



## **2022 Lake Junaluska Speaker Bios**

### **Dr. Rev. Percy Johnson, Jr., PhD**

Dr. Rev. Percy Johnson, Jr. was born in Mobile, Alabama. He holds degrees in General Studies, Social Science, Divinity, Ministry, and recently completed his Doctor of Sacred Theology Degree in Pastoral Counseling. He works out of New Horizon Counseling Center in Georgia and as an Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies and Theology at Beulah Heights University. Additionally, his work as a counselor includes providing counseling to At-Risk Inner-City teenagers and young adults at Atlanta's Year Up Program. He is married to Kim, and they have two adult children, and one energetic seven-year-old granddaughter.

### **Julie Brand, MS**

Julie has a master's degree in Counseling and enjoyed a 25-year career as a school counselor. She uses her unique perspective as a counselor/survivor, to speak about females who sexually abuse children. Julie educates and empowers audiences with her dynamic programs on mother-daughter sexual abuse, female offenders in positions of trust, male survivors, and recovery from childhood trauma. She authored *A Mother's Touch: Surviving Mother-Daughter Sexual Abuse* and *Behind the Façade: Exposing Female Sex Offenders and Helping Victims to Heal*. She is the recipient of the NCFM (National Coalition for Men) "2019 Award of Honor" for her work in the area of child sex abuse and advocacy for male victims.

### **Heather Waleski, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, SANE-A**

Heather Waleski is a Family Nurse Practitioner for the Atrium Health Child Protection team. In this role Heather conducts Child Medical Evaluations for children who may have experienced child maltreatment in the form of neglect, physical or sexual abuse, in the outpatient and inpatient setting. Heather was previously the Forensic Program Coordinator at Atrium Health Union in Monroe, North Carolina for 7 years. Heather has been a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner since 2008. Prior to becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner, Heather was an Emergency Department Nurse for 16 years working in several different ED and level one trauma centers in Charlotte and New York City. Heather has conducted Adult and Adolescent SANE trainings in the Charlotte area since 2011.

### **Troy Armstrong, AS**

Troy retired in 2020 as a Sergeant after 30 years of service with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. For 17 years, he was assigned to the felony investigations unit working in both the sexual assault unit and homicide. This unit was cutting edge and was one of only a handful of its kind when it began in 2006. Troy developed and implemented the CMPD sexual assault cold case unit. The unit was responsible for over 5,000 open sexual assault cases. While working as the unit's only full-time detective, he was involved in the convictions in over 71 cold case rapes dating back to the 1970's. Troy was awarded the NCCASA Legislative Award and CMPD Chief's Award of Excellence for his work on creating the NC Sexual Battery Law. He currently works with the North Carolina Department of Justice as a cold case investigations specialist concentrating on sexual assault cases.

### **Dr. Raymond Turpin, PhD**

Dr. Turpin was born in Atlanta, Georgia and attended UGA, where he earned a BA degree in psychology and attended the University of West Georgia and earned an MA in psychology. He received his doctorate in clinical psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. After relocating to NC, he co-founded Jackson County Psychological Services, which provided free and reduced-cost mental health services to the students and families of the Jackson County Public School system. In 2018, he went into private practice in Waynesville, NC and primarily works with adults and older adolescents. In his clinical experience, he has worked in psychiatric hospitals, psychiatric emergency units, a juvenile detention facility, schools, and community mental health clinics.

**Paul Phelan, MS**

Paul has been in law enforcement since 2002 and has experience in law enforcement and corrections in the State of Florida as well as North Carolina. Paul has written the department policy on Hostage Negotiations for two law enforcement agencies. He has also been the hostage negotiations team coordinator for the Nassau County Sheriff's Office in Florida and is an FBI trained negotiator. He has experience as a patrol officer, FTO, honor guard member, SWAT operator, detective, and crisis negotiator. Paul was an Adjunct Instructor at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office/FSCJ Academy from 2007-2013 and is currently an instructor/developer for the North Carolina Justice Academy for hostage/crisis negotiations, Solo Active Shooter Response, and Rapid Deployment Instructor Training. Additionally, he is an adjunct professor for the Bachelor of Applied Science in Public safety degree program for Florida State College. Paul is a former member of the Florida Association of Hostage Negotiators, and a current board member for the Central North Carolina Negotiators Network. Paul is also a board member for the North Carolina Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Board. He is a qualified professional counselor embedded for the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in North Carolina, where he is also actively a crisis negotiator for the department's crisis negotiations team. He is also a member of the Western Carolina Peer Support Network. Paul is a sworn deputy sheriff with the Haywood County, North Carolina Sheriff's Office. He holds a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Columbia College and a Master of Arts degree in Crisis and Trauma Counseling from Liberty University.

