

Tifton Speakers

All Tifton Speakers (in alphabetical order)

Latesa Bailey, Senior Manager, Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia

Latesa Bailey is the Senior Manager/Head of Department for Human Resources at Kia Motors Manufacturing, Georgia, Inc. (KMMG). Ms. Bailey is currently responsible for leading Human Resources Employment and Recruitment, Payroll & Benefits, HRIS, Strategic Planning & Compensation, and Training & Organizational Development. Previously, Ms. Bailey served as the Senior Corporate Counsel, Labor & Employment Law for KMMG beginning in 2012. Before joining KMMG, Ms. Bailey was the Corporate Counsel, Labor & Employment Law for ThyssenKrupp Steel USA, LLC in Mobile, Alabama where she managed the Compliance Program.

She is a licensed attorney admitted to practice before the Florida and Georgia state and federal courts. She is a graduate of Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Business Management. She also graduated Cum Laude from Stetson University College of Law and received a Juris Doctorate (JD) and Master of Business Administration (MBA).

She sits on the Foundation Board of Trustees for West Georgia Technical College, the Board of Directors for the LaGrange-Troup Chamber of Commerce and has served as a member of Cool Girls, Inc. advisory board, the Junior League of Atlanta and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Myrna Ballard, President, Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

Myrna Ballard has been President of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce since January 1997. She was formerly Vice President for Economic Development for the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber, Economic Developer for Quitman-Brooks County (Georgia), and Director of Economic Development for the Brazos Valley Development Council (Texas). She has 32 years of experience in community and economic development. Ballard is a native of Hyden, Kentucky. She holds a bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky University and a master's degree in community development/rural sociology from Texas A&M University. Her master's thesis was entitled, "The Role of Banks and Bankers in Rural Industrial Development". Ballard is active in several community and professional organizations. She serves as chairman of the South Georgia Workforce Development Board, is a member of the E3Z Birth-to-Eight Partnership and the Valdosta Early College Academy Board, is past president of the Valdosta Rotary Club, past president of the Valdosta Civic Roundtable, former member of the Valdosta Technical College Board of Directors, and past chairman of the board of the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. She has been

married to Dr. Chet Ballard for 39 years. They have lived in the Valdosta area since 1985.

Kathy Carlisle, Founding CEO, THINC College and Career Academy

Dr. Carlisle is currently the CEO of the THINC College and Career Academy. From 2010 – 2014, she worked with Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers, Inc. as the Director of Mission Services. She provided leadership for 4 Training Centers and 9 Career Centers serving over 30,000 job seekers and individuals with disabilities. Dr. Carlisle worked for Columbus State University (CSU) for 14 years - 8 years as the Dean of Enrollment Services (2001-2009), and 6 years as the Director of Human Resources, (1996-2001). She served on the President's executive team for eight years, providing leadership and strategic direction for the several departments.

Ms. Carlisle graduated from Auburn University in 2005 with a Doctorate in Adult Education. She earned a Masters in Public Administration from Columbus State University, and a Bachelor of Science in Human Services from Troy State University. Ms. Carlisle is a native of Georgia. She has been married for 44 years and has two sons and nine grandchildren.

Jamie Cook, STEM Outreach & Workforce Coordinator, 21st Century Partnership

Mr. Jamie W. Cook is STEM Outreach and Workforce Coordinator, 21st Century Partnership. He supports programs for STEM Economic and Workforce Development for Robins AFB and Middle Georgia. Mr. Cook retired in 2018 as the branch chief for Workforce Development in the engineering directorate at Robins AFB, where he was responsible for recruiting and hiring processes for all scientists and engineers (S&E), student experience programs, and specialized programs.

Prior to this position, Mr. Cook spent 18 years at AT&T, progressing from student engineer to staff manager, responsible for software development, data system operation and project management for a variety of applications supporting long distance voice and data services. He also held positions of technical leadership for an insurance company, a non-profit religious organization, and a major technical consulting firm, where he was director/project manager for implementation of PEOPLESOFT human resource and financial management applications for several corporate clients.

