

2015 PLANNING FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE

SPEAKER BIOS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Jared Cates

Community Mobilizer

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association



Jared Cates is the Community Mobilizer at the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. He is a native of Orange County and a graduate of the UNC School of Social Work, where he received his Master's degree. Jared has been working in the non-profit sector since his graduation from Appalachian State University in 2003. Jared is a home gardener, kombucha and beer brewer, bee keeper, backyard poultry raiser, and has a passion for sustainable community food systems. His current work at the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association keeps him engaged in policy advocacy and with the growing network of food councils across North and South Carolina.

Leslie Meehan, AICP

Director of Primary Prevention

Tennessee Department of Health



For the past ten years, Leslie Meehan served as the Director of Healthy Communities at the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in Tennessee. She focused on the intersection of transportation and health, specifically the impact of transportation on physical activity, air quality and injury. While at the MPO, she led a Regional Transportation and Health Study that collected data from over 11,000 participants on transportation habits and health attributes such as BMI, physical activity and sedentary time, diet and chronic disease. She worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on a model that calculates the population-level reductions in diseases such as cancers, heart disease and diabetes, and monetizes the healthcare savings. In July 2015 she transitioned to the Commissioner's Office at the Tennessee Department of Health where she is focusing on Primary Prevention with an emphasis on physical activity. Her responsibility is to ensure that the entire public health workforce in Tennessee is focused on prevention as the primary objective of each employee. Ms. Meehan is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and the Institute of Transportation Engineers. She is a graduate of Emory University and Tennessee State University. She is co-author of the Transportation Sector of the soon-to-be-released National Physical Activity Plan.

Ruth Petersen, MD, MPH

N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Section Chief, Chronic Disease and Injury Section

N.C. Division of Public Health



Dr. Ruth Petersen has served at the North Carolina (NC) Division of Public Health as the Section Chief for the Chronic Disease and Injury (CDI) Section since 2009. In this role, Ruth has oversight for programs in NC related to the prevention of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and injury as well as the areas of physical activity, nutrition, tobacco prevention and control, and forensic tests for alcohol. Ruth is a physician with training and experience in preventive medicine, health system change, public health, disease prevention, community engagement, partnership building, evaluation and epidemiology. She has built her career as a leader in public health through experience in health settings, local and state public health, national advisory groups, university settings, business settings and global health.

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Pete Armstrong

Pete Armstrong has served as Director of Recreation Resources Service at NC State University for eight years. He works to administer the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, and to provide technical assistance, applied research, and continuing education for parks and recreation professionals cross the state. He recently, co-edited the chapter on “Parks and Recreation” in the 2014 edition of County and Municipal Government produced by the UNC School of Government. Prior to joining RRS, Pete worked for the City of Rocky Mount (NC) Parks and Recreation Department for 28 years, the last 8 years as Director. He is a member of the North Carolina Park and Recreation Association and the National Park and Recreation Association.



Kerry Burch

Kerry Burch is and Epidemiology Specialist with the Mecklenburg County Health Department. In this role she is responsible for coordinating the Community Health Assessment, a process that takes place every 4 years to review and prioritize county health data. In response to the assessment, she facilitates community groups dedicated to creating action plans around the county’s top four health issues; chronic disease prevention, mental health, access to care and violence. Kerry also has a background in health literacy having done several workshops for medical professionals and health educators. Kerry earned her Master’s in Public Health from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.



Meghan Charpentier

Meghan Charpentier represents the Cabarrus Health Alliance and the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Grant and the Eat Smart, Live Well Program. With REACH, Meghan leads the Safe Routes to School Action Plans, city active transportation plans, and healthy food policy objectives. She received her Bachelor of Science in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and her Masters of Public Health and Masters of Science in Nutrition Science and Policy from Tufts University in Boston.



John Preston Cock

With experience in local government, private, and nonprofit sectors, John has developed expertise in the areas of planning and design for walking and bicycling as well as long range land use and transportation planning; Smart Growth policy, regulatory, and urban design standards; streetscape and roadway design principles for walkability/bikeability; regulatory and policy tools for parking management and transit station area planning; project management; and group facilitation.



Helena Connors

Helena Connors is the Transportation Manager at UNC Charlotte. She received her MBA from Phoenix University and a Bachelor’s in Management of Information Systems from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. She has 7 years of experience in the transportation industry including a General Manager position, Operations Manager and Safety Manager of over 200 personnel and 110 Motor Coaches and Shuttles. She is also a retired Veteran of the United States Air Force. She is active in the UNC Charlotte Sustainability efforts. Currently she is working on a Bicycle program for the campus and is part of the Transportation Committee for the introduction of the Blue Line Extension slated for operation in the fall of 2017.



Joe Frey

Joe is a professional engineer with 20 years of experience working on a wide variety of infrastructure and environmental projects throughout the southeastern U.S. For the past 12 years Joe has been a project manager with the City of Charlotte Engineering and Property Management Department’s Urban Infrastructure group, where he specializes in projects focused on increasing transportation choices by improving connectivity and safety for pedestrians and cyclists to move around the City. Joe is currently the City’s lead project manager on the ambitious and exciting 26-mile Cross Charlotte Trail project. Joe graduated cum laude from the University at Buffalo in 1995, is a licensed professional engineer, and is working toward an MBA in Sustainable Development online through Marylhurst University in Portland, Oregon.

