

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Ceri Artzer has been a mediator for the Center for Conflict Resolution in Scottsbluff since 1999 and has worked in family mediation, family group conferencing, victim/offender mediation, and facilitating Pre-Hearing Conferences and Permanency Pre-Hearing Conferences. Since she lives in Northeastern Colorado, she has an extreme appreciation for the opportunity to work in the Panhandle of Nebraska and to access the superb trainings which are offered to her as well. In the past, she has worked with a Colorado program called Baby Bearhugs/Warm Welcome, calling on families of newborns. Any opportunity to encourage children and their families to make good decisions for themselves is where her passion lies.

Sarah Beal is a doctoral student in the Developmental Psychology Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is primarily interested in the role children and adolescents play in facilitating their own development, as well as their interactions with their environments. For the past year, Sarah has participated in research on children in the court process and the effects of case progression at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families, and the Law.

Judge Robert J. Bednar received his undergraduate and legal education at Washburn University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971. He was in private practice from 1973 to 1998 when he was appointed to the District Court of Atchison County (Kansas). His docket currently includes juvenile offender, child in need of care, domestic/family law, and limited and small claims cases.

Debra Blue is a Program Director with Concord Center and has been with the Center for 9 years. Concord Center creates pathways for constructive dialogue through facilitation, mediation and education. She worked closely with founding director, Mary Lee Brock and served as the Interim Executive Director from February – August of this year. As Program Director, Debra coordinates the Juvenile Court Pre-hearing Conferences and mediations for parents' whose children are wards of the state. She oversees the parenting plan mediation program and coordinates Victim Offender Meetings and the Sarpy County Small Claims Court program. She also coordinates for Employment First, Special Education, and Employer/Employee cases. Concord Center specializes in alternative and innovative methods to manage personal and professional conflicts.

Andrew Bridge spent 11 years in the Los Angeles County foster care system and went on to earn a scholarship to Wesleyan, become a Fulbright Scholar, and graduate from Harvard Law School. His memoir *Hope's Boy* (Hyperion) is the true account of Bridge's life with his mother, a young mentally ill woman, of her efforts to keep and care for him, and of his life in foster care without her from the age of seven until 18. He has spent the majority of his legal career representing impoverished children across the country, and is a devoted advocate and pioneer for children in foster care. Bridge is currently Director of the Child Welfare Initiative in Los Angeles. Established by a consortium of leading private foundations, individuals, and other philanthropic organizations, the Child Welfare Initiative focuses on the fundamental reform of our nation's child welfare systems. Working with public officials and private organizations, the Initiative investigates and implements innovative strategies, policy changes, and programmatic reforms aimed at bettering educational outcomes and expanding mental health services for children in and aging out of child welfare.

Retired Judge Joanne Brown is a consultant for the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues, the Institute on Law and Public Policy, and Mark Morris and Associates. Trained as an attorney and a social worker, she is a member of the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, California, New Mexico and Maryland State Courts, and US District Courts for California and New Mexico. She served as General Counsel to the State of New Mexico Department

of Children, Youth and Families, and as Commissioner of Alameda County (California) Superior Court.

Debora Brownyard, J.D., is the director of the Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR), Nebraska Supreme Court State Court Administrator's Office. She is responsible for the annual granting process of the regional non-profit mediation centers and for furthering programs and resources in mediation, ADR and the courts. Since 1992, Ms. Brownyard has actively mediated and facilitated issues ranging from family and child welfare matters to multi-jurisdiction public policy issues. She has developed curricula for and is a trainer in child welfare family conferencing processes, restorative justice, and basic and family mediation training. From 1992 to 2005 she served as founding executive director for the Nebraska Justice Center, one of ODR's approved regional mediation centers. In 1999, she helped to pilot family group conferencing for child welfare cases in partnership with Nebraska Health and Human Services and the Nebraska Center on Children, Family, and the Law. Since 2007, she has been a member of the national Child Welfare Collaborative Decision Making Network, affiliated with the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

Judge James L. Burgess is the presiding judge in the juvenile department of the 18th Judicial District and he has been hearing juvenile cases exclusively for over 20 years. He received his undergraduate degree from K.U., his law degree from Washburn University, and a masters of law degree from the University of Miami. Some of his professional activities include membership on the United States Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Supreme Court Task force on Permanency Planning, and the Sedgwick County Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee. Judge Burgess has spoken on numerous occasions about juvenile justice issues including presentations at the President's Drug Advisory Council National Leadership Forum, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers National Conference, and the Midwest Legislative Conference. Some of his civic activities include Special Olympics, Communities In Schools, and the Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas.

