



How a Community Coalition Mobilized for Early Learning Success

A Crucible of Practice Salon

April 11, 2023 / 12:30 – 2 pm EST

PRESENTERS



Bill Hammack
Partner
Link Restaurant Group

New Orleans native, Bill Hammack, has been involved for many years in various businesses, with both local and national scope. Professionally trained as a journalist, after a short career working as a newspaper reporter and editor, he decided that his future was as an entrepreneur and subsequently build several successful ventures in printing, graphic arts, publishing, internet technology, hospitality, and construction.

For 22 years, Hammack has been a partner with celebrity chef, Donald Link, in the Link Restaurant Group. LRG owns and operates Herbsaint, Cochon, Peche, Gianna, Butcher, and La Boulangerie. He is also a partner and investor in several other local businesses ranging from hospitality to construction.

Hammack was a founding member of the World War II Museum, has served on various nonprofit and community organization boards, including Clover and Educare. He is also a founder and member of the board of the Link Stryjewski Foundation, created to address the persistent cycle of violence poverty, as well as the lack of quality education and job training opportunities available to young people in New Orleans.

His commitment to early childhood education has been recognized by several awards including:

- Force for Good Leadership Award by the Louisiana Association of Non-Profits
- Founders Award from the Louisiana Institute for Children and Families
- Young Leadership Council Role Model Award
- Child Welfare League of America “100 Champions for Children”
- Community Impact Funding Partner from United Way



Ron McClain, LCSW
Executive Director, Institute of Mental Hygiene

Chair, Public Policy Committee,
United Way of Southeast Louisiana

Ronald P. McClain is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), who received a law degree (JD) from Loyola University at New Orleans School

of Law in 2004. Mr. McClain is currently the Executive Director of the Institute of Mental Hygiene of the City of New Orleans (IMH), a Fellow in the Tulane University School of Medicine Early Childhood Policy leadership Institute, and holds the office of chair of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana Public Policy Committee. He previously served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Family Service of Greater New Orleans for approximately 10 years and for nine years as the Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Bureau of New Orleans. He held the office of chair of the Long-Term Recovery Organization for Orleans parish, called Crescent Alliance Recovery Effort or CARE, and vice chair of the Greater New Orleans Disaster Recovery Partnership (GNODRP).

A long-term resident of New Orleans, Mr. McClain has over 30 years of experience working with children and families in need, and in social service administration and university teaching in the social work field. Most recently, Mr. McClain has received recognition for his strategic re-building of the community-based behavioral health agency, Family Service of Greater New Orleans, following Hurricane Katrina. He has also served as chair of the Research, Advocacy and Policy committee of the New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium.

Mr. McClain is a former Commissioner on the City of New Orleans Civil Service Commission. He serves as a member of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation Board of Directors and is a board member of WWOZ public radio station. Mr. McClain is a member of the Tulane University School of Social Work Dean's Advisory Council and was a member of the inaugural class of the Nancy M. Marsiglia Institute for Justice. He currently serves as chairman of the board of the Times-Picayune Doll and Toy Fund, President of the board of the Pelican Center for Children and Families, and Vice-President for Budget and Finance of the Louisiana.



Jillian Delos Reyes
Director of Education and Youth Initiatives
United Way of Southeast Louisiana

Jillian has led the charge of the New Orleans Campaign for Grade-Level Reading since 2017 and manages the campaign as an internal initiative of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana (UWSELA) as the Director of Youth and Education Initiatives. A Virginia native, she has dedicated the last fifteen years across different organizations spanning Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Louisiana, to improving the outcomes of children and families through direct programming, policy advocacy, and community organizing. Recent highlights of her career to date include: establishing D.C.'s first residential housing program for women and their children in addictions recovery at Samaritan Inns, managing strategic and sustainability plans for organizations like National Birth Equity Collaborative, Louisiana Center of Children's Rights, Funders for LGBTQ Issues among many others, led UWSELA's United for Early Care and Education COVID-19 recovery program that saved over 80 child care centers across southeast Louisiana from permanently closing its door during the pandemic, and most recently advocated for a historic first-time investment of city funds towards the expansion of high-quality early education seats which laid the groundwork for a dedicated 20-year millage that passed in 2022. Jillian is a fellow of the Urban League's Urban Leaders of Equity and Diversity program, Loyola University College of Law's Nancy Marsiglia Institute for Justice, and the Institute for Educational Leadership's Education Policy Fellowship. She currently serves on the board of Make Music NOLA, an organization committed to providing free access to music and music instruction to low-income children of color to support the future culture bearers of New Orleans. Jillian has had the honor of calling New Orleans her home for the past eight years and dances as a member of the NOLA Cherrybombs Mardi Gras dance krewe when she is not working behind the scenes to help create equitable policies and programs for New Orleans children and their families.



