



Speaker Biographies

Fireside Chat

Alfreda B. Norman

Alfreda Norman oversees the Dallas Fed's communications and public outreach programs, which support healthy economic growth and increased understanding of the economy and the Federal Reserve. She has responsibilities for corporate communications, digital communications and design, community development, economic education and financial industry outreach.

Before becoming a senior vice president, she served as vice president of community development at the Dallas Fed, promoting economic inclusion for lower-income communities and individuals.

Prior to joining the Dallas Fed in 2004, Norman was one of the first neighborhood development officers hired by Bank of America in Texas, in charge of developing a strategic community development plan to extend credit to low- and moderate-income communities.

In addition to banking, she has extensive experience working with the public and private sectors. She has held management positions at the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs and The Container Store corporate headquarters in Dallas.

Norman provides leadership to many cultural and civic organizations. She is board chair for the Communities Foundation of Texas and serves on the board of the Dallas County Community College District Foundation, Southwestern Medical Foundation and Meadows Foundation. She also serves on the executive board of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University and on the advisory boards of Dallas Promise and the Commit Partnership. She is a member of the Dallas Assembly.

Norman holds a bachelor's degree from Southern Methodist University and is a graduate of the University of Virginia's Graduate School of Retail Banking.

Wende Burton

Wende Burton is Chief Philanthropy Officer, overseeing and supervising all of CFT's grantmaking activities and staff. She leads CFT's focus on economic security for working families through the Working Families Success model, workforce and employment programs, and child savings accounts. Wende also leads CFT's disaster philanthropy efforts, including support through North Texas Cares, providing emergency funding in response to COVID-19.

Prior to joining CFT in 2013, Wende spent more than a decade working with public and private organizations as a project manager, business analyst and organizational development consultant, helping businesses create and implement better processes to work more strategically. Wende also has extensive experience and interest in education, working as an English and theater teacher and developing effective training programs to support adult learners both in her corporate and CFT experience. Wende believes education is an asset and one of the most important factors for achieving economic mobility.

She holds a bachelor's degree in English, theater and secondary education from Doane University.

Michelle Thomas

Michelle R. Thomas joined JPMorgan Chase in 2000. She is vice president of Corporate Responsibility and Community Relations for JPMorgan Chase and responsible for managing a multi-million dollar corporate giving budget for the Dallas-Fort Worth and Oklahoma region. Michelle is also responsible for implementing the firm's strategic approach to philanthropy, which is multifaceted and aims to address community needs in the local market. She serves on the Dallas Market Leadership Team and represents the firm at community events.

Michelle has been in the financial industry for more than 25 years as a banker, human resource and community development professional. A Dallas native, Michelle earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Education from the University of Oklahoma and a MBA from Dallas Baptist University. In addition, she received her teaching certification from the State of Texas and Oklahoma.

She is personally committed to the community through her many volunteer roles, including Advisory Board of the Center for Nonprofit Management, Junior League of Dallas and the Kipp DFW Council, Board of Director for the Methodist Health Foundation, UT Southwestern Medical Foundation and TACA. She is an alumna of Leadership Dallas and a member of Dallas Assembly and Dallas Summit. Michelle was recently recognized as a 2014 Minority Business Leader in the Dallas Business Journal, recipient of the 2015 Business and Civic Leader award by the Dallas Black Dance Theater, the 2015 Income Award by United Way of Metropolitan Dallas and the 2017 Heritage Award by the African American Museum. Under Michelle's leadership, JPMorgan Chase received Outstanding Corporation of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals in 2015.

Being a catalyst for meaningful, positive, and sustainable change within high need neighborhoods and communities across the globe is important to JPMorgan Chase and to Michelle as a champion of the firm's commitment to corporate responsibility which is focused on driving inclusive economic growth.

Annika Little

Annika Little serves as Managing Director for Asset Funders Network (AFN). In her role, she is responsible for developing and guiding AFN's programming strategy, partnerships, research, and special projects aimed at engaging philanthropy to connect, collaborate, and advance change.

Annika is a strong advocate for asset building and financial security with more than 25 years of experience working in the philanthropic, corporate, and nonprofit sectors. She joined AFN as a consultant, launching the North Texas Regional network that became a blueprint for AFN's place-based initiatives as well as conceptualizing and building the organization's programming strategy, now encompassing seven issues areas and over 40 original research publications.