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Katherine Hebert

Katherine Hebert, MCRP, is the founder of Creating Community Change Consulting, a private consulting firm offering services in health impact assessments (HIA), healthy community design, policy analysis, program development, and stakeholder engagement. She is a subject matter expert in HIA and healthy community design having conducted HIAs on various topics including universal design, transportation, neighborhood design, food systems planning, and parks and recreational planning. She is the former coordinator of the Town of Davidson's Design for Life Program, an initiative designed to foster healthy community design through the use of health impact assessments (HIA), public participation, and collaborative efforts in Davidson, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region, and North Carolina.



Rebecca Hefner

As Community Research Manager at the City of Charlotte, Rebecca Hefner facilitates the use of data and information by City departments and community partners to inform planning, program development, policy and resident action. In this role, she manages the Quality of Life Explorer in partnership with Mecklenburg County and UNC Charlotte, and oversees the City's Speakers Bureau, working with City staff to increase the use of data in community engagement and to open data from various departments to the community. Prior to joining the City, Rebecca served as Senior Researcher for the Council for Children's Rights. She received her Masters of Public Administration from UNC Charlotte and her BFA in Historic Preservation from the Savannah College of Art and Design.



Ty Houck

Ty Houck serves as the Director of Greenways and Natural and Historic Resources for Greenville County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism.



Michael Kirschman

Michael is Deputy Director for the Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation Department. The CAPRA Accredited and NRPA Gold Medal winning department manages and maintains over 20,800 acres and 210 parks, nature preserves, greenways, and special facilities. Prior to his position, he worked as Division Director for the department's award-winning Nature Preserves & Natural Resources Division. Michael has worked for park districts in Illinois and Ohio, consulted for the National Park Service, worked for the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency, and worked as an educator for a county Soil & Water Conservation District. He is a Certified Park & Recreation Professional and is currently chair of the Board of Regents for the NRPA/NC State/Oglebay Supervisors Management School.



Don Kostelec

Don Kostelec, AICP, is the principal of Kostelec Planning in Asheville. Kostelec Planning is applying and researching Health Impact Assessments and integrated health/planning efforts through various projects in NC, AK, WV, TN, UT, and ID. This includes ongoing work with MountainWise in Community Transformation Grant Region 1 on an eight-county Health Impact Assessment on comprehensive planning and built environment policy. Don has worked in the public and private sector managing municipal plans, comprehensive plans, and active transportation plans for more than 13 years. He is an adjunct professor for planning in the Master of Public Affairs Program at Western Carolina University and holds a Master of Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago.



Jason Lawrence

In 2000, Jason Lawrence joined the Charlotte Area Transit System and has been the lead Transportation Planner on Major Investment Studies and Draft/Final Environmental Impact Statements for transit corridors. Jason has performed bus service planning, conducted alternative analyses, population/ridership forecasting, and implemented the Sprinter Enhanced Bus service. Jason is a member of the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) Light Rail Team where he authored and designed the LYNX BLE Bus/Rail integration plan. Jason has also integrated his Geographic Information Systems knowledge into transit service planning, public outreach strategies, and demographic analysis. Currently Jason is project manager for an alternative analysis study for the LYNX Silver Line/Southeast Corridor.

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Michelle Nance

Michelle Nance, AICP is the Planning Director for the Centralina Council of Governments, providing planning services to nine counties in the greater Charlotte region. She directs the Council's work related to land use and transportation, healthy community initiatives, energy and the environment. Her work is focused on helping local governments address shared, long-term issues through collaboration and partnerships. She is the former Director of the City of Gastonia Development Services Department, managing land use and subdivision planning, transportation, building inspections and housing, a development ombudsman for the City of Gastonia, fostering public-private collaboration on policies and practices related to growth, and is a past president of the NC Chapter of the American Planning Association.



Phyllis M. Rocco

Phyllis Mangum Rocco is the Branch Head of Local Technical Assistance and Training, the Public Health Nursing & Professional Development Unit with the Administrative, Local and Community Support Section in the Division of Public Health, and serves as the State's Chief Public Health Nurse. She reviews and approves each local health department's Community Health Assessment (CHA), Action Plans (AP), and State of the County Health Reports and provides technical assistance and consultation in the CHA process. Former positions include State Maternal Health Nurse Consultant for the NC Division of Public Health, Lee County Health Director, Western NC Public Health Nurse Epidemiologist and Communicable Disease Nurse Consultant, Nursing Director in Chatham and Lee county, and front-line Public Health Nurse.



Andrea Stevenson

Andrea Stevenson is the Executive Director of The Lee Institute, an organization that 'serves and strengthens organizations and individuals who share a commitment to building great communities.' The Lee Institute focuses on the values of civic leadership, innovation, and collaboration. Her career has included serving as President and Executive Director of Community School of the Arts in Charlotte and serving as Vice President of Sales and client services for the Kimmel Center for Performing Arts in Philadelphia. Andrea holds an MBA from the McColl School of Business at Queens University of Charlotte and a BA in English and political science from Texas A&M University.



Londa Strong

Londa has been the Cabarrus County Active Living and Parks Department Director since 2008 and has been in the Cabarrus County Active Living and Parks Department since 1981. Londa has served on numerous committees with Cabarrus Health Alliance over the last 15 years. She has worked with CHA in the development of Healthy Concessions Policies for all Park Concession Operations, Smoking Policy, REACH Grant, and many other programs. She received her BS degree in Park and Recreation Administration from Eastern Kentucky University and her MS degree in Park and Recreation Administration from Eastern Kentucky University. She is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional and is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association.