**Amber Burgess-Cox, MS**

Amber brings experience from both the teaching field and service in one of the largest Sheriff's offices in the state as a deputy with the Henderson County Sheriff's Office. While employed at the Sheriff's Office, she worked in multiple divisions, including detention, investigations, and patrol. In her last six years at Henderson County, Amber was Corporal and then Sergeant of the Civil Process Division. She and her division handled everything from warrants for child custody to delinquent property tax sales. Amber graduated from Wingate University with her Bachelor of Arts degree in History. She received her Master's in Criminal Justice from Columbia College, SC. Her route in the education field has taken her through classrooms at the high school, community college, and four-year college levels. Amber is currently on the advisory boards of Crossnore School and Children's Home - Hendersonville Office and the Hendersonville branch of the State Employees Credit Union and a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Lodge 1616. She brings a unique perspective to the classroom -- real-world experience and extensive knowledge of criminal justice. Amber has taught topics from Transportation of Inmates to Community Policing and students from sixteen to seventy.

**Jim Sears, LE**

Jim Sears has been a law enforcement officer for over 30 years working with the Irving, Texas Police Department, Jim is a Texas Commission on Law Enforcement instructor specializing in domestic violence and child abuse cases, instructor at the Crimes Against Children's Conference in Dallas, certified instructor for advanced child abuse investigations through the Texas municipal police association, and the National Criminal Justice Training Center. He is the 2011 recipient of the Lt. Bill Walsh Award from the Dallas CAC for career achievements in the field of child abuse investigations. He is a multiple time winner of the Nick Fowler award at the Tarrant County law enforcement academy and for the outstanding instructor with the Basic Law Enforcement Academy. He has recently taken a position with the Richland Hills Texas Police Department and is helping to shape and mold a young police force in the Criminal Investigative Unit. He is a mainstay for our NC symposiums and continues to lecture across the country on topics related to child abuse investigations, interview and interrogation, and crime-scene investigations for domestic violence and child abuse.

**Liz Ghilardi, LCSW, MSW**

Liz received her BA at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in Social Welfare and MSW at Washington University, George Warren Brown School of Social Work in St. Louis, MO. Liz is currently the Forensic Interview Program Supervisor for Child Advocacy and Protection Services within Children's Wisconsin. During her career, she has completed over 2,000 forensic interviews. Liz provides training for professionals on issues of child maltreatment, interviewing children and sexualized behavior. She is considered an expert witness regarding child maltreatment and interviewing. She has been instrumental in the development of the Wisconsin Forensic Interview Guidelines including the curriculum, training, and implementation across the state.

**Elizabeth Champion, MS**

Elizabeth Champion, MS, received her BS in English and a BS in Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and an MS in Applied Psychology with a Community Health Emphasis at Sacred Heart University. She is currently the Executive Director of Child Advocacy Centers of Wisconsin, the statewide chapter supporting Wisconsin's fifteen child advocacy centers, two satellite centers, and other multidisciplinary teams investigating suspected child maltreatment. Previously, Elizabeth was the Children's Justice Act Coordinator at the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and the Executive Director of a community-based domestic and sexual abuse program. She serves on multiple statewide committees involved in child maltreatment, including the Children's Justice Act Task Force, the Office of Crime Victim Services Grant Advisory Board, the Wisconsin Drug Endangered Children Steering Committee, and more.

**Oto U. Ekpo, JD**

Oto is a 2009 graduate of Emory Law School and has been practicing law for 13 years in the area of criminal prosecution. She is currently the Director of Advocacy and Compliance Officer with the Fulton County Solicitor General's office and previously served as the Director of Training & Policy for the DeKalb County DA's Office. Prior to her transition into training, she prosecuted in the Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking Unit in which she protected some of the most vulnerable victims in her community. She brings passion, knowledge, and experience in training those seeking justice for victims.