Before joining AFN, Annika supported a variety of clients as a strategic philanthropy consultant as well as working in the fields of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility. Annika served as a Senior Vice President and National Program Manager for Bank of America supporting the company's lending, investing, and giving activities to strengthen the economic health of communities. Prior to joining Bank of America, Annika held a number of positions with Fannie Mae and the Fannie Mae Foundation with a focus on housing and community development issues, affordable housing policy, as well as government and industry relations.

Annika holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Government from American University and a Master's in Business/Corporate Communications from Northwestern University. She serves on the Board of RAISE Texas, a statewide coalition of diverse organizations and individuals, united around the common goal of building financial security for low and moderate income Texans. Annika resides in Plano, Texas with her husband and two daughters.

Lean Into Learning

Christopher Connelly

Christopher Connelly is a reporter covering issues related to financial instability and poverty for KERA's One Crisis Away series. In 2015, he joined KERA to report on Fort Worth and Tarrant County. From Fort Worth, he also focused on politics and criminal justice stories.

Before coming to Texas, Christopher covered the Maryland legislature for the NPR member station in Baltimore. He also worked at NPR as a Joan B. Kroc Fellow – one of three post-graduates who spend a year working as a reporter, show producer and digital producer at network HQ in Washington, D.C.

Christopher is a graduate of Antioch College in Ohio – he got his first taste of public radio there at WYSO – and he earned a master's in journalism from the University of California at Berkeley.

Dena Jackson

Dena L. Jackson, Ph.D. is Chief Strategy Officer at Texas Women's Foundation where she has served since 2012. In this role, she oversees the effective business operations, ensuring a strong and capable team is in place to transform the lives of women, girls and their families across Texas while also driving Foundations research initiatives.

Following 14 years in healthcare administration and consulting, Dr. Jackson joined the nonprofit arena in 2001 starting with the Susan G. Komen Foundation training staff and volunteers around the U.S. to develop, manage, and evaluate local breast cancer programs. Later, Dr. Jackson opened both the Foundation Relations and Research Development offices at the University of Texas at Dallas during five years as Assistant VP of Research Development.

A native Texan, Dr. Jackson earned her Doctoral degree in Health Studies at Texas Women's University. She is a graduate of both Leadership Texas and Leadership North Texas. Currently, she serves as co-chair of Asset Funder's Network, Membership co-chair for Philanthropy SW and Advisory boards of Early Matters Dallas and AFN North Texas. She spends her free time cooking, reading, playing with her two cats and one dog and traveling with her husband, Bob.

Anna Crockett

Anna Crockett is a Community Development Advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, Houston Branch. She conducts research and speaks publicly on a variety of issues relating to economic inclusion, education, and workforce development. Most recently, she has conducted research on the childcare industry and disconnected youth. Her work has been featured in The Dallas Morning News and Essence magazine. Previously, she worked in the nonprofit sector in Austin, Texas. Crockett has a master's degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin.

Local & State Policy and The Impact on Equitable Wealth Building

Ann Baddour

Ann Baddour is the state director of Appleseed projects aimed at bringing low-income and immigrant consumers into the financial mainstream. She is actively involved in reform of regulations governing payday and auto title lending in Texas to build greater consumer protection into these transactions. She also advocates for consumer protections to address financial exploitation of vulnerable populations and improve protections against abusive debt collection practices. Her work in the areas of immigrant financial education and improving consumer disclosure and protection in remittance transactions has been presented at economic conferences in Benin, Africa; Mexico; and the European Union. She was a member of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Consumer Advisory Board, serving a four-year term ending in 2018. Ann is a Fulbright Scholar with a Master of Public Affairs Degree from the LBJ School of Public Affairs and a Master's Degree in Middle Eastern Studies from The University of Texas at Austin.

Courtney Collins

Courtney Collins has been working as a broadcast journalist since graduating from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in 2004. Before coming to KERA in 2011, Courtney worked as a reporter for NPR member station WAMU in Washington D.C. While there she covered daily news and reported for the station's weekly news magazine, Metro Connection.

At KERA, Courtney is lead reporter for the series "One Crisis Away," about life on the financial edge. Courtney has won awards from the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors, Texas Medical Association, Houston Press Club and last year received the inaugural consumer financial reporting award presented by the Public Radio News Directors Inc. and the National Endowment for Financial Education. "One Crisis Away" was also recognized by the Radio Television Digital News Association and National Endowment for Financial Education for excellence in personal finance reporting.

When she's not at work, Courtney loves to read and play outdoors with her husband and wild toddler.

Chris Cobler

Chris Cobler is a longtime daily newspaper leader who started his career as a reporter in his hometown at the Topeka (Kan.) Capital-Journal and then worked at newspapers in Colorado, South Dakota and Texas. In Texas, he first served as managing editor of the Denton Record-Chronicle and later was editor and publisher of the Victoria Advocate.