Judge Denise Navarre Cubbon was elected Lucas County Juvenile Court Judge in November, 2004. She became the Lucas County Administrative Judge in April, 2007. She currently serves as the Lead Judge of the Lucas County Juvenile Court NCJFCJ Model Court and in January, 2009, was appointed to serve on The Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on Children, Families & the Courts. Prior to taking the bench, she served as a Lucas County assistant prosecuting attorney for 23 years, assigned to the juvenile division, criminal division, and senior protection unit having held supervisory positions in the juvenile division and senior protection unit. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology and Certification to Teach English as a Second Language from The American University, Washington, D.C. and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Toledo College of Law, Toledo, Ohio. After college she served as an ACTION/ VISTA volunteer assigned in affiliation with Texas Migrant Council, Laredo, Texas. She is an active community member having served and held leadership positions on several not-for-profit organizations and task forces. She has been married to Stuart F. Cubbon, Esq. since 1981. They have four children.

Carol Dart has been associated with Central Mediation Center (CMC) in Kearney since 1993 when she was hired on a part-time basis as support staff and case manager. Carol's current full-time responsibilities as Program Director at CMC include oversight of programs, some family mediation and case management for specialized cases. Her primary direct service work is as Coordinator/Facilitator for Family Group Conferencing and initiating and maintaining a Pre-Hearing Conference program within the 35-county area served by Central Mediation Center.

Howard Davidson has been actively involved with the legal aspects of child protection for over 35 years and has directed the *ABA Center on Children and the Law* since its 1978 establishment. The Center provides extensive training, technical assistance, consulting, and publications for lawyers, child welfare agencies, juvenile (dependency) courts, and programs that provide legal representation in these cases. He served as chair of the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect and is a founding board member of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. He is author of many legal articles on child maltreatment and in the 1970's spent five years as a legal services attorney exclusively representing children in juvenile court. At that time he created the Children's Law Project at Greater Boston Legal Services, one of the country's first children's law centers.

Judge Larry Gendler has been a Separate Juvenile Court Judge in Sarpy County since his appointment in 1992, and is Project Chair of the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative. He is the recipient of numerous service awards, including the 2006 Nebraska Supreme Court Service to Community. He is currently on the Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts, the Omaha Community Partnership and the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

Norma Ginther received her master's degree in social work from The Ohio State University in 1988, and has thirty-five years of child welfare practice and training experience. She has worked in both public and private child welfare agencies as a family services caseworker, a foster care program development specialist, in a physical abuse assessment and treatment unit, and in an adolescent services unit. She has consulted with a variety of local communities to develop and sustain community-based, professional treatment foster care networks for hard-to-place children and youth, and is the founder of a local treatment foster care network. Ms. Ginther is a lead assessor in child welfare program evaluations, and works directly with agency managers and staff to improve their services.

Judge Roger Heideman earned his BA from Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas in 1984, then went on to complete his JD at the UNL College of Law in 1992. After serving as partner for the law firm of Morris, Titus & Heideman, Judge Heideman was appointed to the bench in 2006 by Governor Heineman. He is currently the Lead Judge for Lancaster County's Through the Eyes of the Child team.

Alicia Henderson has been the Chief Deputy of the Juvenile Division at the Lancaster County Attorney's office since January of 2006. She currently serves on the Nebraska Supreme Court's Commission on Children in the Courts, where she is serving on the Case Progression Standards subcommittee and the Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines subcommittee. She is also a member of the LB 961 Advisory Committee and is the team coordinator for Lancaster County's "Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative" taskforce. She graduated from UNL with a bachelor's degree in music education and received her J.D. from the UNL College of Law.

Judge Douglas Johnson is a graduate of Creighton University Law School and has been a judge of the Separate Juvenile Court of Douglas County, Nebraska, for 15 years. He is on the teaching faculty and is the President Elect of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). He is the founding Lead Judge of the Omaha Model Court. He is a 2005 Zero to Three Fellow graduate. Judge Johnson presides over Nebraska's first Family Drug Treatment Court, the "Zero to Five Family Drug Treatment Court" (est. May, 2005). He serves on numerous national, regional and local commissions, committees, and Boards, and is co-Chair of the Nebraska Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts.