Mr. Cook has served on numerous advisory boards and committees for secondary and post-secondary education institutions and community support organizations related to growing Georgia's STEM workforce. He is a frequent speaker to community groups supporting STEM educational outreach programs and volunteers many hours to STEM outreach and mentorship programs.

Glenn Deibert, President, Coastal Pines Technical College

Dr. Glenn Deibert is president of Coastal Pines Technical College. During his 27 years in higher education he has served as president of three Georgia technical colleges: Coastal Pines Technical College in Waycross, Southwest Georgia Technical College in Thomasville, and Swainsboro Technical College in Swainsboro. He has also served as a drafting instructor, Academic Dean, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Executive Vice Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System. Dr. Deibert holds a Bachelor of Science in Education, Master of Education in Occupational Studies and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership.

Meghan Duke, Economic Development Director, City of West Point

Meghan is a next-generation economic developer who is passionate about collaborating with others to see cities transform creating stronger communities in which to live, work, play and learn. As the Economic Development Director for the West Point Development Authority and City of West Point, Meghan develops, organizes, and executes strategic plan designed to achieve the City of West Point's economic development goals and objectives to stimulate expansion of existing industry, and effective recruitment of new business.

Meghan serves on a variety of professional boards and associations including the Georgia Economic Developers Association, LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Troup County Center for Strategic Planning, ThINC. College & Career Academy, The Valley Partnership Joint Development Authority, and GeorgiaForward.

She is a graduate of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development and participated in GeorgiaForward's Young Gamechanger Dublin-Laurens County program in the Spring of 2014. Meghan is a recipient of Southern Economic Development Council's 2015 Chairman's Award as well as Georgia Economic Development Association's Penn Worden Professional Development grant and 2017 Committee Chair of the Year award.

A native of Georgia, she holds a Mass Media Arts degree from Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and Terry College of Business Certificate in Music Business at the University of Georgia.

Kay Durand, Retired Executive Director, Troup County Center for Strategic Planning

Graduate of the University of Georgia and lived in LaGrange for 43 years and with husband Fred reared 5 children and now are grandparents to 12. She was the Former Project Manager for Design Firm where she handled customer accounts and export documentation for Durand-Wayland, a family manufacturing firm. Ms. Durand retired as Executive Director of the Troup County Center for Strategic Planning. She has also

served on a variety of boards, those more aligned with the conference topic are: LaGrange City Council Member, LaGrange Industrial Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority, City of LaGrange Board of Planning and Zoning, West Georgia Technical College Board. Currently she serves with DASH for LaGrange Board (Dependable, Affordable, Sustainable Housing) as a volunteer, Circles of Troup County (Helping families in poverty to become self- sustaining and thrive.) and the LaGrange College Leadership Council.

Conni Fennell-Burley, Archway Professional, Washington County

Conni Fennell-Burley joined the Archway Partnership in January 2016 and serves as the Archway professional for Washington County. Following graduation from the University of Georgia with a bachelor of science, Conni began her career as assistant director of orientation and admissions. She later served in the private sector as the director of public relations and promotions for Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday. Conni has specialized in various business development, marketing, management and sales positions during her career in the public and private sectors.

Conni is a 2009 graduate of Leadership Georgia, the Georgia Academy of Economic Development and the UGA Public Service and Outreach Facilitation Academy. She is pursuing a Master of Public Administration. Conni serves as a member of two local boards of directors in Washington County. Conni lives in Tennille, Georgia, with her husband Blaine and their three children, Blaize (a graduate of UGA), Brandt (a student at UGA) and Brock (a high school student).

Chris Hatcher, CEO, Commodore Conyers College & Career Academy

Lauren Healey, Public Service Faculty, J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development

Lauren Healey is a public service faculty member at the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, specializing in youth engagement and leadership education. She has more than 16 years of experience in curriculum development, program design and delivery, and evaluation of both youth and adult programs for diverse audiences. With her successful background in the management of and collaboration with schools and community agencies, she provides valuable technical assistance to groups and assists them in meeting their leadership goals.

Prior to joining J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, Healey worked as a 4-H youth development agent in both rural and urban counties. In this position, she was responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs for youth ages 9-19. Healey has a MS Degree in Human Development and Family Studies from Auburn University; and a BS in Psychology from the University of Georgia.