As editor, he led two newspapers to recognition as the best in the nation for their size. His newspapers have earned hundreds of state and national honors, including the Robert G. McGruder Award for Diversity Leadership. Cobler was the first Donald W. Reynolds Nieman Fellow for community journalism at Harvard University, where he studied the digital future of news and how to promote a constructive community conversation about changing demographics.

He is a recipient of the Texas Daily Newspaper Association Editorial Achievement Award for courage and commitment to open government; the Texas Press Association Frank W. Mayborn Award for Community Leadership; and a current board member and past president of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas.

Matthew Watkins

Matthew Watkins is the managing editor for news and politics for The Texas Tribune. Before becoming an editor, he worked as a reporter at the Tribune, The Dallas Morning News and The Eagle in Bryan-College Station. He earned his bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University.

Leaning into Action

Ashley McIver

Ashley McIver is senior community philanthropy officer focused on economic security. She oversees the Working Families Success Network, supporting local nonprofit agencies to increase their capacity to help struggling families in North Texas become more financially stable, gain meaningful work and develop economic mobility. Ashley also works to amplify CFT's philanthropic impact through partnerships with other critical asset-building nonprofits and funders, including the Dallas Economic Opportunity Leadership Academy, focused on strengthening regional leadership around the workforce ecosystem in Dallas. Ashley is a content expert at CFT in economic security, workforce development and youth, and brings an equity lens and focus to all her work.

Prior to joining CFT in 2015, Ashley worked as program manager for Big Thought's after-school program in two DISD elementary schools in Oak Cliff and Pleasant Grove, and she spent time as a stay-at-home mom. She credits her love of serving the community through nonprofit leadership to her time working with youth and their families at Mission Waco while attending Baylor University.

Ashley holds a bachelor's in psychology from Baylor University and a master's in public administration from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Leah King

Leah King was named president and CEO of United Way of Tarrant County in November 2019. As president and CEO, Ms. King provides leadership, sets strategic direction and ensures operational excellence, in accordance with the values and mission of United Way of Tarrant County. She is responsible for all aspects of the organization including fiscal oversight, growing financial support, developing processes and policies, facilitating cross-departmental collaboration and promoting a positive, multi-cultural environment.

Previously, she was executive vice president and chief operating officer. She was responsible for driving the strategic vision and direction of the organization in the areas of workplace campaign, donor relations, community investment, volunteer engagement and the Day of Action program.

Before joining the staff of United Way, Ms. King spent her career in the private sector as a public affairs, community relations, investor relations and marketing professional. A passionate advocate for children, Leah is active in the community. She currently serves as a director for Cook Children's Medical Center and on the board of governors for the Fort Worth Club. She is also an active member of the Fort Worth (TX) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. Ms. King is a founding member of the United Way of Tarrant County's Women United and has served as its Women's Fund development committee chair.

Greg Mangum

Greg Mangum serves as the Vice President of Economic Mobility at United Way of Metropolitan Dallas. He oversees the organizations' mission to ensure all North Texans have the opportunity and access to achieve a firm financial foundation. Greg leads the design, development and implementation of integrated strategies and programs that improve educational attainment, career pathways and financial capability.

Greg and his team create and manage a range of programs that put residents on new career pathways, increase their savings and access to credit, and help their children achieve academic success so they are prepared for college and career opportunities.

Greg also leads and convenes community partners and networks, including the Financial Inclusion Roundtable, to mobilize shared impact and to advocate for legislative and policy changes that improve equitable outcomes and systemic change across our community.

Prior to joining United Way in 2012, Greg led Community Relations strategies in Texas and Louisiana for Capital One and has held previous management roles at Westinghouse and Squire Communications. Greg graduated from Baylor University and has completed certificate programs from Southern Methodist University and Boston College.

Kathryn Arnold

Kathryn Arnold is the Chief Executive Officer of Pathfinders in Fort Worth, Texas, and has served in this role for 18 years. She received her Bachelors of Science in Social Work from Texas Christian University in 1990.

Kathryn believes that all individuals possess unique strengths and should have the opportunity and access to resources to achieve their potential. Her work at Pathfinders fulfills her passion for empowering people on their path to social and financial wellbeing. Under her leadership, Pathfinders has experienced significant growth, expanding the depth and breadth of the Best Practices Mentoring program and establishing the Financial Capability program. She is dedicated to helping people develop the skills and tools necessary to attain their personal goals and create a vision for their future that is filled with hope.