Judge R. Michael Key received a Bachelor of Science in General Business from Troy State University in 1973, a Master of Business Administration from Auburn University in 1975, and a Doctor of Law from Emory University in 1978 (class of 1979). Judge Key served in the United States Air Force from 1971 until 1975. Judge Key has been active in community affairs in LaGrange since he returned home to practice law. Judge Key has served as part-time Juvenile Court Judge in Troup County, Georgia since 1989, after having practiced in the Juvenile Court for ten years prior to his appointment. Judge Key is a lead judge in the Georgia Court Improvement Initiative, and is a frequent presenter in state and national training. Judge Key has twice received the Georgia Council of Juvenile Court Judges President's Award, and was presented the Child Advocate of the Year Award- Judges Division in May, 2005, by the Juvenile Law Section of the Young Lawyer Division of the Georgia State Bar Association.

Andrea Khoury is the director of the ABA Youth at Risk Bar-Youth Empowerment Project focusing on adolescent's access to attorneys, children's right to counsel, and youth involvement in court hearings. She is also an Assistant Director of Child Welfare for the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues. She received her JD from the University of Baltimore School of Law in 1997 and her BA from the University of Delaware in 1994.

J. Leef is a graduate with honors from Washburn Law School in Topeka, Kansas, and has been practicing law for 15 years. A partner at Sonntag, Goodwin & Leef in Sidney, J. devotes a majority of her practice to family and juvenile law. She has been published in the Nebraska Lawyer and has been a speaker in seminars regarding family and juvenile law.

Lori McKeon is the Family Group Conference Program Director with the Concord Center and oversees the delivery of facilitation services that recognize families as having the most information about themselves to make decisions that protect their family members. As Program Director, Lori maintains external community and system relationships with entities such as Health and Human Services and the courts. Lori holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and public administration. In the past, Lori worked directly with Douglas County's Juvenile Court. She directed a residential facility for girls, and she developed a parenting program. Lori also oversaw in-home programs. Lori brings 27 years of human service experience to Concord Center.

Judge Daniel L. Mitchell earned his undergraduate degree from the College of Emporia and his law degree from Washburn University of Law. He was in the private practice of law until 1985 when he was appointed to the District Court of Shawnee County (Kansas). He is active in numerous advisory boards and committees regarding children and/or law including the Kansas Supreme Court's Task Force on Permanency Planning. Judge Daniels also serves as an Adjunct Professor at Washburn University School of Law.

Joan Ohl currently serves as a Senior Director for Casey Family Programs, where she is responsible for leading Strategic Consulting work in Virginia and West Virginia as well as working with judicial leaders across the country and providing consultation to other jurisdictions. She was most recently the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Family (ACYF) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to joining ACYF, Joan spent four years as West Virginia's Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). During this time, she successfully implemented the state's welfare reform program, three statewide information systems were federally certified, two federal court orders were vacated, initiated numerous child welfare and child quality improvement measures, and oversaw the initial establishment of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Judge Robert O'Neal is a native of Papillion. He received his B.A. in 1974 and J.D. in 1977 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After graduation from law school, he served as a judge advocate in the United States Air Force and was formerly an assistant U.S. Attorney and a deputy Sarpy County Attorney. Judge O'Neal was in private practice in Sarpy County for ten years with an emphasis on juvenile justice. He was appointed to the Sarpy County Separate Juvenile Court bench by Governor Nelson in 1996.

Michelle Paxton is a Staff Attorney at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families, and the Law. Michelle received her J.D. from University of Nebraska College of Law. As a member of the Legal Team, Michelle conducts training for all new Child and Family Service Specialists about juvenile court process and practice in Nebraska. The training includes education about the process of child protection, status offense, and juvenile justice cases, as well as training on testifying and being cross examined. Prior to joining the CCFL staff in 2008, Michelle was a Deputy County Attorney in Douglas and Lancaster Counties.

Judge Linda Porter has been a separate juvenile court judge in Lancaster county since 1999. Before that time, she was a deputy county attorney in the juvenile and criminal divisions of the Lancaster county attorney's office for approximately 10 years. After law school, Judge Porter worked for a federal judge as a law clerk in the southern district of Ohio (2 years) and with a large law firm in Cincinnati, Ohio as an associate for 4 years. She graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1976 with a bachelor's degree in Spanish and from the University of Cincinnati College of Law in 1981. Between college and law school, she worked as a social worker in Berkeley and Oakland, California.

