



# **RURAL RENAISSANCE ROADSHOW**

**October 25-27**

**Bentonville, AR**

**Program Schedule**

**OCTOBER 25**

**Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art**

**WELCOME CELEBRATION & DINNER**

**5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

**5:00 p.m.**

**Doors Open**

Music Begins - [Shannon Wurst](#)

Private Gallery Tour with tour guides from Crystal Bridges

Featured Speaker & Partner Stations, mingle with the Speakers!

**6:00 p.m.**

**Welcome! Michelle Moore, CEO, Groundswell**

**Michelle Moore**

CEO

Groundswell



**Michelle Moore** is the author of “Rural Renaissance” and CEO of Groundswell, a 501(c)(3) that builds community power by eliminating energy burdens and increasing economic opportunity with community solar, resilience centers, residential energy efficiency, and pioneering research. A social entrepreneur and former White House official with roots in rural Georgia, Michelle is a relentless agent for change. Her accomplishments range from cutting the government’s energy bill by \$11 billion and deploying 3.2 Gigawatts of new renewable energy for President Obama, to developing LEED into a globally recognized brand for USGBC.

Michelle also serves as a Senate-confirmed member of the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors and as Secretary of the Board for the Interdenominational Theological Center. Her work is rooted in her faith and the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

**6:10 p.m.**

**Creating Access to Opportunity in Rural Communities**

People and communities can thrive with access to opportunity, no matter where they’re located. That belief guides the Walton Family Foundation’s work. We envision a more vibrant, inclusive economy in Northwest Arkansas. And see equity growing through education and financial security in the Delta. Learn how this vision is a team effort and requires respecting and listening to the voices closest to the challenges each community faces.

**Robert Burns**

Home Region Program Director

Walton Family Foundation



**Robert Burns** is director of the Home Region Program at the Walton Family Foundation. In this role, he leads the foundation’s work advancing economic and cultural vibrancy, opportunity and inclusion in Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta.

Robert has more than 25 years of experience in workforce housing, philanthropy, community development and governmental affairs. Most recently, he led efforts to promote financial inclusion and economic empowerment as senior vice president of Citi. In previous roles, Robert partnered with nonprofit and public agencies to build more inclusive cities; managed a Community Development Financial Institution; directed nonprofit solutions for an affordable housing organization; and served in local government in four states. Robert has a master’s in public administration from the University of Kansas and a bachelor’s in political science from Appalachian State University.

## WELCOME CELEBRATION & DINNER

5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

6:25 p.m.

### Blessing, Rev. Mitchell L. Johnson

Reverend Mitchell L. Johnson  
Director



**Reverend Mitchell L. Johnson** has been a Chicagoland community leader for over two decades. He is a nationally recognized economic development expert who has helped hundreds of churches serve as catalysts for economic growth and empowerment in their communities. Johnson's focus on community economic development and collaboration has led to roles serving as Executive Director of Developing Communities Project (DCP) – a position previously held by Former President Barack Obama. Johnson has served as a consultant for Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi), the world's largest Jewish college fraternity, operating chapters on more than 190 college campuses in seven countries. Johnson also serves as an Associate Minister at Hillcrest Baptist Church.

6:30 p.m.

### Dinner at Eleven, Crystal Bridges

Enjoy a seasonal, five-course menu created by Executive Chef Timothy Ordway and team in this elegant, curated dinner experience.

Look out for an email to select what entre you'd like after you register!



8:00 p.m.

### Dinner Concludes

## OCTOBER 26 - THE LEDGER, 6th Floor

240 S Main St, Bentonville, AR 72712

### A RURAL RENAISSANCE, Michelle Moore, CEO, Groundswell

8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

**8:00 a.m.**

**6<sup>th</sup> Floor**

#### **Breakfast – Catered by Catering Concepts**

Enjoy a buffet focusing on locally sourced products

- Breakfast Burritos
  - Choice of: Chorizo, Bacon, Egg, and Cheese (vegetarian), or beans and rice (vegan)
- Greek parfait
- Seasonal fruit display
- Orange Juice and Coffee

**8:30 a.m.**

**Main Gathering Space**

#### **A Rural Renaissance**

**Michelle Moore**

CEO

Groundswell



**Michelle Moore** is the author of “Rural Renaissance” and CEO of Groundswell, a 501(c)(3) that builds community power by eliminating energy burdens and increasing economic opportunity with community solar, resilience centers, residential energy efficiency, and pioneering research. A social entrepreneur and former White House official with roots in rural Georgia, Michelle is a relentless agent for change. Her accomplishments range from cutting the government’s energy bill by \$11 billion and deploying 3.2 Gigawatts of new renewable energy for President Obama, to developing LEED into a globally recognized brand for USGBC.

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**8:45 a.m.**

**Main Stage**

#### **Unpacking the Biggest Investment in Rural Power in a Century**

Engage directly with White House Senior Advisor, Will McIntee, and learn about the Rural Partners Network. The Rural Partners Network works with rural people to build prosperity through job creation, infrastructure development, and community improvement. Attend this Keynote address to learn more about building long-term economic stability on your own terms.

**Will McIntee**

Senior Advisor for Public Engagement

The White House



**Will McIntee** serves as Senior Advisor for Public Engagement at The White House handling rural, agriculture, food, and nutrition engagement. He served as the National Rural Engagement Director on the Biden-Harris campaign. He previously served at the U.S. Department of the Interior during the Obama-Biden Administration, in the Office of Congressman Bruce Braley (IA-01) in Iowa, and as the Midwest Outreach Director for the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. A native of northeast Iowa, Will is an alum of Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa.

### **COFFEE BREAK**

9:30 a.m.

