



2024 WCMA Summer Conference

SPEAKER & MODERATOR BIOGRAPHIES

(listed alphabetically)

Michael A. Gillette

Dr. Michael Gillette is an ethicist who has presented numerous keynotes and workshops nationally and internationally for over 30 years. Dr. Gillette graduated magna cum laude from Brandeis University, with majors in philosophy and classical Greek, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He earned his master's and Ph.D. in philosophy at Brown University. He has taught at colleges and universities, published articles in the field of applied ethics, and has received several teaching awards. He was elected three times to the City Council in Lynchburg, Virginia, and served two terms as Mayor of the City. Dr. Gillette contracts with dozens of healthcare organizations and other agencies to provide ethics case consultations and policy work. His energetic and interactive style engages his audiences and helps them think critically about ethical decisions in their work and beyond.

Kyle Gulya

Kyle Gulya is a Shareholder and Chair of the Government Law Group at von Briesen & Roper, s.c. Kyle advises both public sector employees with employment – and labor-related issues including regulatory compliance, antidiscrimination practices, contractual and workplace policy matters, and personnel management. Kyle assists clients with crisis communications and effectively handling crisis situations, and he regularly advises clients regarding Wisconsin's Public Records Law and Open Meetings Law.

Ryan Heiden

Ryan Heiden is a Shareholder in the Government Law Group at von Briesen & Roper, s.c. He focuses his practice on public sector labor and employment issues. Ryan helps public sector employees navigate and minimize risk with respect to a wide-range of complex and sensitive labor and employment issues by providing employers with trusted and practical guidance. He is adept at navigating Wisconsin's Open Meetings and Public Records Laws, as well as unique issues related to public safety employees and police and fire commissions.

Stephanie Hirsch

Stephanie Hirsch returned to her hometown in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in 2020 after working in municipal government in the Boston area for 20 years. For 14 years, Stephanie worked in different roles in the Mayor and Superintendent's Offices in Somerville, Massachusetts. Somerville is one of the most densely populated and diverse communities in the country. Stephanie has an MBA from Harvard University and a BA from Swarthmore College, and her municipal government passions include data-informed decision making and working to close gaps in life outcomes.

Paul Holzinger

Paul Holzinger

Krystal Johnson

Krystal Johnson, a proud native of Sun Prairie, has been deeply rooted in her community from an early age. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership from UW Green Bay and is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Environmental Health and Safety from UW Whitewater. She holds a certificate in Emergency management and Diversity Equity and Inclusion. Krystal is dedicated to serves on the Sun Prairie Library Board and its DEI committee, as well as being the board president of the KLJ Movement. She is also actively engaged in her church, particularly within the public relations ministry, where she serves as the Public Relations Director.

Her commitment to advocacy and community involvement extends to her role as the Advocacy Chair for the Urban League of Greater Madison Young Professionals and a committee member. Krystal is also an author in the making and the CEO of Krystal Clear Connections, a leadership and development consulting business. She is currently developing several adult literacy programs.

Krystal is the DEI strategist for the Village of McFarland, showcasing her continued dedication to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Her passion for serving and empowering communities is evident in her multifaceted contributions and commitments.

Meleesa Johnson

Meleesa Johnson is the executive director for Wisconsin's Green Fire, an organization dedicated to not only conducting science-based research related to conservation of natural resources and environmental protection, but also advancing that research into sound policy. Prior to this, Meleesa served as the director of solid waste management for Marathon County and Portage County for over two decades. She directed business operations and solid waste programming/facilities serving central and north-central Wisconsin. She has been adjunct faculty at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point Soils and Waste Resources Program and co-created the curriculum for both the introductory and advanced waste management classes.

Meleesa served seven terms as president of Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW) and over the last 20 years has held leadership roles in both the Solid Waste Association of North America-Badger Chapter and for the Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management Association. She was appointed to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal (2005), the DNR's Waste and Materials Management Study Group (2016-2023) and the DNR's PFAS External Policy Advisory Group (2021-2023). As a member of Wisconsin Green Fire's Science Council and Contaminants of Emerging Concern Working Group, she co-authored two informational papers on PFAS and speaks around the state on the topic.

In her private life, Meleesa was elected to 4 terms as alderperson for the city of Stevens Point's 5th District. She chaired the Finance Committee and was elected to seven consecutive terms as president of Common Council. Meleesa was elected to three terms as a supervisor for the Portage County Board. Currently, she serves on several non-profit boards in her community.

Mark Kapocius

Mark a Shareholder in the Government Law Group at von Briesen & Roper, s.c. Mark focuses his practice on school law and advising other public-sector entities on labor and employment matters, governance issues, collective bargaining, public records, and open meetings compliance. Since 2012, Mark has served as an impartial hearing officer for school districts, counties, and municipalities on matters involving employee grievances. He is also an elected municipal judge for the Village of Greendale, where he presides over appearances and trials for civil ordinance violations.

Jake King

Jake King is the Communications & Diversity Strategist for the City of Sun Prairie, spearheading efforts to advance Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) values while leading the organization's Public Relations initiatives. In his current capacity, Jake develops communication strategies to ensure both internal and external understanding of key city initiatives and projects, while providing leadership and expert advice on DEI matters to department directors and staff. Prior to joining the city, he served as Program and Outreach Coordinator for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Dane County, collaborating with law enforcement on Crisis Intervention Trainings. King has the opportunity to apply the education he received from the University of Findlay in Ohio, where he received his Bachelor's degree in Spanish and Public Relations. When he's not working, he's on a jog to check out the latest lineup of Crumbl cookies for the week.

