marketplace. WPI provides Individual counseling at our offices, at client facilities, and virtually. WPI also provides Small group training – webinars and workshops, as well as conferences including: one on one buyer meetings at Marketplace; The Contracting Academy; Small Business Academy; Wisconsin Federal Contractor Forum; Acquisition Hour Series, Cyber Fridays Series, DOD Supplier Roadmap Series, Government Opportunities Business Conference (GOBC), End of Year Federal Contractor Update, Annual DOD Contract Management Update, Evening FAR sessions, and more.



Carol Murphy, Business Development Specialist, Wisconsin Procurement Institute

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Genia Stevens, Founder & Executive Director, Rock County Jumpstart

For over 20 years, Genia has supported businesses with strategic planning, business plan development, and community engagement. Genia has extensive experience with nonprofits, with a specific focus on organizational development, community outreach, community engagement and fundraising. For three years, Genia served as the first Entrepreneur in Residence for Madison College's Goodman South Campus. Genia has served on numerous nonprofit boards and committees, including the City of Beloit Equal Opportunities Commission, the Beloit NAACP Economic Development Committee, the Beloit NAACP Political Action Committee, Concerned Black Citizens, the Beloit Memorial High School's Master Planning Committee, and the Beloit School District Strategic Planning Committee. Genia was named a YWCA Rock County Woman of Distinction, one of Wisconsin's Most Influential Black Leaders, and she's received the Beloit NAACP's Community Service Award. She's currently serving as a Rock County Board Supervisor, representing District 13 and a she's member of the Board of Directors of Madison Region Economic Partnership (MadREP).



Lester Grace, Owner, Backyard Barbeque

Lester Grace was born in Houston, Texas raised in Beloit, Wisconsin and has lived in Janesville, Wisconsin for over the past 20 years. In 2015, Grace started Backyard Barbeque after the company he was working for closed. Backyard Barbeque began as a sandwich shop in Janesville, Wisconsin, but after two years Grace closed the shop to refocus his business on catering. Since 2017, the company has seen a steady growth. In 2021, the company added a concession trailer and then reopened the sandwich shop on Milton Ave in Janesville, Wisconsin.

MAY 3 VIRTUAL



Harlie Juedes, Interim Director, Small Business Development Center at UW-Eau Claire

Harlie Juedes is the Interim Director of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UW-Eau Claire and runs the SBDC's statewide Capital Access Clinic program. Harlie also owns a car wash business with three locations and a laundromat. Harlie specializes in financial and marketing consulting. Her marketing expertise includes web design, social media, online ads, and graphic/package design. Some of the most meaningful work to her is working on a marketing or financial project for a business owner who is very passionate about their business and providing that product or service for the community. In her free time, she likes painting and design projects. Harlie was a part of her community's first annual Community Supported Arts program and the instruction and development of the annual UW-Eau Claire Blugold Beginnings Exploring the Arts summer camps. Her work has made it on the cover of two Volume One Magazine editions and she has her paintings in permanent collections throughout the Marshfield Clinic Health System.



Greg Clark, Certified Mentor & Vice Chairman, West Central Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula of Michigan, SCORE

Greg Clark is a high energy, results-driven executive with an entrepreneurial spirit, having started 3 successful businesses. He has extensive experience in the global sales and marketing of diverse products with demonstrated success in profitable sales growth and increased market share. Greg has an MBA with a concentration in finance and an undergraduate degree in Marketing. Greg has also been trained in Six Sigma and Project Management processes. In addition, He is a recognized adjunct professor and trainer and has been blessed with the trust of multiple nonprofits with leadership positions that have facilitated positive change. Greg approaches life as a student and is always willing to help people achieve their goals and dreams.



Juan Corpus, Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, New North Inc.