**Track 1**  
**Room C****“The Power of Partnerships”: Leveraging Scale for Successful Community-Centered Clean Energy Development**

Rural communities, including low-income and under-resourced communities, often struggle with the ability to attract the funding needed to address local challenges including the development of community-centered projects. The reason for this includes limited capacity and resources to dedicate to grant applications and awareness of other types of partnership models that can help with funding gaps apart from the traditional funding sources usually available from Federal, State and Local governments.

This session will explore the success of partnerships as a means of leveraging scale to implement successful clean energy projects that center communities in their design. Panelists will examine the influence of regional networks such as the rural electric cooperative community and the Central Appalachian Network in helping organizations as they seek support for community programs, how outside-the-box thinking helps organizations to problem-solve and explore different partnership models aimed at economic benefit for their communities.

**Moderated by Adaora Ifebigh**

Senior Director of Impact  
Sol Systems, LLC

**Bill Inman, Panelist**

Vice President of Member & Strategic Services  
Aiken Electric Cooperative

**Autumn Long, Panelist**

Director  
Appalachian Solar Finance Fund



**Adaora Ifebigh** is the Senior Director of Impact at Sol System and leads efforts to execute Sol’s comprehensive Impact and Infrastructure strategy. In this role, she builds community partnerships and collaborates with local organizations that are driving positive change in their communities in their efforts to address systemic challenges to sustainability. Ms. Ifebigh has over 15 years of program management and leadership experience across the energy sector with specific experience in energy access and community impact work in rural cooperative territory. As Program Director for Energy Access at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), she started and led the Advancing Energy Access for All initiative that spotlights cooperatives’ involvement in facilitating healthy communities, explores the innovative ways they do it, and uncovers new directions community assistance programs are taking. The initiative created a sustainable practice around supporting cooperatives as they holistically serve their members, especially low- and moderate-income households and to ensure that rural communities are not left behind in the transition to clean energy.



**Bill Inman** is the Vice President of Member & Strategic Services at Aiken Electric Cooperative. With over three decades of experience in the industry, he has been instrumental in providing reliable energy solutions to the community. Bill holds a B.S. in Administrative Management from Clemson University and an MBA from Nova Southeastern University. Before joining Aiken Electric, he worked in banking. Bill is actively involved in community organizations such as the Rotary Club, Salvation Army Board of Directors, and Savannah River Site Redevelopment Authority. He has also served as the Aiken Chamber of Commerce Chair and United Way of Aiken County Chair. Bill enjoys traveling with his family and staying active in his free time.



**Autumn Long** directs the Appalachian Solar Finance Fund, a regional financial and technical assistance program designed to catalyze solar development in coal-impacted Central Appalachian communities. She previously served as a Regional Director at Solar United Neighbors, a national nonprofit dedicated to grassroots solar advocacy and education. Ms. Long holds a NABCEP PV Associate certification and teaches a course on solar PV technology and policy fundamentals at West Virginia University. She co-chairs the Central Appalachian Network's Clean Energy Working Group and chairs the advisory board of New Roots Community Farm in Fayetteville, West Virginia. Ms. Long lives in the New River Gorge region of West Virginia, where she enjoys climbing, trail running, paddling, swimming, hiking, and playing music.

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**Track 2**  
**Room A**

### **Climate, Justice, and the Deep Roots of Regenerative Farming**

A powerful movement is happening in farming today—farmers are reconnecting with their roots to fight climate change. In this session, author and researcher Liz Carlisle introduces participants to the inspiring farmers and scientists she met while researching her book *Healing Grounds*, who are restoring native prairies, nurturing beneficial fungi, and enriching soil health. While feeding their communities and revitalizing cultural ties to land, these farmers are demonstrating how we can steadily stitch ecosystems back together and repair the natural carbon cycle.

**Liz Carlisle**

Associate Professor in the Environmental Studies Program  
University of California Santa Barbara



(Book is included in your registration)

**Liz Carlisle** is an Associate Professor in the Environmental Studies Program at UC Santa Barbara, where she teaches courses on food and farming. Born and raised in Montana, she got hooked on agriculture while working as an aide to organic farmer and U.S. Senator Jon Tester, which led to a decade of research and writing collaborations with farmers in her home state.

She has written three books about regenerative farming and agroecology: *Lentil Underground* (2015), *Grain by Grain* (2019, with co-author Bob Quinn), and most recently, *Healing Grounds: Climate, Justice, and the Deep Roots of Regenerative Farming* (2022). She holds a Ph.D. in Geography, from UC Berkeley, and a B.A. in Folklore and Mythology, from Harvard University. Prior to her career as a writer and academic, she spent several years touring rural America as a country singer.

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**Track 3**  
**Room B**

### **Arkansas's HEAL Program and LaGrange's SOUL: Energy Efficiency Healing Rural Areas**

Join us to learn about the power of energy efficiency in uplifting communities and strategies to implement programs in rural areas. The discussion will cover a program based in Arkansas and a program in LaGrange, GA.

**Chris Ladner**

Former Owner at Entegrity

**Nicole Sonderegger**

Director of Energy Programs  
Groundswell

**Leon Childs**

Community Engagement Associate  
Groundswells

## Track 3

### Room B



Through my previous experience I have expertise in building HVAC systems, performance contracting, controls as well as knowledge of industrial controls. I am a past member of the USGBC Energy and Atmosphere Technical Advisory Group. I served as Chairman of the USGBC Chapter Steering Committee. I have participated in various types of LEED projects including: LEED-Neighborhood Development, LEED-Commercial Interiors, LEED-New Construction, LEED for Existing Buildings, and LEED-Homes.

