



## United Way and CGLR: Aligning for Impact in Education

United to Thrive – United Way of Central Iowa

A Crucible of Practice Salon

December 13, 2022 / 12:30 – 2:00 pm EST

### PRESENTERS



#### **Kate Bennett**

**Community Impact Officer, Early Childhood Success & Education Success, United Way of Central Iowa**

**Kate** began her career at United Way of Central Iowa in 2002 as the Executive Director for Polk County Early Childhood Iowa. In that position, Kate worked to create a collaborative system for government and local nonprofits to support at-risk children from ages 0-8 and their families. The outcome of that work was a much more collaborative system and higher quality early childhood services in central Iowa.

Kate has served as the Community Impact Officer, Education Success since 2012. She spearheaded the 2020 goals to raise the graduation rate in Polk, Dallas, and Warren counties from 83.4% in 2008 to 93.6% in 2019. This increase of 10.2% means 6,300 more students graduated opposed to if the graduation rate remained at the 2008 statistic. For the last two years, Kate has been a part of the team who created the United to Thrive framework, which UWCI officially launched in May 2021. This framework maintains a strong education focus while looking through an equity lens and COVID recovery. Kate is the staff lead for two volunteer cabinets who guide this work: Early Childhood Success and Education Success. Kate is looking forward to this next exciting chapter in central Iowa.



#### **Marian Rueter Godwin**

**Community Impact Services Director, United Way of Central Iowa**

**Marian** began her career at United Way of Central Iowa in 2016 as a Research Associate and Data Lead for Education. In that position, Marian worked closely with Kate and Cheryl providing data and helping to tell the story of United Way's work in education. Marian now leads the team responsible for the research, data, and investment process of UWCI. She

has been a part of the team who created the United to Thrive framework, and with her current team works within all Five Elements of a thriving community. Marian looks forward to the work ahead in United Way's effort to deepen understanding of the facets of United to Thrive, with the aim to identify new and multiple ways of measuring impact to demonstrate thriving.



**Mary Sellers**  
**President, United Way of Central Iowa**

**Mary Sellers** was named President of United Way of Central Iowa in July 2021, a role she also held from 2012 to 2017. During the interim period of 2017 to 2019, Sellers served as U.S. President of United Way Worldwide, leading the U.S. network of 1,200 local United Ways. Mary was accountable for \$3.5 billion in fundraising revenue annually and the strategic impact of United Ways in 41 countries and territories. For 10 years prior to her leadership of United Way, Mary was the president and CEO of the Science Center of Iowa, where she guided the planning, fundraising, execution, and operation of the \$62-million, 110,000-squarefoot facility in downtown Des Moines. Mary earned her B.A. degree from the University of Florida and her M.B.A. at the University of Iowa, Tippie School of Management. She is also a graduate of the Getty Leadership Institute, the Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Business, and the Diversity Leaders Initiative at Furman University.



**John Spinks Jr.**  
**Project Manager, Oakridge Neighborhood**

John Spinks Jr. is Project Manager with Oakridge Neighborhood, managing its 21st Century Community Learning Center. The Center provides a much-needed source of support to youth in the community through a continuum of after-school and out-of-school programming focusing on the academic, social, emotional and enrichment needs of students from kindergarten through 12th grade. John joined Oakridge Neighborhood in 2012 as community/Des Moines Public Schools liaison. He previously served at Children & Families of Iowa and Orchard Place/PACE.

A native of Fort Meade, Florida, John attended Highland Community College and Drake University. He holds an Associates of Arts degree in criminal justice and a Bachelor of Science in Education. He serves on Iowa's Disproportionate Minority Contact committee. John believes the most meaningful aspect of his work is seeing youth in Oakridge Neighborhood programs graduate high school and become successful in the community with college and work.



**Dave Stone**  
**Advocacy Officer, United Way of Central Iowa**

Dave Stone currently serves as Advocacy Officer for United Way of Central Iowa. In this role, Stone focuses on government relations and advocacy in advancing the collective goals of United Way and its coalition partners. Stone previously served as Associate Director of Bravo Greater Des Moines, a regional arts, culture, and heritage organization in the region. As a community funder, Stone worked with over 60 organizations in the region to increase sustainability, strategic planning and support innovative collaborations.

