

The Children's Foundation of Mississippi &  
the Phil Hardin Foundation's 4th annual Summit

# Heart to Hearts

*Conversations on the Changing  
Landscape of Childhood*



# 2025 SUMMIT PROGRAM GUIDE

# 2025 SUMMIT AGENDA

**8:00 CHECK-IN OPENS**

**8:40 ENTERTAINMENT** RH Watkins Jazz Band, Laurel High School, Laurel, MS

**9:00 WELCOME & VIDEO INTRO**

Dr. Linda Southward, Executive Director, Children's Foundation of Mississippi

**9:10 PRESENTATION FROM THE FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE**

Dr. Criscillia Benford and Dr. Anna Marie Trester

**10:00 BREAK + MOVE TO BREAKOUTS**

**10:10 BREAKOUT SESSIONS 1 & 2**

**CHOOSE ONE - to learn more about each session, visit page \_\_\_\_**

*Tender Hearts: Navigating Infant Development and Emotional Health*  
Dr. Anita Henderson and Dr. Courtney Walker | ROOM 218

*Hearts of Resilience: Nurturing Coping Skills in the Next Generation*  
Letoria Mitchell and Mykala Watson | ROOM 216

**10:55 BREAK + MOVE TO NEXT SESSION**

**11:05 BREAKOUT SESSIONS 3 & 4**

**CHOOSE ONE - to learn more about each session, visit page \_\_\_\_**

*United Hearts: Community Resources & Partnerships for Children's Mental Health*  
Captain Thomas Callahan, Dr. John Damon, Christi McCafferty, & Shea Hutchins | ROOM 218

*Healing Hearts: How to Talk About the Hard Things*  
Judge Trent Favre and Jennifer Goodwin | ROOM 216

**11:50 BREAK + MOVE BACK TO BALLROOM**

**12:00 LUNCH & 2025 FACTBOOK RELEASE**

**1:15 KEYNOTE ADDRESS** Dr. Michael Rich, MD, MPH

**2:05 KEYNOTE RESPONSE PANEL**

Ms. Wendy Bailey, Dr. John Damon, Dr. Lance Evans, Dr. Carla J. Evers

**2:45 BOOK SIGNING WITH DR. RICH**

# BREAKOUT SESSION INFO

## **Tender Hearts: Navigating Infant Development & Emotional Health** **Dr. Anita Henderson & Dr. Courtney Walker** **10 AM | ROOM 218**

Participants will explore the importance of infant and early childhood mental health, the impact of early relationships on emotional development, the connection between physical and mental health, and practical strategies to support young children's mental well-being in everyday settings.

## **Hearts of Resilience: Nurturing Coping Skills in the Next Generation** **Letoria Mitchell & Mykala Watson** **10 AM | ROOM 216**

Participants will explore strategies for integrating mindfulness into daily routines to enhance emotional resilience in children and adolescents, learn trauma-informed care principles for supporting young individuals, and engage in an inspiring session featuring faith scholars discussing the transformative impact of the Kinkadee FAITH Scholarships on foster youth. The session will highlight the importance of advocacy in policy reform, practical solutions for foster care challenges, and the power of faith and community in fostering educational success.

## **United Hearts: Community Resources & Partnerships for Children's Mental Health** **Captain Thomas Callahan, Dr. John Damon,** **Christi McGafferty, & Shea Hutchins** **11 AM | ROOM 218**

Participants will explore a digital platform designed to screen for hope and assess social determinants of health (SDOH), connecting youth and caregivers with tailored resources to foster resilience and improve mental health outcomes. Additionally, representatives from DeSoto County Schools and the DeSoto County Sheriff's Department will share insights on their commitment to youth mental health, highlighting the programs and resources they have implemented to provide support.

## **Healing Hearts: How to Talk About the Hard Things** **Judge Trent Favre & Jennifer Goodwin** **11 AM | ROOM 216**

Participants will explore trauma-informed practices, including Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) principles, the effects of trauma on development, and the role of courts in fostering change. Participants will also learn about children's understanding of death across developmental stages, grief responses, and strategies to support grieving children through communication, routines, and creative expression.