Chris served as Chairman of the Arkansas Alternative Energy Commission, formed in 2009. In 2008, I was a Commissioner on the Arkansas Governor's Commission on Global Warming. Through this commission, greenhouse gas reduction policies were developed for the Governor and Arkansas Legislators.

I have also served in many capacities for the U.S. Green Building Council and am a past consultant for the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI). I have presented on sustainable design and construction to various groups including Master Speaker at the USGBC Greenbuild Conference, American Planning Association, National Environmental Balancing Bureau (NEBB), the American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), graduate architecture programs, and various sustainability conferences.



**Nicole Sonderegger** is the Director of Energy Programs at Groundswell. Nicole oversees implementation of Groundswell's energy efficiency, solar and resilience programs with a focus on Georgia and Maryland. She has been working on Groundswell's residential energy efficiency programming for almost 3 years, supporting day-to-day implementation and overall program strategy.

Nicole has over 5 years of experience serving low-income communities. Prior to working at Groundswell, Nicole led partnerships and impact monitoring at a workforce development nonprofit. Nicole holds a master's in Social Business from the London School of Economics and dual bachelor's degrees in Business and Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Nicole is a native of San Jose, Costa Rica.



**Leon Childs**, Community Engagement Associate, contributes a strong background in community engagement, social justice initiatives, community organizing, and social justice initiatives to Groundswell's Save On Utilities Long term program. He has more than 16 years of experience in community organizing and public relations. Leon is dedicated to engaging the community, and he is a dedicated volunteer for service projects around the globe.

Leon spent 8 years as a director of an after-school mentoring and tutoring program. Through this experience, he gained a huge understanding of the LaGrange community and the community's needs. Leon also served as the Vice President of sales in the metal industry, where he gained knowledge of small business outreach. An advocate for the people in all aspects of his life — including education, housing, jobs, and just being a strong voice for the people — Leon has been on the front lines of a wide array of important issues. He holds a degree in business administration from Grandmarshall and has received education, social justice, and community awards. Leon is constantly trying to make the world a better place.

## BREAK & GATHER

11:15 a.m.

## CONCURRENT PROGRAM TRACKS

11:30 a.m.

### Track 1 Room A

### Food, Energy, and Water Resilience Solutions: Agrivoltaics as a Tool for Rural Communities

'Agrivoltaics' is the concept of co-locating agriculture and photovoltaics (renewable energy from solar panels), which can generate a symbiotic relationship, enhancing both agricultural and energetic outcomes. Tyler will dig into how rural communities can utilize agrivoltaics as a tool for cultivating more resilient agricultural communities in partnership with intentionally designed solar photovoltaic installations.

#### Tyler Swanson

Graduate Research Assistant

School of Geography, Development, and Environment, University of Arizona



**Tyler Swanson** is a graduate research assistant at the University of Arizona studying the social dimensions of agrivoltaics. Tyler began studying agrivoltaics in the context of policy and rural economic development at the University of Illinois and has since published his work in Q Magazine, the Chicago-Kent Journal of Environmental and Energy Law, and the Agrisolar Clearinghouse. Tyler's goal is to assist in the development of sustainable transitions for rural communities. In place of Greg Barron-Gafford, Tyler will present Agrivoltaics as a Tool for Rural Communities.

### Track 2

Room C

### Black Land, Wealth, and Freedom

Join Dianne for a conversation about "Black Wealth"-or the lack there of and WHY, & what are or have been the structural impediments to creating and passing that to subsequent generations? Even more important what and how, especially through "Land", "Education"-especially HBCU's has the Black Community succeeded, thrived, and persisted despite repeated institutional impediments? What lessons for RESISTANCE today Re Climate and so much "social diffusion" must we draw from our historic resilience and steadfast "Eyes On the Prize" a very conscious homage to my dear friend, HENRY HAMPTON!! This is just the beginning of a powerful story!

#### Dianne Dillon-Ridgely

Changemaker, Environmentalist, and Human Right Activist



In her own words, "COURAGE is the catalyst for change," and **Dianne Dillon-Ridgely** is the very definition of a changemaker. Shattering glass ceilings and claiming her place at the table to be a voice for equity and sustainability throughout her life Dianne leads with courage and passion. In the last forty years Dianne has been a dedicated Environmentalist and Human Rights Activist at the forefront of society's shift from an industrial one to one focused on sustainability. Appointed by three US Presidents across three Administrations, she has served on twenty-three US Delegations at the UN and other global meetings. By appointment of the White House she attended the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the 1997 General Assembly Special Session and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, making her the only person to serve on all three US delegations.



### Track 3

#### Room B

## Rural Economic Development: Federal Investments in Clean Energy and Efficiency Projects

In this session, we will explore the alternatives of federal financial assistance available today to deploy clean energy infrastructure in our rural communities and implement energy efficiency initiatives that foster economic development and improved quality of life. The discussion will consider long-standing programs as well as new opportunities arising from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. Bus

### Luis Bernal

Deputy General Counsel  
Appalachian Regional Commission



**Luis Bernal** is the Deputy General Counsel at the Appalachian Regional Commission. In this capacity, he provides legal advice to senior leadership and operational units of the Commission on a wide range of legal matters pertaining to grants management and cooperative agreements for economic development, broadband deployment, and access to capital. Prior to joining the Commission, Luis worked at the USDA- Rural Utilities Services, where he advised leadership in the Electric Program on the design and implementation of energy efficiency programs and renewable energy projects, in particular the Rural Energy Saving Program. He also led the Puerto Rico Energy Affairs Administration (2009-2012). In that role, he established and implemented policy for renewable energy and energy efficiency and conservation projects and investments, liaised with the US Department of Energy, and oversaw the implementation of federally funded programs and daily operations of the organization. Luis holds a Master of Laws in Energy and Environmental Law from the George Washington University Law School and a Juris Doctor from Inter American University of Puerto Rico School of Law.