Juan Corpus is the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for New North Inc., the regional marketing and economic development organization for the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin. In the role, Corpus leads New North's DEI initiatives, assists Northeast Wisconsin organizations with diversity portions of their ESG plans and mentors local partners on their respective DEI journeys. Previously he spent over 20 years at Humana in a variety of areas and progressively ascending roles. He co-founded the Latino Professionals Association of Northeast Wisconsin in January 2021, becoming its president in 2022, and is a board member of Casa ALBA Melanie, the Neville Public Museum Foundation, and the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation. He holds a bachelor's degree in public administration from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Corpus has been a member of the UWGB Alumni Advisory Board since 2020.



David Lindenstruth, Owner, Van Zeeland Nursery & Landscape

David Lindenstruth is an award-winning entrepreneur and current owner of Van Zeeland Nursery & Landscape. While working full-time as a Project Manager at Plexus in 2006, David opened his first successful business, which owned and operated HuHot Mongolian Grill restaurants. Within 5 years, David built that business to seven restaurants operating across two states, employing a staff of over 400, servicing over one million guest visits per year, and donating over \$125,000 annually. David's current business, Van Zeeland Nursery & Landscape, tripled its sales over his first 5 years of ownership. After moving to a new location two years ago, its community involvement and programming is exploding. David aspires to help other business owners to realize their visions and currently does so through guest speaking and as an adjunct professor at Fox Valley Technical College. Away from work, David's passions include enjoying his family, hunting, fishing, and woodworking.



Aina Vilumsons, President & Executive Director, Wisconsin Procurement Institute

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Alex Ysquierdo, MSc, Wisconsin Supplier Diversity Program Director, Department of Administration

Alex Ysquierdo is the Director of the Wisconsin Supplier Diversity Program within the Wisconsin Department of Administration, a role he assumed in earlier this year. With over two decades of experience in the financial industry and a passion for community building, Alex brings a unique blend of expertise to his current position. With sheer will and determination to succeed, Alex demonstrated unwavering strength and commitment. He earned his bachelor's degree from UW-Stevens Point, laying the foundation for his future endeavors. Additionally, he enriched his knowledge by obtaining a master's degree in organizational leadership and changed from Edgewood College. Alex's journey has uniquely prepared him for a purposeful life in Madison, Wisconsin. Alongside his wife and daughters, he continues to make a significant impact on the community, leading initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion through his role as the Wisconsin Diversity Supplier Program Director.



Shane Mahaffy, Lead Business Opportunity Specialist, U.S. Small Business Administration

Shane Mahaffy joined SBA's Wisconsin District Office as its Lead Business Opportunity Specialist in July 2015. Previously, he worked with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as a procurement contracting officer. He served as a team lead and supervisory contracting specialist for procuring services, equipment, and supplies for facilities in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan. He maintains a Level III Federal Acquisition Certification. Shane began his contracting career in 2004 with the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) – Milwaukee administering contracts for defense contractors throughout Wisconsin. He received Bachelors of Science in Business Management from the Milwaukee School of Engineering 2005. He is a Navy veteran.



Rosalind Roberson, Civil Rights Urban Outreach Strategist, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Rosalind Roberson is the DBE Support Services Coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Office of Business Opportunity and Equity Compliance (OBOEC). She is responsible for overseeing several programs to assist Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)s with technical assistance and resources provided by DOT and business development consultants at no cost to the DBE. Rosalind has been in this position for 16 years. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and started her professional career at the Milwaukee Urban League and then the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee. Her journey started as a labor development specialist recruiting minority men and women for the State of Wisconsin building trades apprenticeship programs. Since joining WisDOT in 2008 as the Civil Rights Urban Outreach Strategist, OBOEC has put in place several programs to assist in the development of DBEs and their participation on highway construction projects. These programs include Mentoring Connections for contractors and consultants, the Loan Mobilization Guaranty Program, DBE workshops and networking opportunities hosted at the Annual DBE Summit and 1-one-1 technical assistance or DBE Coaching with a professional consultant. Technical assistance can range from establishing your accounting systems to bidding as a DBE Prime.