Morgan Shannon
Director of Strategic Partnerships
Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

Morgan Shannon is a crusader for communities of color. Morgan's passion has allowed her to build connections amongst various stakeholders including youth, advocates, organizers, and philanthropy. Morgan served as Program Manager at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation where she worked with the Mississippi, New Orleans, and Boys and Men of Color portfolios. She also served as Program Associate at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), where she supported the Health and Climate Justice programs. Morgan is deeply committed to youth development and racial equity, having worked in both and as frontline staff for CommonHealth Action and Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association in the southwest section of Atlanta, GA.



Hamilton Simons-Jones
Founder and Principal
ResourceFull Consulting

Hamilton Simons-Jones is the founder and principal of ResourceFull Consulting. He has spent the last two decades working to ensure every child enters adulthood empowered to create and fulfill their dreams and contribute to their community. He has helped raise more than \$130 million for organizations and communities focused on improving circumstances and equitable outcomes for children, youth and families. He has helped lead the policy and advocacy strategy for the United Way of Southeast Louisiana's New Orleans Campaign for Grade-Level Reading since 2017, which has led to significant increases in investment in early care and education in New Orleans. He served as the Secretary of Ready Kids New Orleans, which led the campaign to pass a transformative early childhood education millage in Orleans Parish to double the number of infants and toddlers from low-income households in the city who have access to a quality early care and education. He has worked on a variety of consulting projects over the past fifteen years with clients that range from the ACLU, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and the Walton Family Foundation, among others.



Rochelle Wilcox
Owner and Director,
Wilcox Academy of Early Learning
Co-Founder,
For Providers by Providers

Rochelle Wilcox has been an early childhood education professional for over 23 years. Her advocacy for early learning started in the classroom as a teacher and led her to her current position as the CEO/Executive Director of the Wilcox's Academy of Early Learning, Wilcox's Academy Too and Wilcox Academy Central City [Wilcox Academy](#). She comes super-charged with an educational background including an Associates of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education and a Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an education in Urban Society concentration. She was the first early learning center provider to sit on the Board of Agenda for Children. She currently sit on the boards of The Children's Funding Accelerator [CFA](#) and Drexel Prep Foundation [DPF](#). She also sits the steering committees of the New Orleans Grade Level Reading Campaign [NOLAGLR](#), The New Orleans Early Education Network [NOEEN](#) and she is the co-chair of Geaux far Louisiana [GeauxFar](#). In 2021, she co-

founded For Providers by Providers [4PXPLA](#) a non-profit that champions Louisiana's Type III predominantly BIPOC and Woman led early learning centers (ELC that accepts public funding) by enhancing the quality of ELC through policy advocacy, professional development, networking and wealth building. She is the 2023 recipient of the Inaugural Early Childhood Leader of the Year award bestowed by Dream teachers and the Louisiana Department of Education. Over her career she has served over 2000 children, families and ECE providers however, she notes her highest honor is being a wife and a mother to 3 sons.



Michael Williamson
President and CEO
United Way of Southeast Louisiana

Michael L. Williamson serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of Southeast Louisiana serving Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington parishes. Under Williamson's leadership as CEO, United Way developed a Blueprint for Prosperity, a plan which informs all of the organization's work with a framework to eradicate poverty in Southeast Louisiana and a bold vision of equitable communities where all individuals are healthy, educated, and economically stable. Williamson is committed to a focus on community outcomes as the top strategy for increasing accountability and maintaining United Ways' leadership in philanthropy. He has worked to strengthen United Way's public-private partnerships at the local, state, and federal level to create scalable community building efforts while creating and leveraging the state's only United Way advocacy program, which has been responsible for countless legislative advancements since its inception.

Among his accomplishments, Williamson created United Way's Million-Dollar Roundtable, whose initiation requires a gift of \$1M. The group has grown from a single member to six distinguished individuals and couples who continue to lead United Way's investments and help to inform the organization's fundraising strategy Williamson has over 30 years of executive level nonprofit management experience, 26 of those years served in the United Way system. He has served as President of United Way of Aiken County, Aiken, SC, and Resource Development Director/Executive Director of ATC Foundation, Aiken Technical College. Aiken, SC.