### BREAK & GATHER

1:00 p.m.

### AWARD PRESENTATION, LUNCHTIME KEYNOTE, & SPECIAL SESSION

1:15 p.m.

1:15 p.m.

Main Gathering Space

### Award Presentation - Celebrating Rural Power, Curtis Wynn

**Curtis Wynn**  
CEO  
SECO Energy



**Curtis Wynn** became SECO Energy's CEO in December 2021. They are the 7th largest distribution cooperative in the nation. Wynn also served for 24 years as President and CEO of Roanoke Electric Cooperative in North Carolina before making the move to SECO Energy. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration and Management Information Systems from Troy University.

With a cooperative career that spans over 40 years, Wynn's resume reflects a long list of awards and accomplishments with creative solutions that are turning the challenges of the energy industry evolution into major opportunities. Wynn was recently awarded the Clyde T. Ellis award from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The award honors those who have made exemplary contributions that promote the principles and progress of rural electrification and the development and use of natural resources. NRECA's board of directors named the newly formed NRECA Diversity Champion award in his name.

**1:20 p.m.**  
Main Gathering Space

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## Lunchtime Keynote - A Visionary Challenge for Rural Leadership

**Curtis Wynn**  
CEO  
SECO Energy



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**1:45 p.m.**  
Main Gathering Space

## Special Session - Investing in Emerging Market America: Rural Opportunity Zones

**Al Puchala**  
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
CapZone Impact Investments LLC



**Al Puchala** is Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of CapZone Impact Investments LLC, a positive impact operating company created in early 2018 as one of America's first Qualified Opportunity Funds and formed to Connect Profits to Purpose. CapZone is building a solutions-oriented Opportunity Zone investment platform, offering national OZ data/analytics/compliance services and products to the market, and developing Zone Equity as a new financial asset class. Opportunity Zone projects, businesses and other Environmental, Social and Governance plus Resilience investments can advance positive social impact at scale; CapZone is proud to bring together human, financial and intellectual capital to invest in low-income communities and solve seemingly intractable problems throughout the U.S.

**BREAK & GATHER**  
2:15 p.m.

**Track 1**  
**Room C**

**Building Resilience: Faith and Community-Centered Strategies**

**Aubrey Germ**

Climate and Resilience Planner  
Baltimore’s Office of Sustainability

**Tiffani Lawson**

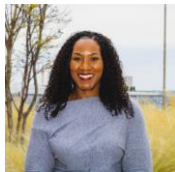
Resiliency Program Manager  
Groundswell



**Aubrey Germ** is the Climate and Resilience Planner for Baltimore’s Office of Sustainability. She oversees and manages hazard mitigation, climate adaptation, and community resilience plans and projects including Baltimore’s Climate Action Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Community Resiliency Hub Program.

She hails from Cleveland, Ohio and holds a Master’s in Urban Planning from Harvard University as well as a BS in Environmental Health Sciences from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she was a Morehead-Cain Scholar.

Aubrey is passionate about improving urban and ecological resilience through thoughtful planning, equitable community engagement, and forward-thinking environmental and sustainable design. In her spare time, she enjoys knitting, ceramics, traveling, and spending time outdoors.



**Tiffani Lawson** contributes a strong background in youth and community development, community engagement, and community outreach to Groundswell’s Energy Programs team in her role as the Resiliency Program Manager. With more than 12 years of experience in the nonprofit youth development sector, Tiffani is dedicated to creating safe and equitable spaces for socioeconomically disadvantaged youth and communities by advocating for access to safe spaces, opportunities for growth and development, and the resources necessary for success.

Prior to joining Groundswell, Tiffani held leadership positions in various organizations, including The City of Houston, YMCA of Greater Houston, Grand St. Settlement, Inc., and The Children’s Aid Society, working in community engagement and outreach, program management, program development, and youth development across Houston and New York City, including Washington Heights, the Bronx, and Brooklyn.

Tiffani earned her Bachelor’s degree in Communications from Tennessee State University and her Master’s degree in Youth Development from The City University of New York (CUNY). Outside of work, Tiffani is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She loves animals and international travel.

**Track 2**  
**Room B**

**The Role of Local Wildlife and Dark Skies in Making Places We Love**

The particular view of the stars, the sweet smells of native flowers, a glimpse of a local fox or a tree full of fireflies, and the songs of the neighborhood frogs and migrating birds, combine to create a unique local language and experience. Understanding this language opens us and those around us to the specialness of our communities and ties us to the humans and other creatures that have occupied these places before us. These connections link us firmly to the places themselves and increase their emotional and economic value while helping us identify what needs to be protected or encouraged. But many of us don't understand enough of the language to participate. These days it's easier than ever to learn.

**Dan Slone**  
Lawyer & Vision Wallah  
Vertical Vision



**Dan Slone** is an attorney, author of fiction and non-fiction works, and an international speaker and TEDx alum. He has been honored over the years to represent some of the leading green and pedestrian scale building organizations, including the US Green Building Council, the World Green Building Council, EcoDistricts, Congress for the New Urbanism, Groundswell, and Building Transparency. He has written chapters in nine books, co-authored A Legal Guide to Urban and Sustainable Development, and is on sabbatical finishing Saving the Dark Night and Her Children, due out in 2024.

Dan has also authored a series of fantasy novels centered on human relationships with the world around them. Most of Dan's practice and writing these days focuses on the design of human habitat and that design's impact on interactions among humans and with other living creatures.

**Track 3**  
**Room A**

**The Green Yellow School Bus!**  
**Electrifying Your School Bus Fleet**

Funding is a challenge but convincing the school's Transportation Department to move out of their Diesel "comfort zone" can be the real obstacle.