**Liz Szarkowski, MS**

Liz obtained her master's in science in Clinical Art Therapy from Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts. She worked extensively in the Springfield community with a focus on at-risk children, adolescents, and their families. Liz also worked as an Administrative Coordinator for the largest Healthy Families program in Massachusetts. During that time Liz and her team strengthened the community's efforts to create easy access to services for young families. Through these efforts, Liz's team won several awards including Community Engagement, Group Facilitation, and Legislative Outreach Awards. In January 2018, Liz became the Program Director for the South Carolina Network for Children Advocacy Centers. In this position, Liz supports Forensic Interviewers through Peer Review, co-facilitates Building Resiliency training for CACs and MDT groups, co-facilitates SCNCAC Initial Victim Service Provider (VSP) training, and provides technical assistance and support to 28 CACs around the state. In 2022, Liz became a certified FAN Trainer through the Erikson Institute. The most recent project involved working with a team to develop a state-wide curriculum for the 2022 South Carolina Child Abuse Response Protocol Act.

**Alvera, Lesane, Ed. D**

Dr. Alvera Lesane has served as the Associate Superintendent for Iredell-Statesville Schools since 2010. She also serves as an adjunct professor for The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the School of Education. Previously, Dr. Lesane has worked in Iredell-Statesville Schools and Durham Public Schools as the director of professional growth and development. Her passion centers on serving children and adults from diverse backgrounds. Among other community activities, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Dove House Children's Advocacy Center in Statesville, NC.

**Steven Clinard, AAS**

Steve has been a law enforcement officer for 25 years and employed with the Pender County Sheriff's Office in Burgaw, North Carolina for the past 10 years. He is a detective-sergeant and is currently assigned as a special victim's investigator, a position he has had since 2014. Steve's duties include investigating all sexual assaults (both children and adult), all child physical assaults and serious felony domestic assaults. He is also tasked with investigating ICAC cases as well as overseeing the county's Sex Offender Registry. Prior to Pender County, Steve was with the Winston-Salem Police Department, the Nags Head Police Department, and the Topsail Beach Police Department. Steve has been married for 32 years, has two adult children and lives in Wilmington, North Carolina.

**Ashley Fiore, LCSW, MSW**

Ashley is a licensed clinical social worker with 27 years of experience treating childhood trauma in Children's Advocacy Centers and Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse agencies. She is endorsed as a master trainer by the developers of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and as a developer-endorsed trainer in

Alternatives for Families Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AF-CBT). She serves as training faculty for the NC Child Treatment Program at Duke University's Center for Child and Family Health and provides evidence-based mental health trauma treatment to children and their families at Mountain CAC. She has developed successful TF-CBT programs in several agencies; provides training and clinical consultation on trauma-informed comprehensive clinical assessments and trauma-related sexual behavior problems; and has provided clinical supervision, training, and implementation support of evidence-based treatment models to agencies in North Carolina and other states. She enjoys gardening, making pottery, and spending time with her husband and teenage children in the beautiful NC mountains.

### **Andie Morgenlander, BA**

Andie is a director, writer, and producer of short and feature length narrative films. They co-wrote, executive produced and acted in the independent feature *Luke & Jo* which has garnered various awards including "Best Narrative Film" at Full Bloom Film Festival and "Best Feature Film" at Fort Meyers Beach International Film Festival. *Luke & Jo* is available on DVD/Blu-ray. Andie co-created a narrative about queer visibility in Appalachia, titled *Whistle Down Wind*. It has played both nationally and internationally on the festival circuit and is currently being adapted into a feature film. Lastly, Andie is a head creative producer at Justice Film Collective. They're dedicated to centering equity and care at every stage of the filmmaking process.

### **Joshua Overbay, VA, MFA**

Joshua is a director, producer, and teaching artist. In 2014, he released the award-winning feature film, *As It Is in Heaven*. The New York Times deemed it a Critic's Pick. He directed his third feature film, *Luke & Jo* which has received numerous accolades and is available on Amazon Prime. Overbay garnered over 30 awards for his short films. His film *Transposition* was a 2009 National Finalist for the Student Academy Awards. He has taught courses in independent screenwriting, directing, producing, and film history at Asbury University and Louisiana State University. He directed the short film *Spare the Child*, which features three adult survivors of corporal punishment. *Spare the Child* has screened nationally and internationally with organizations like The US Alliance to End the Hitting of Children and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. He is an Assistant Professor of Film at Western Carolina University and producer at Justice Film Collective.