The Children's Foundation of Mississippi (CFM) is focused on improving the policies and systems that affect Mississippi children's well-being. We were founded in 2019 as a 501 (c) 3 to serve as a convener, facilitator, advocate, and catalyst for positive change. Since January 2020, the Children's Foundation has been home to Mississippi KIDS COUNT. The Children's Foundation produces the annual Mississippi KIDS COUNT Factbook and works in concert with the national KIDS COUNT Data Center. We recognize that for Mississippi to reach its potential, our children must first reach theirs.

We deliver data through a variety of resources — such as Mississippi KIDS COUNT — and we monitor and report the critical indicators of our state's child well-being that advocates and decision makers need to be informed.

**For Mississippi to reach its potential, our children must meet theirs.**

Visit [childrensfoundationms.org](http://childrensfoundationms.org) for more.

Find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn at @childrensfdnms

CFM is the home of **Mississippi KIDS COUNT**. KIDS COUNT is the leading resource for comprehensive information on Mississippi's children and serves as a catalyst for improving outcomes for children, families, and communities. Mississippi KIDS COUNT is housed within the Children's Foundation of Mississippi. KIDS COUNT provides data, statistics, and original research about the health, education, safety and well-being of children to policymakers, educators, program administrators, parents, caregivers, advocates, and the general public. A recent survey of community and agency personnel revealed that Mississippi KIDS COUNT data helped secure \$52 million in grant funds for the state and local communities.



The Mississippi KIDS COUNT program is made possible, in part, through grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Mississippi KIDS COUNT releases an annual Factbook containing information in the areas of children's education, health, and economic well-being within the state. Visit the Annie E. Casey Foundation's national KIDS COUNT Data Center at [aecf.org](http://aecf.org) for the latest national data book and to create custom reports from Mississippi's data.

# CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION OF MISSISSIPPI EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS

1. Carthan Enterprises
2. Central Mississippi Regional Library System
3. Excel by 5: Columbia-Marion County
4. Excel by 5: City of Durant
5. Excel by 5: Hattiesburg
6. Excel by 5: Pass Christian
7. Excel by 5: Vicksburg/Warren County
8. Institute of Community Services, Inc.
9. Jefferson County School District
10. Level-Up Learning Center
11. Lynn Meadows Discovery Center
12. Mayor's Council on Early Childhood Policy and Education
13. Midtown Partners, Inc.
14. Mississippi Gulf Coast YMCA
15. New Vineyard Community Development Center
16. Nurture Our Future
17. Oakland Area Chamber of Commerce
18. Pontotoc Achieving Community for Tomorrow
19. Project H.O.P.E. Community Services, Inc.
20. Quitman County Arts Council
21. Richton Head Start Center
22. The Church of the Living God Community Outreach & Services
23. United Way of Northeast Mississippi
24. Valley Early Learning Collaborative Resource Organization



To begin designing a better future, CFM has proudly undertaken signature initiatives to “turn the curve” for children and youth in Mississippi. Recognizing that no one knows what a community needs more than the members of the community itself, the CFM has launched planning grants to establish Early Childhood Councils (ECCs) at the local level. We currently have 24 established councils, and we have been expanding this program state-wide over the past three years by awarding annual Early Childhood Council planning grants. An ECC is a group of community leaders from all sectors who are united by their common interest in improving conditions for children and families in their neighborhoods, cities, or counties. The purpose of an ECC is to identify the unique needs of the community in relation to early childhood and, subsequently, strategize and implement ways to improve outcomes for children.