John Koskinen

John Koskinen serves as Chief Economist for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. John has testified on the Wisconsin economy before multiple standing committees of the state legislature. He has presented on Wisconsin's economic outlook to various groups including state and regional economic development associations, colleges and universities, financial institutions and trade associations. He is a frequent commentator on the Wisconsin economy for a variety of media outlets throughout the state and the country.

Prior to joining the Department of Revenue in 2007, John served as the Staff Economist for the Governor's Budget Office, Wisconsin Department of Administration from 1979 to 2007. He has also served in the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau and the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

John has his B.A. and M.A. in Economics from Marquette University. He has done additional graduate studies in Economics at Northwestern University and computer science at the University of Wisconsin.

Matt Marcum

Matt Marcum is one of two section managers for DNR's Environmental Loans program and is responsible for overseeing the Clean Water Fund Program and Safe Drinking Water Loan Program. Matt has worked at DNR for the past 8 years in several different roles within the Environmental Loans program. He has a master's degree in environmental science from the University of Illinois.

Andy Pederson

Andy Pederson has served as the village manager of Bayside, Wisconsin, a community of 4,400 on the shores of Lake Michigan and the northern boundary of Milwaukee County, since 2005.

Prior to serving in Bayside, Pederson was the assistant village manager/community services director for the Village of Brown Deer; human resources director/special projects coordinator in the City of Whitewater; and assistant to the city administrator of the Apple Valley, Minnesota. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree in public administration from Hamline University.

Kent Rader

Known as the "World's Cleanest Comedian and Speaker," Kent Rader helps people and associations learn and experience how laughter matters in reducing stress and building quality organizations. Kent graduated from

William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri with a B.S. in Accounting. He survived five years in public accounting and twelve years as C.F.O. and C.E.O. of hospitals before becoming a professional speaker in 1997. Kent has authored the stress reduction book titled Let It Go, Just Let It Go and co-stars with Jan McInnis in the Baby Boomer Comedy Show, Clean Comedy for People Born Before Seat Belts, Safety Helmets, and Facebook. He has been heard on NPR's Talk of the Nation, Sirius Satellite radio and Kent is the winner of the Branson Comedy Festival.?? He has been seen on Comcast's comedy show, Who's Laughing Now and his new clean, stand-up comedy CD will be released in the spring of 2023. You may also hear his daily podcast called Laughter Matters on your Amazon Echo, Google Home, iTunes, or Spotify.

Mark Rohloff

Mark Rohloff has been City Manager for the City of Oshkosh, Wisconsin since 2008. With the leadership and vision of the Oshkosh Common Council, Mark and his staff have transformed the City of Oshkosh into a customer-oriented service organization through strategic planning, employee engagement, and continuous improvement initiatives. Mark has 40 years of experience in local government management, in areas as diverse as finance, economic development, public works, and organizational development. He is committed to the values and goals of the city's strategic plan, and he believes in working closely with individuals and groups throughout the city to achieve great things for the community.

Mark currently serves on the Board of Directors for the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and the League's Mutual Insurance Company, is Vice President of the Wisconsin Urban Alliance, and serves on various non-profit boards in the Oshkosh area. He is a Past President of the Wisconsin City-County Management Association. Mark is also a member of the adjunct faculty in the UW Oshkosh Master of Public Administration program, and is on the Advisory Board for the Whitburn Center for Governance and Policy Research at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Parth Shah

Parth is the CEO and Co-Founder of Polimorphic, where they focus on building state of the art constituent services technology for local government. Polimorphic has been a pioneer of AI applications in local government.

Prior to Polimorphic, Parth worked at NVidia in deep learning, at a smart-cities startup, and ran the Machine Intelligence Community at MIT. Parth has a degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from MIT.

Christina Thrun

Christina Thrun has served as the Executive Officer of the Chippewa Valley Home Builders Association (CVHBA) since 2015 where she has worked to advance the mission of the CVHBA to "build a better area housing industry through promotion, advocacy and education." Over the past 9 years she has worked with municipalities throughout the CVHBA's 6 county service area to support the housing industry and promote responsible growth and land use. She holds an MBA from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and also currently serves on the Housing Opportunities Commission with the City of Eau Claire.

Aaron J. White

Aaron J. White is the Community Development Director for the City of Eau Claire and Executive Director of the Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority, and oversees the Economic development Division, Planning Division, Inspections Division, and Housing Division since May 2023, previously holding the Economic Development Manager position since December 2018. The Community Development Department is focused on all aspects of the physical growth and economic success of the City of Eau Claire.

Aaron received a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Psychology from Buena Vista University, and a master's degree in Business Administration from Kansas Wesleyan University. Aaron has over 24 years in business and economic development experience and is a certified Business Retention and Expansion Professional from BREI, and served on the Kansas International Trade Coordinating Council, U.S. Commerce Mid-America District Export Council, Local Area1 Workforce Investment Board of Directors (Kansas), NW Kansas Planning and Development Commission, and Western Kansas Rural Economic Developers Alliance Board, and currently serves on the Wisconsin Economic Development Association Board of Directors.