**Sam Ham**  
Director of Alternative Power  
Yancey Bus Sales and Service



Been there, done that! **Sam** spent over 25 years in our public-school system's transportation department. He does hold a CDL, and yes, he has driven school buses. Sam was the Executive Director of Transportation with Fulton County Schools in Atlanta Georgia.

He retired from GA's 4th largest school district in 2020. He helped neighboring Cobb County Schools (GA's 2nd largest school district) for 6 months serving as Interim Executive Director of Transportation until March 2021. Yancey Bus Sales and Service, the GA Blue Bird Bus Dealer, asked Sam to help them transition school districts from a diesel-powered school bus platform to viable alternative powered platforms. The journey began.

Sam holds a BS in Administrative Management from Clemson University. In 2014 he completed the National Association of Pupil Transportation (NAPT) Certified Director of Pupil Transportation program, the equivalent of a Master's Degree in Pupil Transportation.

**Track 1**  
**Room A**

**Clean Energy, Sustainability, and Venture Investment in Rural America:  
BootstrapLabs & Good Machines**

**Fabio Ficano**

Head of the Venture Studio for Climate and Energy  
BootstrapLabs

**Jen Cole**

Vice President, Strategy & Impact  
Good Machine



**Fabio Ficano** is an eclectic entrepreneur, investor, and tireless business development partner, recognized for his passion in creating and advancing new businesses, ventures and partnerships. He excels at bringing together complex projects with multiple stakeholders to successful ideation and growth. He is known for his expertise in clean/green technology, hard tech, renewable energy, large infrastructure, security technology, mass transportation, intermodality, and Intelligence Augmentation. Before joining BootstrapLabs as Head of the Venture Studio for Climate and Energy he was part of the founding team at MODOS, a distributed mobility-on-demand solution, and an investor at Baruch Future Ventures. He also co-founded and chaired the International Relations and Renewable Energy Initiatives for the Silicon Valley Italian Executive Council (SVIEC) and is a former member of the “US–Italy Bilateral Climate and Energy Partnership”, an agency created by the U.S. Department of State and the Italian Government to pursue joint research programs on climate change and low-emission technology.

Fabio is founder of Elettranova, and LuftraRise, a firm specialized in seed investments, business development, government and industry affairs and bi lateral investments between U.S. and European enterprises, including scouting emerging technologies on behalf of the largest European Utilities and Transmission System Operators. He co-founded and is Partner of Moncada Energy USA and Moncada Energy Malaysia & Philippines (now under Moncada Energy Group) and was co-founder and Managing Director of VM Relazioni Istituzionali USA, a legislation monitoring firm.



**Jen Cole** has extensive experience driving social impact and sustainability initiatives with early-stage companies, Fortune 500s, and NGOs. Her background includes partnership development between smallholders, multinationals, government, and civil society organizations. Jen has a deep understanding of social and environmental challenges and her passion is spearheading sustainable, equitable growth for complex global systems.

**Track 2**  
**Room C**

**Solar for All: Community, Solar, Power**

The Solar for All Program, primarily through grants, will provide financial assistance and technical support to deploy community solar projects benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. Learn more about how Solar for All Programs can build power in your community.

**Glen Hooks**

Policy Manager  
Audubon Delta

**Lauren Waldrip**

Executive Director  
Arkansas Advanced Energy Association and Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation

**Rashad Williams**

Director of Subscriber Services  
Groundswell



**Glen Hooks** is Policy Manager for Audubon Delta, a regional arm of the National Audubon Society encompassing Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, where he focuses largely on climate and clean energy issues. Prior to joining Audubon in late 2021, Glen served as Director of the Arkansas Sierra Club, as Executive Director of the Arkansas Democratic Party, and as an attorney in public and private practice. He is a graduate of Hendrix College and the UALR Bowen School of Law.



**Lauren Waldrip** currently serves as the Executive Director for the Arkansas Advanced Energy Association and Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation. Through this role, Lauren oversees communications, media relations, trade association management, event planning, government relations, grassroots engagement and activities for state and federal PACs. She regularly engages in advocacy efforts regarding regulatory issues through the Public Service Commission and policy issues through the legislature.

Lauren previously acted as partner at Campbell Ward, a Little Rock based public affairs and public relations firm. While at Campbell Ward, Lauren served as the Executive Director of the Arkansas Rice Federation and testified on behalf of farmers before the Public Service Commission regarding net metering.

She has worked as Project Coordinator for the Razorback Foundation, where she created and implemented a program that increased membership by 20%. Lauren assisted with the re-branding of the Razorback Foundation and aided in planning events for current and prospective donors. She has provided public relations assistance for U.S. Senator John Boozman and for the Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation.

Lauren serves on the Arkansas Foodbank board and recently served on the Little Rock Water Reclamation Commission. She has been named to Arkansas Business' 20 in their 20's and Arkansas Money and Politics' Future 50 lists and is a Leadership Arkansas graduate.



As Director of Subscriber Services, **Rashad Williams** is at the helm of Groundswell's effort to provide low-to-moderate-income households with access to clean energy resources, information, programs, and products that empower them to mitigate both the physical and financial barriers to going solar. As an advocate for social and environmental justice, Rashad is committed to advancing equitable clean energy solutions that center the people closest to the problem. Rashad provides strategic direction, project governance, and general program oversight to Groundswell's subscriber services delivery. He uses a people-centric approach to coordinate various elements of the program including customer support, marketing & communications, software development, and data analytics. With over 5,000 income-qualified subscribers under management, this work directly drives Groundswell's ability to build community power and share solar savings where they are most needed.