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## The Phil Hardin FOUNDATION

Phil Hardin was an innovative and visionary businessman whose success never caused him to lose sight of his own humble beginnings. Mr. Hardin valued education as the most important ingredient for success in his life and knew that better educational opportunities for all would not only benefit individuals but would also make Mississippi's communities stronger and more prosperous. Acting on this belief, he decided in 1964 to use the wealth he had created as the owner of the Meridian-based Hardin's Bakeries to "improve the education of Mississippians," and the Phil Hardin Foundation (PHF) was born. More than half a century later, Mr. Hardin's vision of an excellent education as the norm for all Mississippians continues to find expression in the work of the foundation he established.



**Executive Director of the Phil Hardin Foundation, Lloyd Gray, pictured above at our first annual Summit in 2022. We are grateful for Lloyd's leadership and PHF's continued support of our annual event!**

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Special thanks to *Hederman Brothers Printing* for their support of our 2025 Summit!

Keynote Speaker

# Michael Rich, MD, MPH



Michael Rich, MD, MPH is recognized globally for his acclaimed work as a pediatrician, child health researcher, and children's media specialist. He is the Founder and Director of the [Digital Wellness Lab](#) whose mission is to understand and promote positive and healthy digital media experiences for young people, from birth through young adulthood.

Dr. Rich is also the Founder and Co-Director of the [Clinic for Interactive Media and Internet Disorders](#) (CIMAID), the first evidence-based clinical program designed to address Problematic Interactive Media Use (PIMU) in children, adolescents, and young adults. Using a multidisciplinary approach, Dr. Rich works with young people and their families to help them to adopt and sustain healthy approaches to engaging with interactive media and technology.

More than 50 peer-reviewed research papers, and 40 book chapters, research reports, and pediatric practice policies have been authored by Dr. Rich. He has written policy statements on media and child health for the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and testified on the scientific findings about media effects on child development and health to state legislatures, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Congress.

Having spent his first career as a filmmaker working in Japan with Akira Kurosawa before transitioning to medicine, Dr. Rich has a unique combination of experience and expertise in medicine and media, which synergize in his health research and clinical work. As "The Mediatrixian", Dr. Rich recently released [The Mediatrixian's Guide: A Joyful Approach to Raising Healthy, Smart, Kind Kids in a Screen-Saturated World](#), a science-backed approach to give parents the confidence they need to raise a child well (and to raise a well child) in the digital age.

Dr. Rich's innovative child health research has been featured in national and international press, including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Time, NPR, BBC, Education Week, and CBS, among others. He has served on multiple youth mental health advisory boards, participated in hundreds of expert panels, and delivered presentations across the world to tech and entertainment companies, schools, and healthcare organizations.

He is the recipient of numerous professional accolades including: the AAP Adele Dellenbaugh Hofmann Award for exemplifying excellence in the field of adolescent health; the AAP Holroyd-Sherry Award for contributions to knowledge and policy addressing children's and adolescents' use of media; the Peace Islands Institute Media Award for excellence in the field; the Family Online Safety Institute Award for Outstanding Achievement; and a first place award from the American Medical Writers' Association for his work on teen communication strategies. In addition, Dr. Rich served as the AAP's Media Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan and was the 2017 Litt Visiting Professor of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. Through his work, he has developed innovative media-based research methodologies, including Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment (VIA) and Measurement of Youth Media Exposure (MYME).

Dr. Rich received his MD from Harvard Medical School and his MPH from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He completed his internship, residency, and fellowship at Boston Children's Hospital. Dr. Rich is a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Society for Adolescent Medicine and is board certified in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine.



## **Wendy Bailey**

Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Mental Health

Wendy Bailey currently serves as the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH). A role she assumed in January of 2021. She has been with the agency for 18 years beginning her career at Mississippi State Hospital in 2005. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees and is also a graduate of the John C. Stennis Institute of Government. She is a Licensed Mental Health Administrator and Certified Public Manager. She serves on numerous boards and task forces including the National Research Institute Board of Directors, Southeast Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Advisory Board, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Board, State Early Childhood Advisory Council, Certified Public Manager Advisory Board, and the Mississippi's Suicide Prevention Task Force. She serves as a liaison with national organizations such as Mental Health America, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. She lives in Rankin County with her husband, Charles, and their son, Brandon.