### **Nancy Lamb, JD**

Nancy Lamb recently retired as a prosecutor after more than 35 years in service to North Carolina and currently serves as the CAC Attorney for Southmountain Children and Family Services. Lamb received her undergraduate degree from Appalachian State University and her law degree from Wake Forest University School of Law. Lamb served for 6 years on the Board of Directors of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) and chaired the Professional Education committee during her tenure on the Executive Committee. In 2003, she was awarded APSAC's Outstanding Service Award, given annually to an APSAC member in recognition of outstanding service to the organization. Lamb is a past president of the North Carolina Professional Society on the Abuse of Children and the 1999 recipient of NCPSAC's Kimberly Crews award, given annually to an NCPSAC member in recognition of professional excellence for service to abused children statewide. Lamb has provided training for the past 25 years at local, regional, and national child abuse conferences throughout the United States. Lamb also serves on the CACNC Board of Directors.

### **Whitney Belich, JD**

After graduating from Florida State University with a degree in Criminology, Whitney worked in the Tampa Bay area until returning to North Carolina to attend Wake Forest School of Law. Whitney began her legal career as an ADA for the Honorable Susan Doyle in Johnston County, North Carolina. As a prosecutor, Whitney specialized in cases involving impaired driving and sexual and physical abuse of both children and adults. In 2014, Whitney accepted a position with the Attorney General's Office and was stationed at the NC Justice Academy in Salemburg, NC. A year after taking the position at the Justice Academy, Whitney was promoted to another position within the Law Enforcement Liaison section of the Attorney General's Office. While working in Raleigh, Whitney served as the primary attorney for the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission, after serving as a guest instructor for the Conference of District Attorneys for many years, Whitney was honored to accept the position of Child Abuse Resource Prosecutor with the Conference in 2019. The NC Conference of DAs provides support and training for all of North Carolina's elected DAs and ADAs and other staff within the DA's Office as well as others. Whitney currently lives in Clayton with her husband and their 4-year-old daughter.

**Michele Thames, M.Ed.**

Michele is the Executive Director of SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center in Fairfax, VA. She holds a master's degree in Education from Cambridge College. Michele was previously the Supervisor of the Forensic Interview Program at the Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters Child Abuse Program in Norfolk, Virginia. Michele is a trained Forensic Interviewer that has conducted over 3,000 forensic interviews in a multidisciplinary team setting for local, state, federal and military agencies. Michele is a board member of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Virginia and faculty for ChildFirst Virginia. She is the handler of Virgil, SafeSpot's facility dog.

**Jessica Greis-Edwardson, JD**

Jessica L. Greis Edwardson was a prosecutor for twelve years in Fairfax County, Virginia, and specialized in the prosecution of crimes against children, specifically sexual abuse and sexual exploitation offenses. She regularly consults with law enforcement and prosecutors concerning child sex crimes investigations and charging decisions. Jessica was the prosecutor liaison to the Fairfax County child abuse multi-disciplinary team, where she worked with Child Protective Services, SafeSpot Child Advocacy Center, police, victim services, and health care providers specifically trained in the areas of pediatric sexual abuse and forensic examinations, to assess and review cases of child sexual abuse. She also trains prosecutors and law enforcement in the areas of crimes against children, search and seizure, and evidence-based prosecutions. Jessica has specialized expertise in internet crimes against children, investigating and prosecuting child sex abuse cases, understanding the impact of trauma on children, recantation and memory issues in child abuse cases, sex trafficking of minors, and forensic interviewing. She received the 2019 Team Excellence Award from the Fairfax County Police Department and the 2011 Champion of Justice Award from the Northern Virginia Victim Assistance Coalition. Jessica's work prior to becoming a prosecutor includes advocating for domestic violence victims and their children as an attorney with Potomac Legal Aid and Legal Services of Northern Virginia, and training judges, victim advocates and community service providers on these special victim cases.