Amy Jones, Business Services Coordinator, Southern Georgia Regional Commission

Amy Jones is the Business Services Coordinator and Sector Partnership Manager for the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. Prior to this role she was a business owner for 15 years in the equipment rental industry and served on the Workforce Development Board. With her background as a business owner as well as serving on the board for 6 years, it gives her insight as an employer advocate while implementing the various programs utilized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in Region 11.

Amy has two children in college who are in pursuit of their dreams. Amy and her husband Jason reside in Waycross and enjoy sporting events, spending time with her children, exercising and outdoor festivals.

Morris Leis, Superintendent, Coffee County Schools

Dr. Leis, began his tenure in Coffee County on August 10, 2011. Serving as superintendent of the school district for the past eight years, the school district was recently named the 2018 Georgia Charter School System of the Year. Dr. Leis earned his undergraduate degree from Georgia Southern University and graduate degrees from Valdosta State University and Argosy University.

Completing his 25th year in education, Dr. Leis has served in numerous roles as an educator including elementary and high school principal in Fitzgerald, Georgia and superintendent of Wayne County Schools in Jesup, Georgia prior to his tenure with Coffee County Schools. Additionally, he serves on the Georgia School Superintendent Association Board of Directors, Board of Control for Okefenokee RESA and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Charter System Foundation. In 2015, Dr. Leis served on Governor Deal's Superintendent Education Advisory Board.

Sharon Liggett, Archway Professional, University of Georgia

Sharon Liggett serves as a state-wide Operations Coordinator supervising 'faculty in-county' and linking resources of UGA within colleges, schools, and departments (faculty research and student experiential learning) to community-identified needs. She facilitates community engagement through stakeholder partnerships. Additionally, she networks with regional partners, state agencies, USG and TCSG institutions, business/industry and other resources to leverage assets and build collaborative community and economic development opportunities. Ms. Liggett earned her BA in International Relations from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida and a MPA from The Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Rob Martin, Business Consultant, UGA Small Business Development Center

Rob joined the SBDC in 2015 as a business consultant in the Albany office. Previously, he worked for multiple large corporations and brings with him a rich background of leadership experiences ranging from manufacturing, sales and distribution to hospitality, culinary and operations management. He is recognized as a leader that loves to grow business and people to help them reach their full potential.

These previous experiences have equipped Rob with the ability to educate clients through a multitude of challenges and strategic changes needed in today's marketplace. His areas of expertise include marketing, retail strategy, financial forecasting, human resources and strategic planning. One of Rob's major forte's is the ability to help educate leaders and teams "connect the dots" using innovation and communication to achieve results.

Rebecca McIver, Research Professional, Carl Vinson Institute of Government

As a research professional at the Institute of Government, Rebecca McIver assists governmental organizations across the state with workforce and economic development needs. Her areas of expertise include labor market data analysis, applied research, and project management. In her year and a half at the Institute she has supported several local government projects, numerous regional projects, and has even worked on multiple state level plans and projects all of which have involved citizen or stakeholder engagement. Prior to joining the team she served with AmeriCorps at the Community Development Office with the City of Knoxville, Tennessee. In this role, she coordinated citizen training events, tabled at various community engagement events, and served as a liaison between local organizations and the City's Office of Neighborhoods. Rebecca has a BA in International Affairs with a minor in Mechanical Engineering from Lafayette College and a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Georgia.

Darrell Moore, Executive Director, Valdosta State University Center for Regional Impact

A Georgia native, Darrell Moore is the Executive Director of Valdosta State University's Center for South Georgia Regional Impact. Prior to joining the Center, Darrell served as President of the Moultrie Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority and the Okefenokee Development Authority. His involvement in economic development projects represent over \$325 million in investment and over 3,000 new jobs throughout South Georgia.

Darrell has served on the boards for the Georgia Economic Developer's Association, and has chaired the Southwest Georgia Chamber Council, the Joint Development

Authority of Brooks, Colquitt, Grady, Mitchell and Thomas Counties, and Locate South Georgia. He is a graduate of Leadership Georgia and has been recognized in Georgia Trend Magazine's 40 Under 40. Darrell and his wife, Kay, live in Moultrie.