## **Dr. Criscillia Benford**

FrameWorks Institute

Dr. Criscillia Benford is a narratologist, media theorist, and Senior Fellow with the FrameWorks Institute. She works in a variety of issue areas, including Child and Adolescent Development, Maternal Health, Racial Justice, and Housing. Prior to joining the FrameWorks team, Criscillia taught literature and "big ideas" courses like "Alienation," "Evil," and "Technological Visions of Utopia" at the University of Chicago, Duke, and Stanford. Criscillia lives in the San Francisco Bay Area where she enjoys singing and watching TV while yelling at the characters. She earned her MA and PhD in English at Stanford University and her BA in English and Plan II (an interdisciplinary honors program) from the University of Texas at Austin.



## **Captain Thomas Callahan**

Captain in Patrol Support Services, DeSoto County Sheriff's Department

Captain Thomas Callahan has dedicated 27 years to law enforcement, with the past 14 years proudly serving at the DeSoto County Sheriff's Office. Currently, he holds the rank of Captain in Patrol Support Services, where he oversees various divisions, including the School Resource Officer (SRO) team.

At 52, he is passionate about positively impacting today's youth to create a better tomorrow. Mentorship and community engagement are central to his mission, as I believe in guiding the next generation toward success.

Beyond his career, he has been happily married to his wife, Tenna, for 23 years. They are proud parents to their 21-year-old daughter, who is pursuing her nursing degree at the University of Memphis.



## **John Damon, MS, PhD**

Chief Executive Officer, Canopy Solutions

Dr. John Damon, MS, PhD, is the CEO of Canopy Children's Solutions, Mississippi's largest and most comprehensive non-profit provider of children's behavioral health, education, and family support solutions. John works with all three branches of government; business thought leaders and community stakeholders to develop public policy, clinical best practices, and catalytic partnerships aimed at helping every child and family reach their full potential. He has served as president of the National Association for Children's Behavioral Health (NACBH), the Behavioral Health Society of the Mississippi Hospital Association, and the Mississippi Association of Child Caring Agencies. John continues to serve in Board leadership for NACBH and the Children's Home Society of America. He is a member of the Mississippi Early Child Investment Council.

John is currently appointed by the Mississippi Legislature to serve on the Mississippi K-12 and Postsecondary Mental Health Task Force and by the Mississippi Supreme Court to serve on the Children's Justice Commission.

He was formerly appointed by the Mississippi Legislature to the Mississippi Autism Advisory Committee and has served on other appointed task forces, including the Governor's Healthcare Task Force (chair, Mental Health), the Mississippi Children's Mental Health Task Force, and the Governor's Human Trafficking Taskforce. He was selected to the Magnolia Tribune's 2024 class of the Mississippi Top 50. John has served as adjunct faculty in undergraduate and graduate academic institutions, and he's been the featured presenter at many state and national conferences and the US Senate Caucus Committee on Foster Care, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse. He has co-authored book chapters and Congressional white papers on best practices in children's behavioral health and has published in multiple peer-reviewed journals.

John's undergraduate degree is in psychology, he has a master's in marriage and family therapy, and his PhD is in clinical psychology. He completed his residency in Child Psychology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. He and his wife, Helaina, are the proud parents of five children and live in Madison, Mississippi. John is a Fellow of the fifth class of the Health Innovators Fellowship and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.



## **Dr. Lance Evans**

Mississippi State Superintendent of Education

Dr. Lance Evans began serving as State Superintendent of Education in July 2024. In his more than two decades as an educator, he has served as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, elementary principal, high school principal, and Superintendent of Schools for the New Albany School District.

During his seven-year tenure as superintendent in New Albany, the district experienced continuous growth in all academic areas. New Albany School District earned an A rating for the past five years and is ranked among the top 10% in Mississippi in overall academic performance. The district has also increased its graduation rate by 13.5% to its current graduation rate of 95.5%

While in New Albany, Dr. Evans implemented a systematic workforce development program through a multistep process with an emphasis on Career and Technical Education (CTE).