A native of Atlanta's south side, Rashad attended Georgia State University, where he earned a master's degree in public policy and a bachelor's in sociology. When he's not working to identify solutions that benefit marginalized communities, you can find him reading a good book, discovering new ways to stay active, or traversing the D.C. food scene.

**Track 3  
Room B**

**Introducing the Community Infrastructure Center: Connect With Resources And Funders To Deploy Your Community Infrastructure Project**

During this prep session, we will walk you through getting your projects loaded into the Community Infrastructure Center (CIC), so that during our deep-dive workshop on Friday morning, we can jump into how to utilize the CIC to assess your project, identify funding, and financing pathways, and identify partners and resources to advance your project.

**Rachel Halfaker**  
Associate Director  
The Milken Institute



**Rachel Halfaker** is an Associate Director at the Center for Financial Markets at the Milken Institute. Rachel leads the Community Infrastructure Center, developing strategic partnerships between communities, capital providers, and advisory firms for equitable, climate-resilient infrastructure deployment. Prior to her work at the Milken Institute, Halfaker worked at the intersection of urban technology and economic development. She worked as an Urban Development Consultant in Deloitte's Smart Cities practice supporting clients with regional and national place-based economic development and later as the head of Launch in Washington DC for a Mobility startup utilizing machine learning and computer vision for curbside management.

Halfaker holds a Masters in Urban Planning from Georgetown University and a BS in Information Systems from the University of Florida.

**GATHER & CELEBRATE**

**Celebrating Dr. Mildred McClain, Founder and Executive Director**

5:15 p.m.

**5:15 p.m.**  
Main Gathering Space

**Gather and Celebrate: Celebrating Dr. Mildred McClain, Founder and Executive Director of Harambee House**

**Dr. Mildred McClain**  
Founder and Executive Director  
Harambee House

**COCKTAIL RECEPTION**

5:40 p.m.

**5:40 p.m.**  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor Patio

**Cocktails and Appetizers, get your bandanas customized by Rangerstitch!**

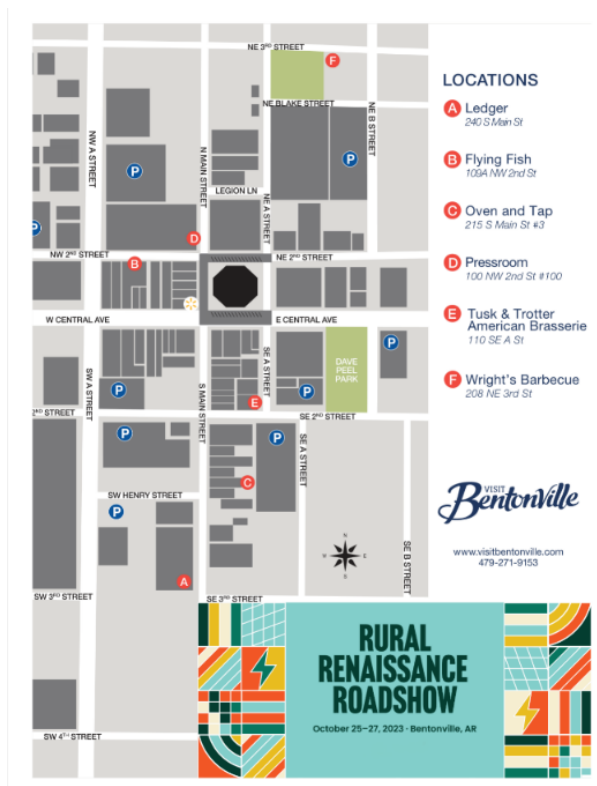
We are celebrating Made in America craft! Straight out of Nashville, [Rangerstitchers](#) will be on site during the conference on Thursday to customize your Rural Renaissance swag.

**Group dinners out on the town.**

**Enjoy a complimentary dinner out of town!**

Use the vouchers given out during the cocktail hour at The Ledger at any of these restaurants:

- [Flying Fish](#) serves fresh catfish, shrimp and oysters, grilled fish, shrimp cocktail, fish cocktail, crab legs, burgers, chicken, and mudbugs (crawfish) in season. A specialty selection of grilled salmon, trout, or tilapia is also offered each day.
- Go to [Oven and Tap](#) to enjoy a delicious wood-fired pizza, lasagna, and more.
- [Press Room](#) has a variety of options, from a veggie Reuben to BBQ beef short ribs, to shrimp and grits. Check out their menu to see what you may like!
- [Tusk and Trotter](#) American Brasserie, is a Bentonville original. Chef Rob brought his flavor of high south cuisine to Bentonville in 2011, when Bentonville was first starting to become the cultural hub, it is today.
- [Wright's BBQ](#) delivers a, "cooking experience that is uncommon to this area, and is becoming more rare as time goes on. We take people back to the method of open flame, 100% wood fire, on a pit. Its simple, but hard. We believe the only way to achieve the flavor and tenderness of real barbecue is through the method of old. You can have a life changing barbecue experience...Our goal is to create and build an atmosphere that pulls people in, a true destination barbecue location in NWA. We source pecan wood from downed central Arkansas trees. From the start each week, to when we end, our fires never stop burning. An overnight process that delivers fresh food when you need it."





**OCTOBER 27- THE LEDGER, 6th Floor**  
240 S Main St, Bentonville, AR 72712

**GOSPEL BREAKFAST**

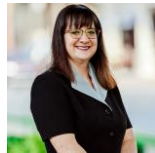
8:00 a.m.