Anthony Parker, President, Albany Technical College

Dr. Anthony O. Parker has been president of Albany Technical College since July 1995. He is the former vice president of student services at Aiken Technical College in Aiken, S.C, and Southeastern Tech in Vidalia, GA. In July of 2005, Parker also assumed the duties of interim assistant commissioner of Adult Literacy for the Technical College System of Georgia in Atlanta serving from July 1, 2005, through April 1, 2006.

Parker received a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from South Carolina State University, a Master of Education degree in counseling and guidance from South Carolina State University, a specialist in education degree in educational administration from Augusta College and a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. Parker graduated from the Institute of Educational Management at the Harvard University Graduate School. He graduated from the Executive Leadership Institute at the League for Innovation in the Community College and also served as a faculty member on four occasions.

Parker is a member of the Presidents' Council of the Technical College System of Georgia, Board Member, Phoebe Putney Health Systems, Board Member, Alliance for Progress of Southwest Georgia (BRAC Preparation Taskforce), Rotary Club of Albany, Georgia, League for Innovation's John & Suanne Rouesche Excellence Award, 2014.

Parker is married to the former Sandra Pinkney. They have three children, Kimberly, Andrea Parker Smith and Richard Anthony.

Jimmy Parker, Owner, Scales Systems & Automation

Jacqueline Ponti-Lazaruk, Chief Innovation Officer, USDA Rural Development

Jacqueline Ponti-Lazaruk is the Chief Innovation Officer for USDA, Rural Development (RD) and leads the RD Innovation Office (IC). The IC's mission is to identify best practices and bring continuous improvement in program delivery to enhance the quality of life in rural communities. The Center works to transform rural communities through strategic partnerships, data analytics and evaluation, regulatory reform and enterprise risk management. Jacki has served in various senior positions in RD over the last 12 years. Prior to becoming the Innovation Officer, she served as Rural Development's first CRO. She was the Assistant Administrator for the RUS Water and Environmental Programs for nine years.

From 2006 to 2008 she served as the Rural Development Assistant Administrator for Telecommunications Program, promoting and supporting rural broadband deployment. She has also been called upon to lead major agency-wide efforts. She was the career senior executive in charge of leading Rural Development's implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), lead the consolidation and streamlining of environmental regulations and facilitated the implementation of the 2010 census. She has also served as the Rural Utilities Service Chief of Staff and as Acting Administrator at various times during her tenure.

Prior to joining USDA, she served in various positions over a 15-year span at the Federal Communications Commission. In February 2018 she marked the completion of her 27th year in public service. Ms. Ponti-Lazaruk is a graduate of James Madison University in rural Virginia.

Leigh Ribolzi, Executive Director, Miller County Family Connections

Leigh Ribolzi, joined Miller County Collaborative/Family Connection in 2007 as Executive Director. Prior to working back home in Colquitt, GA, she was employed in Post-Secondary Education at Bainbridge College in Bainbridge GA and before that Georgia Southern University (GSU) in Statesboro, GA. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Child and Family Development at GSU.

She is passionate about the safety and wellbeing of children, health and wellness of families and a self-sufficient community. She is currently the Pataula Center for Children Child Advocacy Board Chair, Community Development Corporation Vice-Chair, Pine Woods Apartments Board Vice-Chair, Colquitt-Miller County Chamber of Commerce Past Chair, SWGA Action Council as MC Head Start Board Member, as well as with many other community committee placements. Leigh is a trained facilitator in Darkness to Light Steward's of Children child sexual abuse prevention training and Love 146 Not a Number trafficking and exploitation prevention training, while also trained as a Forensic Interviewer for child abuse victims.

In her spare time, she enjoys any outdoor activities, playing sports, attending concerts, church volunteering, watching Cubs baseball and FSU sports. Leigh is outnumbered at home with her husband, Ryan, her two boys, Beckett (6) and Baylor (2) and their chocolate lab, Berkley (14).