## **Dr. Lance Evans Continued**

Dr. Evans' leadership skills have earned him several recognitions including the 2023 Mississippi Superintendent of the Year and the 2015 Mississippi Principal of the Year. He has served on the boards of the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents, the Mississippi Association of School Administrators and the Governing Board for the American Association of School Administrators and is a member of the Rotary Club and Kiwanis Club.

Dr. Evans believes that innovation is key to educating students of the 21st century and a multifaceted approach is essential to ensure the success of all students. Dr. Evans believes all students do not define success the same way and it is the responsibility of educators to create pathways to success with no dead ends for students.

Dr. Evans earned his doctorate degree from Delta State University, his master's degree from the University of Mississippi, and his bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University.

Dr. Evans and his wife Brandy have two children, Katie, a college junior, and Landon, a high school sophomore.



## **Dr. Carla Evers**

Superintendent of Schools,  
Pass Christian Public School District

Dr. Carla J. Evers proudly serves as the Superintendent of Schools for Pass Christian Public School District. She previously served as Director of Instructional Programs for the Gulfport School District. Dr. Evers served as an elementary principal while in Gulfport as well as during her nine-year tenure with the Natchez-Adams School District. Her greatest joy was seeing both schools improve two performance levels during her tenure (Morgantown: 1 to 3 and West Elementary: 3 to 5). The district has demonstrated its enormous potential by earning the distinction of being one of the top-rated school districts in the state as well as national recognition for its work with students of poverty and achievements in Advanced Placement.

During her 28 years as an educator, she has earned several awards and honors, such as Teacher of the Year and Administrator of the Year. She has also served on several community boards and belonged to community service organizations such as The Lynn Meadows Discovery Center Board of Trustees, Head Start Policy Board, Executive Committee of the MA Gulf Coast Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and Rotary Education Committee, to name a few.

She is married to her husband retired Sergeant First Class Carlos M. Evers; together they have six adult children and two grandchildren. Her family attends First Missionary Baptist Church of Handsboro.

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**Judge Trent Favre**  
Hancock County Youth Court

Judge Favre was appointed by Governor Bryant in 2017 to serve as Hancock County's first County Court Judge. He was elected to his first term in 2018 and is now serving his second term. He presides over youth court matters and a county court docket. Prior to his appointment, he practiced 19 years in civil litigation and governmental law.

Judge Favre graduated from Millsaps College in 1996 and The University of Mississippi School of Law in 1999, where he was a member of the Mississippi Law Journal and Moot Court Board. He graduated from Hancock Leadership (2009), Leadership Mississippi (2010), and Gulf Coast Business Counsel Masters Program (2011), and served as a board member for United Way of South Mississippi, Hancock Chamber and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation (Chairman). He has been recognized as Hancock County's Top 10 Outstanding Citizens (2011), The Sun Herald Top 10 Under 40 (2013) and Mississippi Business Journal Top 40 Under 40 (2013).

He was named Mississippi's 2019 Champion for Children (judicial branch) and the Child Welfare and Child Advocacy Committee (The Mississippi Bar) Reunification Hero (2019). He has served on Mississippi's Court Improvement Team and the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission. In 2020, he was presented The Mississippi Bar's prestigious Judicial Excellence Award. In 2021, he received the Community Hope Award presented by Canopy and he was selected to serve on CASA's National Judicial Leadership Council. Also, in 2021, he created Hancock County's first Family Treatment Court. In 2023, he was named a Fellow to the Mississippi Bar Foundation and as Hancock County Excel by 5's Champion for Children. He also serves on the Mississippi Children's Justice Commission, the Child Welfare Advisory Committee of the Children's Foundation of Mississippi, the Board of Excel by 5, and the Diversity Committee of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. He is also a certified practitioner in TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention).

He is married to Shannon and has two children, Katie and Sam.