She is active in many community coalitions and serves on the Tarrant County Reentry Coalition board and the UNT Health Sciences Center Academic Community Partnership Advisory Board. She formerly served on the Mentoring Advisory Council of the National Reentry Resource Center. She can be reached at kathryn.arnold@pathfinderstc.org.

Susan Smithson

Aligning Words with Actions

Joe Antolín

Joe Antolín serves as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Asset Funders Network (AFN). Joe is a dynamic and entrepreneurial leader with 30+ years of experience as an advocate, mentor, litigator, and executive creating lasting impact in local and regional communities. In his role, he guides AFN's growth and the team's focused efforts to engage philanthropy to advance equitable wealth building and economic mobility across the United States.

Previously, Joe led a consulting practice, served in several executive leadership positions in nonprofit and state government, and was an active legal services individual and class action litigator. He has empowered and led teams in several organizations, provided executive coaching to nonprofit executives of color in several states, and served as a coach mentor for the racial equity national cohort of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Community Leadership Fellowship. He also served as Heartland Alliance's Senior Vice President, Heartland Human Care Services Inc.'s Executive Director, as a director at Catholic Charities of Chicago, and as the Deputy Director of the Illinois human services department.

In these executive roles, he oversaw policy change, advocacy, community engagement, and program design-implementation across issue areas including EITC and CSA, asset building for low income households (in subsidized housing and shelters), consumer protection, income supports, implementing FSA in Chicago public housing, immigration, refugee resettlement, anti-trafficking, affordable and supportive housing, workforce training, publicly financed jobs, transitional jobs program design, equity in state health improvement planning, and early childhood development programs. His experience started as an advocate and litigator with income supports and anti-poverty program benefits at the state and Federal levels. As an attorney, he litigated for civil rights, consumer law, disability benefits, and systemic reform with the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago.

Joe holds a J.D. from Columbus School of Law at Catholic University and received his Bachelor of Arts with Honors from Wesleyan University. He is licensed to practice law as a member of the Illinois Bar. He currently serves on the boards of the Illinois Public Health Institute, and Three Sisters Kitchen in Albuquerque. After decades in Chicago, he now resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Equity in Asset Building Relay Grant

Valerie Holloway Skinner

Graham and Carolyn's middle child, Valerie, has joyfully served as the Foundation's sole administrator for over 20 years. She has a B.S. degree in Education from Baylor University and an M.S. degree in Counseling from Texas Christian University. Valerie is married to Mark Skinner, a commercial real estate broker, and has four adult children Chase, Cresson, Josh and Jake. She and Mark also have two beautiful grandchildren, Charlie and Dorothy, who are the delight of their lives. At different times in her life Valerie has taught elementary school, run a retail tennis shop, and worked in sales and marketing. When not administering the work of the Foundation, her priorities are spending time with her grandchildren, playing tennis, traveling, taking Purebarre classes and volunteering at her church and in her community.

Amanda Arizola

Amanda Arizola serves as the North Texas Program Officer for Asset Funders Network (AFN). Amanda is a dedicated community advocate, nonprofit executive professional and leader with over 20 years of dedicated work in economic security, healthcare, and literacy. In her role, Amanda leads the North Texas regional chapter.

Amanda also serves as the co-founder and chief analyst for CoACT North Texas, a nonprofit, which focuses on human-centered design to promote innovation within nonprofit organizations and business entities. Previously, she served as the Vice President of Finance and Operations for Philanthropy Southwest where she supported operations through the beginning of the pandemic. She was also the Assistant Director for the Dallas Community Tax Centers (DCTC), a program of Foundation Communities, where she managed ten VITA tax centers and oversaw the completion of 79,000+ tax forms aiding in the return of more than \$124 million dollars to Dallas residents. Amanda also held the position of State Program Director for the Affordable Care Act implementation through the CHIMES (Consumer Health Insurance Marketplace and Enrollment Services) Consortium at United Way of Tarrant County.

Amanda holds a bachelor's degree in Government and Mexican American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin and a double Master in Business Administration and Master in Health Systems Management from Texas Woman's University. She is a six generation Texan, and was appointed as the first Latina to serve on the Tarrant County Hospital District Board of Managers (JPS Health Network) by Commissioner Devan Allen. Amanda also serves as the chair of the Community Advisory Board for KERA/KXT, Dallas Leadership Council with ReflectUS, a national collaborative organization of the leading women's civic engagement training programs and is Dallas Advisory Board member for the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. She resides in Arlington, Texas.