Connie Reimers-Hild, Founder, Wild Innovation

Dr. Connie is the founder and CEO of Wild Innovation, a strategic foresight and futuring firm, focused on developing and coaching leaders through personal and organizational innovation. Her experience as a certified professional coach and futurist, combined with over twenty years of successfully helping more than 150 companies and leaders, provides Dr. Connie with unique insights about the future of humanity, technology and

business. Dr. Connie served as the Executive Director (Interim) and Chief Futurist of the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska and as host of the Rural Futures podcast while growing Wild Innovation. Connie enjoys life with her amazing husband, daughter, son, two miniature Dachshunds and big extended family. Connect with Dr. Connie on social media (@AskDrConnie) and through her website: WildInnovation.com.

Marvin Stafford, Regional Coordinator, Great Promise Partnership

Marvin joined the Great Promise Partnership as South Georgia's regional coordinator in early 2017. He uses his enthusiasm for teaching young people, combined with organizational skills and a manufacturing background, to build strong partnerships in local communities to ensure a qualified future workforce and help at-risk youth graduate from high school. He works with school systems, business leaders and industries to implement the GPP program, provides training for the partners, and assists with recruiting jobs for the students. Prior to his work with GPP, he was a math teacher for five years at Coffee County High School, most often teaching the "hard-to-teach". Before teaching, he managed several manufacturing firms over a 25 year period, primarily in South Georgia. Mr. Stafford is a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with a BS in Economics. He's been a Big Brother, a Laubach Literacy volunteer, a GED tutor and is also a Leadership Georgia graduate and a graduate of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development. He and his wife reside in Broxton.

Tracy Suber, Assistant Vice President, Center for Learning & Innovation, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital

Tracy Suber is currently the AVP of the Center for Learning & Innovation at Phoebe. Prior to her tenure at Phoebe, she served as Assistant Dean in Nursing at Darton State College, where she was instrumental in development of their RN to BSN program.

Dr. Suber received her Doctor of Education Degree with a focus in Leadership from Valdosta State University in May 2018. She received her Associate of Science Degree in Nursing from Darton College in 1996 and received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from Thomas University in 2003. Dr. Suber received her Master of Science Degree in Nursing with a focus on Education from the University of Phoenix in August 2006. Dr. Suber is a member of the American Nurses Association, American Nurses Credentialing Center, American Organization of Nurse Executives, and Toastmasters International.

Kathy Tilley, Executive Director, Troup County Center for Strategic Planning

Brewer Turley, Director of Communications, Southern Point Staffing

Brewer Turley joined Southern Point Staffing in 2015 and now serves as Director of Communications. His role with the company allows him to tell the hundreds of success stories created by SPS' many valued customers and clients. Prior to joining the SPS Team, Turley worked as a Reporter for the Camilla Enterprise, Pelham Journal and Thomasville Times-Enterprise, and served as Director of Communications/Publications for Thomas University. He holds a BA in English from Valdosta State University, and an AA in Education from South Georgia College.

Greg Wilson, Public Service Assistant, Carl Vinson Institute of Government

Greg Wilson is a public service assistant with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia, where he leads strategic planning and applied research projects to support local governments, state agencies, and economic development organizations. He regularly serves as a project manager responsible for managing people, schedule, tasks, and final deliverables. Greg has worked with a diverse set of clients in Georgia including the Cherokee Office of Economic Development, the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Chattahoochee Technical College, Marietta City Schools, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Education, and MARTA. Before coming to the Institute, Greg worked in Washington, DC for the Office of Naval Intelligence and the White House Office of Management and Budget. Greg has a BA in Political Science and International Affairs and a Master's in Public Administration all from the University of Georgia.

Jason Wilson, Director of Business Development, Southern Point Staffing

Jason Wilson is Co-Owner and Director of Business Development for Southern Point Staffing, one of Southwest Georgia's leading employment agencies. Since establishing the business in 2013, Jason has continued to bridge the gap between the area's top industries and a qualified, dynamic workforce. Jason was recently recognized as one of Southwest Georgia's Top 40 Under 40, honoring the area's top young leaders. Prior to founding Southern Point, Jason was a journeyman electrician, serving for 15 years in that profession after attending Albany Technical College, and completing a 5-year apprenticeship with the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (NJATC) for the Electrical Industry.

Shelley Zorn, Executive Director, Thomasville Thomas County Development Authority