**Jennifer Goodwin**  
Executive Director, McClean Fletcher Center

AWAITING BIO



## **Dr. Anita Henderson**

Pediatrician, The Pediatric Clinic, A Service of Hattiesburg Clinic

Dr. Anita Henderson is a pediatrician at The Pediatric Clinic, a service of Hattiesburg Clinic. She graduated from Mississippi State University, received her MD from the University of Mississippi Medical Center and trained in Pediatrics at Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Henderson is Immediate Past-President of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi State Medical Association, The University of Southern Mississippi Children's Center for Communication and Development and was recently appointed to the Mississippi Medicaid Advisory Committee.

She has lived in Hattiesburg for the last 28 years with her husband, neonatologist Dr. Randy Henderson. They have two children, Rand who is an intern in internal medicine and pediatrics in Richmond and Sadie who works in climate technology in San Francisco. Her favorite quote is "Children are 25% of our population but 100% of our future."



## **Shea Hutchins**

Chief Solutions Officer, Canopy Solutions

Shea Hutchins' career spans over 25 years including both clinical and administrative leadership experience. As Canopy Children's Solutions' Chief Solutions Officer, Shea oversees day-to-day operations and direction of the organization's statewide continuum of services which, includes the state's most comprehensive array of children's behavioral health, educational and social service solutions as well as oversight of admissions and medical staff. Her role within the executive team helps to disseminate information about strategic goals throughout the organization as well as the implementation of new programs through strategic initiatives. Shea is instrumental in helping to identify and develop talent within Canopy staff turning strong workers into organizational leaders.

Shea holds a Bachelor of Social Work from Mississippi College and a Master of Social Work from the University of Alabama. She completed two years of post-graduate clinical supervision to obtain her license in Clinical Social Work. Shea strongly believes in the science of hope. She enjoys teaching and training others on the importance of hope, the power it gives us, and the role it plays in a brighter future. She is an exercise and nutrition enthusiast promoting the benefits of a healthy mind and body and the role it plays in mental health. Shea also serves as an adjunct professor for the School of Social Work at Mississippi College.

Shea and her husband are proud parents to two young adult children. She and her family are members of Morrison Height's Baptist Church and reside in Edwards, Mississippi.



## **Christi McCafferty, LMSW**

Mental Health Therapist, DeSoto County School District

Christi McCafferty is a Mississippi native from Southaven, Mississippi. She is married to her husband of 27 years and has four children who all make her proud. Christi is a Mental Health Therapist with DeSoto County Schools serving the Hernando area schools. She received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Christian Brothers University, her master's degree from the University of Tennessee in Social Work, and later her license as a Licensed Master Social Worker. Christi worked in the area of family support and education for most of her career, developing and building programs across North Mississippi. In this role, she also worked on grant funded programs to train and credential child care directors and foster parents. In addition, Christi has experience in the field of Addictions at all levels of care from inpatient/detox to outpatient. She has a passion for working with parents and children alike to help build strong and resilient families.



## **Letoria Mitchell, PCMHT, P-LPC, PCSS, M.S.-CMHC**

Clinical Therapist, Methodist Children's Homes of Mississippi

Ms. Letoria Mitchell is a highly motivated and dedicated professional with a strong background in psychology and clinical mental health counseling. Graduating from Raymond High School, she went on to pursue higher education at Jackson State University, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology.

Driven by her passion for helping others, Letoria continued her studies at Jackson State University, obtaining a Master of Science degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. This advanced degree equipped her with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective therapeutic interventions to individuals struggling with various mental health issues.

Currently serving as a Clinical Therapist at Methodist Children's Homes, Letoria plays a vital role in offering compassionate care and support to children and adolescents facing emotional and behavioral challenges. She works closely with these individuals, utilizing evidence-based therapies to promote healing, growth, and improved overall well-being.

Recognizing the importance of continuous professional development, Letoria is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Professional Counseling from Mississippi College. This program allows her to expand her expertise even further, enabling her to contribute more effectively to the field of mental health counseling.