**8:00 a.m.**

**6<sup>th</sup> Foor Patio**

**Morning Prayer**

**Rev. Pastor Michelle Morris**  
Lead Pastor  
First United Methodist Church



**Rev. Pastor Michelle Morris** started as Lead Pastor here in July 2021. Prior to serving this church, she served churches in West Memphis, Fort Smith, and Conway. She also worked as the Lead Equipper in the Arkansas Conference Office where she helped launch the conference’s online learning system. Michelle is a perpetual student, holding a Bachelor of Arts in English and French and a Master of Arts in Comparative Literature (both from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville), as well as a Master of Divinity and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies with an emphasis in New Testament (both from Southern Methodist University). She also is the author of Gospel Discipleship: 4 Pathways for Christian Disciples, which includes both a participant and a congregation guide.

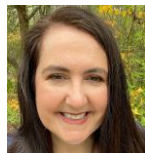
Her philosophy for leading a congregation is to meet with each person and learn what your passions are, and then connect you with others with similar passions so that you can do the work that God is calling you to do.

**8:30 a.m.**

**Main Gathering Space**

**Welcome! Michelle Moore, CEO, Groundswell**

**Michelle Moore**  
CEO  
Groundswell



**Michelle Moore** is the author of “Rural Renaissance” and CEO of Groundswell, a 501(c)(3) that builds community power by eliminating energy burdens and increasing economic opportunity with community solar, resilience centers, residential energy efficiency, and pioneering research. A social entrepreneur and former White House official with roots in rural Georgia, Michelle is a relentless agent for change. Her accomplishments range from cutting the government’s energy bill by \$11 billion and deploying 3.2 Gigawatts of new renewable energy for President Obama, to developing LEED into a globally recognized brand for USGBC.

Michelle also serves as a Senate-confirmed member of the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors and as Secretary of the Board for the Interdenominational Theological Center. Her work is rooted in her faith and the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

**MORNING KEYNOTE, Laurel Blatchford, Chief Implementation Officer, IRA**  
8:35 a.m.

**8:35 a.m.**

**Main Gathering Space**

**Clean Energy Tax Credits and Direct Pay: A Game-Changer for Community, Cooperative, and Municipal Ownership**

Hear from U.S. Department of the Treasury's IRA Chief Implementation Officer, Laurel Blatchford, about how your community can use the Inflation Reduction Act's many clean energy tax credits to attract new investments, support good local jobs, and build new community-owned clean energy and resilience projects. Blatchford's presentation will specifically include a discussion of "direct pay" options for municipalities and rural cooperative utilities, bonus tax credits for energy communities and low-income communities, and related programs.

**Laurel Blatchford**  
Chief Implementation Officer  
IRA



**Laurel Blatchford** was appointed as Treasury's Chief Implementation Officer for the Inflation Reduction Act in January 2023. In this newly created role, Laurel is leading a team focused on the implementation of Treasury's provisions of the IRA across Treasury and the IRS.

Over the course of her 25-year career, Laurel has held senior leadership roles in the non-profit, government and philanthropic sectors. Most recently, as Managing Director and Senior Advisor at Blue Meridian Partners, she collaborated on \$100M of investments focused on economic mobility and advised Blue Meridian's portfolio of grantees on their approach to policy as a tool for impact and influence. Prior to joining Blue Meridian in 2020, she was President of Enterprise Community Partners, one of the nation's largest affordable housing and community development intermediaries. During her six-year tenure at Enterprise, Laurel led a team of 250 staff working in 12 markets across the United States that built capacity on the ground, piloted new advisory solutions for local leaders, and connected partners to capital, including public sector grant funding as well as private capital.

Laurel also has extensive federal and local government experience; she served as a senior political appointee in the Obama Administration, including as Executive Director of the Hurricane Sandy Task Force and Chief of Staff at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development between 2009 and 2013. Prior to that, she served as a senior leader at City Hall and in New York City's housing agency during the Bloomberg Administration. She also served on both the Obama-Biden and Biden-Harris presidential transition team and was nominated for a Senate-confirmed role in the Biden-Harris Administration. She is a graduate of Williams College and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and lives with her family in Washington DC.

**BREAK & GATHER**

9:30 a.m.

**DEEP-DIVE WORKING SESSIONS**  
**FROM IDEA TO IMPLEMENTATION: Round One**

9:45 a.m.

**Track 1**  
**Room A**

**The Milken Institute Presents the Community Infrastructure Center:  
Advancing your Community Infrastructure Project**

This Bootcamp-Style, Interactive Session will focus on assessing project readiness and considering your project financing and funding options. This session will aim to provide attendees with a concrete assessment of their project gaps coupled with the knowledge on how to advance their projects and assess a multitude of financing options based on their project type. The session will feature project support providers including philanthropy, project developers, investors, and grant experts to support the workshop and participants.

**Rachel Halfaker**  
Associate Director  
Milken Institute



**Rachel Halfaker** is an Associate Director at the Center for Financial Markets at the Milken Institute. Rachel leads the Community Infrastructure Center, developing strategic partnerships between communities, capital providers, and advisory firms for equitable, climate-resilient infrastructure deployment. Prior to her work at the Milken Institute, Halfaker worked at the intersection of urban technology and economic development. She worked as an Urban Development Consultant in Deloitte's Smart Cities practice supporting clients with regional and national place-based economic development and later as the head of Launch in Washington DC for a Mobility startup utilizing machine learning and computer vision for curbside management. Halfaker holds a Masters in Urban Planning from Georgetown University and a BS in Information Systems from the University of Florida.

**Track 2**  
**Room B**

**Develop a winning Federal Grant Applications with the Beneficial  
Electrification League**

Advances in end-use technology and low-carbon electric generation, coupled with improvements in grid connectivity and consumer awareness and acceptance, have increased the value of beneficial electrification - from electric vehicles, school buses, home heating, to agricultural applications and lawn equipment. This session will discuss opportunities and challenges around further electrification of our economy. In addition, Uncle Sam is opening his pocketbook for Federal infrastructure investments that can be used toward beneficial electrification programs and projects. While the concept of beneficial electrification is appealing, the question remains – how do we implement, and how do we provide equity and access to technology that will benefit consumers and save money, yet come with an up front cost and investment?