Jason Rae, President & CEO, Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce

Jason Rae (he/him) is the founder and President & CEO of the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, an organization of more than 700 LGBTQ owned and allied businesses from around the state. Jason founded the organization in 2012 and has seen it grow to record numbers and achievements, including winning the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce's Chamber of the Year award in 2015. Jason also serves as Vice President of Affiliate Relations at the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, assisting the other 52 U.S.-based LGBTQ Chambers across the country to be as strong and successful as possible. In his volunteer time, Jason has also served as on a number of community boards. He currently serves on the Board of VISIT Milwaukee and at the end of 2023 completed five years on the Southeast Wisconsin Professional Baseball Park District, which is the entity managing the Milwaukee Brewers Stadium, where he chaired the Project Participation Committee tasked with ensuring diverse vendor engagement. Jason holds an Honors Bachelors of Arts degree from Marquette University in history and political science as well as a Master of Business Administration degree from Drexel University.



Rosie Arabiyat, Senior Business Analyst, City of Milwaukee

Rosie Arabiyat currently serves as a Senior Business Analyst with the City of Milwaukee's Office of Equity and Inclusion. In her role, she specializes in the Small Business Enterprise program, providing valuable assistance to small businesses throughout the certification process. Rosie holds a Master of Science in Management from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Prior to joining the City of Milwaukee, she owned and operated a restaurant for nearly 3 years. Additionally, she has over 5 years in restaurant equipment sales and lead generation. With an expertise in small business development and strategy, she is committed to helping others succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavors.



Amy Hacker, Owner, White Buffalo Trucking

Amy L. Hacker is a Native American Woman Owned DBE, located on the Oneida Reservation just outside Green Bay, WI. Amy started White Buffalo Trucking in 2013 as majority owner with her husband Cale Hacker. In 2013 White Buffalo Trucking was one truck, today White Buffalo Trucking operates 6 quad axle dump trucks with 6 owner/operators that work with White Buffalo as leased on drivers. Amy is not only a NAWDBE, but also has her MBE, and WBE. Amy and White Buffalo Trucking have been recognized by the DOT on the 41 Mega Project in Green Bay and has been the 2023 Honoree Women in Construction.



Jacob Haupt, Director of Jobs and Business Development, Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

Jacob Haupt is the director of Jobs and Business Development at WDEOC, Inc. Prior to his current position, he worked as a business development specialist for the Western Wisconsin Women's Business Center and the Wisconsin Procurement Institute – Wisconsin's only procurement technical assistance center. Throughout his life, he also worked at his family's 110-year-old water well-drilling business in central Wisconsin. Jacob holds a Master's degree in Public Administration and Urban Planning from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration and Political Science from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. He has also spoken nationally about using census data for market research for small businesses. Jacob is passionate about working with under-served populations and making an impact in West-Central Wisconsin. He is an avid sportsman and cyclist in his free time and enjoys reading about astronomy, history, science fiction, and fantasy.



Ashley Bender, Founder & CEO, AMK Cleaning Services, LLC

Ashley, the founder of AMK Cleaning, is a wife and mother in a blended family of five boys. Ashley had dreams as a young girl to own her own business; coming from a low-income, hardworking family. Gaining her intense spirit of generosity and kindness from her mother while inheriting her hard work and determination from her small business work experience. In 2012, a single mom yearning to be more present in her son's life while making a living to support them; Ashley purchased \$20 worth of cleaning supplies and got to work. Today, AMK is a successful business with the most amazing team of individuals. Above all, Ashley's priority is to be more than just an employer to her team, and that's exactly what she's done. In a dog-eat-dog world, she genuinely cares for others and their well-being. To Ashley, it isn't just about a job; it's a family at AMK. She ensures that her team members can thrive and grow both personally and professionally while working at AMK. Giving back to the community is just as important as serving it. AMK participates in donating to local non-profits as well as CleaningForAReason.org; donating free cleanings to patients going through cancer.