Judge Randin Roland earned his BSBA from Northern Arizona University in 1988 and his JD from Creighton University School of Law in 1993. After a short time in private practice, Judge Roland served as Deputy Cheyenne County Attorney from 1995-2006. In 2006, he was appointed Judge of the County Court in the 12th Judicial District. He acts as Lead Judge for the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative for Cheyenne, Deuel, Garden, and Kimball Counties; co-chair of the Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee; and is a member of the Parenting Time Subcommittee. He serves on the Nebraska Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts and is the Presiding Judge (since 2008) of the 12th Judicial District.

Judge Reggie Ryder has been a Lancaster County Separate Juvenile Court Judge since 2007. He received his JD from UNL College of Law in 1997.

Shellie Sabata is a Deputy County Attorney in the Lancaster County Attorney's Office. She has been assigned to the Juvenile Division of the office for several years and solely prosecutes cases involving abuse and neglect toward children as well as truancy and law violation cases involving individuals under the age of 18. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Public Administration from Doane College and her Juris Doctorate from the University of Nebraska - College of Law. Shellie is also an adjunct instructor at Kaplan University and teaches courses in Juvenile Delinquency, Criminal Procedure, Criminal Law, and Corrections.

Milton Scott, MBA is a Program Specialist for community-based programming at the National Fatherhood Initiative. In that capacity he conducts training programs and provides technical assistance to agencies, funders, and community leaders for National Fatherhood Initiative's various curricula. Additionally, Mr. Scott helps promote and support National Fatherhood Initiative's products and services by participating in its exhibits and presentations throughout the country.

Holding an undergraduate degree in math and business administration, Mr. Scott went on to earn his M.B.A. at Harvard University. Prior to joining the National Fatherhood Initiative, Mr. Scott worked as a financial advisor and investment broker.

Judge Linda Senff earned a B.S. from UNL in 1980 and a J.D. from UNL-College of Law in 1983. She served as Deputy Hall County Attorney from 1983-1988, Deputy Douglas County Attorney from 1988-1997. After some time in private practice at the firm of Powell and Senff, she was appointed County Court Judge of the 5th Judicial District in 2005. Additionally, she is a member of the Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts, the Judicial Ethics Committee, and the Executive Committee of the County Judges Association.

Judge Jean Shepherd has been a Kansas District Court Judge since 1984. She is currently serving as the Chair of the Supreme Court Task Force on Permanency Planning, and the Kansas Judicial Council. She was formerly a member of the Court/Education/SRS Liaison Committee and started the first Citizen Review Board in Kansas. She is also a dual case planning and case management trainer for the National Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Barbara Sturgis is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Psychology at the Center on Children, Families, and the Law. She earned her BA from Drake University, M.Ed. from University of Missouri – Columbia, Ph.D. from University of Missouri – Columbia, and her Masters of Legal Studies from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. She has a private psychological practice in Norfolk, NE.

Judge Toni Thorson graduated from UNL College of Law in 1977. She served as the Deputy County Attorney for Lancaster County from 1978-1989. In this position she handled cases in Juvenile Court as well as prosecuting domestic violence, felony sexual assault, and felony drug cases. Judge Thorson was appointed to the Separate Juvenile Court of Lancaster County in 1989.

Vicky Weisz is a Research Professor of Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families, and the Law. Vicky received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Washington University in St. Louis and her Masters in Legal Studies from the University of Nebraska College of Law. She is Director of the Nebraska Court Improvement Project, a federally funded program focused on improving the state judicial and legal system for abused and neglected children, and serves as the main staff support for the Nebraska Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts. She also serves as part time staff of the Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center. Her research projects include assessments of court and legal processes, evaluations of innovative legal or quasi-legal programs, and children's participation in court.

Terri Yellowhammer, an attorney, is the Indian Child Welfare Consultant for the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services. She also currently trains trainers for Minnesota's Child Welfare Training System. She is an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Lakota Nation of North and South Dakota, and graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1995. Ms. Yellowhammer began her legal career as an Assistant Attorney General in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office in the Education and Human Services Divisions, specializing in mental health law. From there she joined the staff at the Indian Child Welfare Law Center, where she represented clients involved in ICWA cases in county child protection matters. She has served as a guardian ad litem in cases involving American Indian families for Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. Ms. Yellowhammer is also an Associate Judge with the White Earth Nation Tribal Court.

KaCee Zimmerman has been in this field for over 10 years and with the DHHS for the past 5 years. In those years she has been a supervisor for initial assessments, OJS, status, on-going abuse and

neglect and Adult Protective Services. She holds a degree in Psychology from the University of Colorado - Boulder.