**Keith Dennis**  
President  
Beneficial Electrification League



**Keith Dennis** is the President of the Beneficial Electrification League, a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission is to increase understanding of the benefits of electrification by promoting the market acceptance of beneficial electrification. He is also the CEO of Electrification Strategies, LLC. Keith has an interdisciplinary background in engineering, business, and law. He worked for nearly a decade at the trade association for 900 not-for-profit electric cooperatives (NRECA), where he was Vice President of consumer member engagement. In 2015, he coined the term “environmentally beneficial electrification,” which led to an industry movement around beneficial electrification. Keith joined NRECA directly from the Department of Energy where he led a Policy and Guidance Team for a \$3.2 billion energy efficiency and conservation grant (EECBG) program. He also served at The White House where he supported several large energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

**Track 3**  
**Room C**

**Left Out or Opting In? Ensuring Massive Opportunities Land in Rural Communities**

It's no secret that philanthropy and government have historically under-invested in rural communities. But now, small-town folks have more tools and opportunities than ever to benefit from changing energy and agricultural systems. During this session, Josh Ewing of the Rural Climate Partnership will discuss the philanthropic funding landscape for rural communities and strategies for stacking philanthropic grants and technical support to "leverage up" federal awards. Josh will also highlight some of the top federal funding opportunities for rural communities and give advice on honing your fundraising pitch.

**Josh Ewing**  
Director  
Rural Climate Partnership



**Josh Ewing** leads the Rural Climate Partnership, a collaborative fund supporting working people, small businesses, and family farmers to implement rural-led climate solutions. RCP works to ensure rural communities have the tools and opportunities to benefit from all the economic and community benefits that flow from the transition to clean energy and regenerative agriculture.

Born and raised in western Nebraska where the Ewing family runs a cattle ranch, Josh has lived and worked in rural America most of his life. With his wife Kirsten, Josh lives on the border of the Navajo Nation in the 150-person town of Bluff, Utah, where he serves as a volunteer firefighter and EMT.

**Track 4**  
**Main Gathering Space**

**Win Local Support for Your Project: Op-Ed Writing with Island Press**

Learn about the Island Press Urban Resilience Project. Gain an understanding of how an article or op-ed is drafted and placed. Gather tips and tricks of your own for placing articles. Talk through your pitch ideas with the team in an interactive exercise. Get your questions answered about how the editorial and placement process works. Gain a new contact who can work with you on your article writing and placement after the Roadshow wraps up.

**Kyler Geoffroy**  
Online Marketing Manager  
Urban Resilience Project



**Kyler Geoffroy** is the Online Marketing Manager for the Urban Resilience Project (URP), a grant-funded program of the non-profit publisher Island Press that works to champion sustainable, equitable communities in the era of climate change. As part of URP, he works with thought leaders, activists, and other change agents in the publication of original short-form writing (articles, op-eds, etc) into external media outlets. He also spearheads a variety of digital media initiatives across social media, podcasts, and other online mediums. Prior to his work at Island Press, Kyler was Managing Editor of Towleroad, the largest LGBT news blog in the United States, and also worked at the progressive advocacy group People for the American Way (PFAW). He is a native Texan and currently resides in Anaheim, CA with his partner Eric and ferocious cat Tommen.

**Track 4**

**Main Gathering  
Space**

**Win Local Support for Your Project: Op-Ed Writing with Island Press**

**Laurie Mazur**  
Editor  
Urban Resilience Project



**Laurie Mazur** is the Editor for the Urban Resilience Project (URP), a grant-funded program of the non-profit publisher Island Press that works to champion sustainable, equitable communities in the era of climate change. In that role, Laurie works with activists and others to co-create articles, blog posts and op-eds—and to place that content in appropriate news outlets. (A compilation of that published work is available [here](#).)

Laurie is the author/editor of three books; her writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Nation, The Los Angeles Times, The Guardian and many other publications. A mother of two adult sons, Laurie lives just outside Washington, DC.

**DEEP-DIVE WORKING SESSIONS  
FROM IDEA TO IMPLEMENTATION: Round Two  
11:00 a.m.**

**Track 1  
Room A**

**The Milken Institute Presents the Community Infrastructure Center:  
Advancing your Community Infrastructure Project**

This Bootcamp-Style, Interactive Session will focus on assessing project readiness and considering your project financing and funding options. This session will aim to provide attendees with a concrete assessment of their project gaps coupled with the knowledge on how to advance their projects and assess a multitude of financing options based on their project type. The session will feature project support providers including philanthropy, project developers, investors, and grant experts to support the workshop and participants.

**Rachel Halfaker**  
Associate Director  
Milken Institute

**Track 2  
Room B**

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**Keith Dennis**  
President  
Beneficial Electrification League

**Track 3**  
**Room C**

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**Josh Ewing**  
Director  
Rural Climate Partnership

**Track 4**  
**Main Gathering**  
**Space**

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**Kyler Geoffroy**  
Online Marketing Manager  
Urban Resilience Project

**Laurie Mazur**  
Editor  
Urban Resilience Project

**BOXED LUNCH AND CLOSING – LUNCH TO BE ANNOUNCED**

12:30 p.m.

**DEPARTURES**

1:00 p.m.



# RURAL RENAISSANCE ROADSHOW

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WALTON FAMILY  
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# RURAL RENAISSANCE ROADSHOW

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# RURAL RENAISSANCE ROADSHOW

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