Formerly Communications Manager for Planned Parenthood of the Heartland in Des Moines, Stone oversaw communications, strategy development and legislative advocacy for Iowa, Nebraska, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Prior to his work at Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Stone worked as the Director of Grassroots Development and Field Director for Iowans for Sensible Priorities, the federal budget campaign led by Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream. Stone has also served as District Organizer for congressional candidate Paul Johnson and Field Volunteer Coordinator for presidential candidate Howard Dean.

Stone holds a Master of Public Administration from Drake University in Des Moines and a Bachelor of Political Science from Iowa State University in Ames. He was recognized as a Des Moines Business Record 40 Under 40 in 2021 and is a 2016 Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute alum.

In addition to his professional roles, Stone is a local artist in central Iowa primarily focusing on long-exposure photography, nightscapes and astrophotography using a telescope and camera. His work, *Silos*, was honored with a 2016 Iowa State Fair Photography Salon Honorable Mention ribbon.



**Rachelle Talbott**  
**Research Associate, United Way of Central Iowa**

Rachelle is a Research Associate at UWCI working closely with funded partners in the field of education and early childhood development. She began her career in youth development and community engagement. Rachelle has an interest in quality, high impact practices, and strong technical skills. Having recently completed her M.S. in Business Analytics at the University of Iowa, she is improving the strategic analysis of programs and results, and helping agencies access public data systems to better support their youth.



**Rubén Vázquez Ruiz**  
**Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer,**  
**United Way of Central Iowa**

**Rubén Vázquez** has over 20 years of experience in social justice, advocacy, civic engagement, community-based initiatives and fighting for diversity, equity, and inclusion at a personal, institutional, and systemic level. He has dedicated his career to advocating for underrepresented populations and engaging them to become primary stakeholders in their community. Rubén has worked in nonprofit, for-profit, education and government sectors. He holds a master's degree in Public Administration

from Hamline University and a Certificate in Global Arbitration Law & Practice from Hamline Law School & Queen Mary University, London, England.

Rubén and his family immigrated to the United States from Mexico City more than 40 years ago. In 2016, Rubén was appointed by Governor Mark Dayton to the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs. In addition, he has also sat on several community boards and advisory committees. In 2016, Rubén was a candidate for the Minnesota House of Representatives. In 2021, Rubén was recognized by the Twin Cities Business Journal as a notable LGBTQA executive in the Twin Cities.

Creating a space of belonging through diversity and inclusion are important to Rubén. As a member of the LGBTQ+, Latino, and the immigrant communities, Rubén's philosophy is, "diversity is what makes us different, inclusion is how we incorporate those differences that yield stronger communities of belonging."



**Cheryl Werner**  
**Education Coordinator, United Way of Central Iowa**

Cheryl joined United Way of Central Iowa in August 2017. She works closely with Kate, UWCI colleagues, and community partners coordinating UWCI's initiatives while supporting our education goals & strategies to maximize our collective impact in our community.

She began her career in education as a classroom teacher and coaching girls' basketball and softball. Cheryl's classroom experience spanned grades 2, 3, 4, & 6 before becoming a learning resource center teacher (technology, library, and GT). Her leadership experiences included serving as an instructional coach and finally as Dubuque Schools K-12 District Coordinator of Gifted & Talented, Advanced Placement, Measures of Academic Progress, and the Arts. Cheryl also coordinated the UD for Kids Summer Enrichment Program for the University of Dubuque. Cheryl was an instructor through the Keystone Adult Learning program. She ended her school career as principal in Waterloo. Cheryl earned her BA at Loras College and her MAE in the Education of Gifted and PK-12 Principalship, Director of Special Education from the University of Northern Iowa.



**Jaclyn Wulfekuhle**

**Women United Director, United Way of Central Iowa**

Jaclyn Wulfekuhle is the Women United Director at United Way of Central Iowa. Jaclyn works closely with Women United volunteers to raise over \$1.6 million dollars to invest in central Iowa's youth programs promoting Early Childhood Success. She is a strong communicator and focuses on creating long lasting relationships. Jaclyn has been with United Way of Central Iowa for over eight years, serving in many roles on the Donor Engagement team. She has a passion for serving her community. Her work at United Way is aligned with her day-to-day values and passion for early child development.

Jaclyn received a bachelor's degree in Public Relations from the University of Northern Iowa. She has been a Des Moines resident for nine years and has enjoyed building a life here with her husband Brett and two sons: Lyndon and Foster. In her spare time, she is busy being active outside, rummaging through thrift shops, and planning the families next getaway!