Throughout her career journey, Letoria has consistently demonstrated exceptional interpersonal skills and an unwavering commitment to client-centered care. Her ability to establish rapport with clients quickly fosters trust and creates a safe space for open communication. She possesses excellent analytical abilities that aid in accurately assessing clients' needs and developing personalized treatment plans.

Committed to staying up to date with advancements in the field of counseling, Ms. Mitchell actively engages in ongoing research and participates in professional workshops and conferences. She seeks out opportunities to collaborate with fellow professionals to exchange ideas and enhance her own practice.

With a strong foundation in psychology, extensive clinical experience, and an ongoing pursuit of higher education, Letoria is poised to make significant contributions within the realm of mental health counseling. She is driven by her genuine desire to help individuals overcome challenges and achieve improved mental well-being.



**Dr. Anna Marie Trester**  
FrameWorks Institute

Dr. Anna Marie Trester is an interactional sociolinguist and story practitioner. As Senior Fellow in the Research Interpretation and Application (RIA) unit at FrameWorks, Anna Marie particularly enjoys working one-on-one with partners to apply framing recommendations where “the rubber hits the road” in developing communications as part of technical assistance. Prior to joining FrameWorks, she directed the MA in Language and Communication program at Georgetown, and has also recently taught at Boise State, Howard, and San Francisco State Universities in subjects including cross-cultural communication, language and social media, and the ethnography of communication. She is the author of *Bringing Linguistics to Work* (2017) and *Employing Linguistics* (2022) and the co-editor of *Discourse 2.0*. In her spare time, you can find her storytelling with *Odyssey Storytelling* in Tucson, AZ.



**Dr. Courtney Walker**  
Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist,  
University of Mississippi Medical Center

Dr. Walker is an Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. She obtained her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Mississippi State University in 2018 following completion of her residency at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. She is a Harris Infant Mental Health fellow and has clinical expertise in the assessment and treatment of infants and young children. Dr. Walker is the Director of the Child Health and Development Promotion (CHDP) Fellowship and serves as PI or Co-I on a range of grant-funded projects that center on the dissemination of evidence-based mental health practices for mothers and young children in rural communities. She currently serves at the Follow-Up Principal Investigator for UMMC within the NICHD Neonatal Research Network. Her research interests include examining the influence of parenting strategies and adverse experiences on child neurodevelopmental and behavioral outcomes as well as how child and family resiliency can moderate these relationships.



**RH Watkins Jazz Band**  
Laurel, Mississippi

The RH Watkins Jazz Band from Laurel, Mississippi, directed by Tamiko Bridges, Director of Bands for the Laurel School District, is composed of the following students: Alto Saxophone players Lauren Bridges and Kimberly Vargas; Tenor Saxophone players Elijah Bridges and Joseph Duckworth; Bari Saxophone player Kaleb Rhodes; Trumpet players Deborah Johns, Maitin Lainez, Isaiah Smith, Giselle Ramirez, and Sunshine Snowden; Trombone players Makaelyn Keys, Mikah Terrell, Glorianna Snowden, Deandre Winn, and Corey Smith, Jr.; and the Rhythm Section, which includes Alex Virgen on bass guitar and Trey Bridges on drums. The band is supported by managers Joycelynn Arrington, Jaylon Hilton, and Rayleigh Pickering.



**MaKyla Watson**  
Faith Scholar, The University of Southern Mississippi  
Jim Casey Fellow, the Casey Foundation

MaKyla Watson is from Jackson, Mississippi. She graduated with a degree in psychology from the University of Southern Mississippi and is currently pursuing her master's in social work. MaKyla has been an advocate for youth for several years and has worked with Mississippi First Place for Youth for the past two years. Additionally, she is a proud Jim Casey Fellow with the Casey Foundation and one of the first graduates to receive the Faith Scholarship, an opportunity she is deeply grateful for, as it helped ease some of the financial stress of college life. Her goal is to continue her education through to a doctorate, where she aspires to become a clinical psychologist.



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