

## UlsterCorps Service Summit 2022

### SPEAKER BIOS

**Bryant “Drew” Andrews** is the longtime Executive Director of the Kingston, NY-based Center for Creative Education (CCE), a non-profit organization whose mission is to enrich the social and cultural awareness of children, youth and community through arts, wellness and education. Drew has dedicated his life to working and mentoring in the community through arts education and wellness, strongly believing that these can both strengthen family bonds and nurture legacies of personal confidence, strength, integrity, and intelligence.

**Christine Hein** has been passionately advocating for People’s Place as their Executive Director since May 2012. She brings an extensive management background and vast experiences partnering with community not-for-profits for over 25 years. Developing innovative and creative programming to combat food insecurities and other financial challenges confronting families and individuals in our communities has been her major focus the last four years. Under her direction, People’s Place has become the largest Food Pantry in Ulster County.

**Ev Mann** has a long history as an educator and community organizer. He is the founder and long-time executive director of the Center for Creative Education in Kingston, NY, and MaMA, Marbletown Multi-Arts, a cultural and community center dedicated to arts, wellness and education. He has worked as a teaching artist in k-12 schools since 1976 and directed the program for homeless students in Seattle Public Schools from 1989-1993. He is the co-creator, with Lester Strong, of Elder Odyssey, a rite of passage program for mature adults and Healing Racism in America. He currently co-teaches the Encore Transition Program at Union Theological Seminary and serves as Education Director of the Peaceful Guardians Project. Ev also has a long and eclectic history as a percussionist. He was an artist in residence with the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico for six years (1975-81) and has studied traditional African music in Mali and Senegal. Ev is the founder of POOK, the Percussion Orchestra of Kingston, a youth performance ensemble that has given hundreds of concerts since its inception in 1997. Ev holds master’s degrees in religious studies from McGill University and in music composition from Mills College.

**Dr. Amy Nitza** is the Director of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz. She is a psychologist who specializes in providing mental health training in academic and non-academic settings both nationally and internationally, with an emphasis on disaster mental health and trauma recovery. As a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Botswana, she trained mental health and school counselors and studied the use of group counseling interventions in HIV/AIDS prevention among adolescents. She has collaborated with the University of Notre Dame in Haiti to develop trauma-related interventions for children in domestic servitude, and to provide training for teachers in dealing with traumatized children in the classroom. She is also currently collaborating with UNICEF USA to develop and implement a program of mental health support for children impacted by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Amy is the author and editor of numerous publications, including the recent book *Disaster Mental Health Case Studies: Lessons Learned from Counseling in Chaos*. She is a Fellow of the Association for Specialists in Group Work and serves on the Executive Board of the Society for Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy (Division 49) of the American Psychological Association. She holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Indiana University. She formerly served as an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Professional Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.

**Andy Reynolds** is Volunteer Programs Manager at Mohonk Preserve. He is an experienced Program Manager with a demonstrated history of working in the recreational facilities and services industry. Skilled in Nonprofit Organizations, Communication, Media Relations, Fundraising, and Community Organizing. Strong program and project management professional with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) focused in English Language and Literature, General from State University of New York at Binghamton.

**Jess Robie**, RN has always wanted to be of part of making the world a better place. Discovering what that means has been a life long journey through many relationships, careers, and life experiences. She has been a child care provider, a housekeeper, a camp counselor, a health educator, a youth group facilitator, a case manager, an administrator, an energy and body worker, a mental health crisis worker, an activist, an RN, and a holistic wellness advocate. What she has learned by working with people using a variety of modalities is that everyone needs support to navigate life’s challenges. She believes that being present with people as they become ready and willing to transform the circumstances of their life – whether those circumstances are related to health, emotion, career, finances, relationship status, or something else has its own powerful magic. Her role as a wellness advocate is to create a physical, psychic and energetic space where my clients feel supported on multiple levels so that transformation can happen. Jess is a certified in Thai- Shiatsu Body Work, zen shiatsu, Matrix Energetics, and Reiki. She supplements this work with basic knowledge of many other modalities including yoga, herbs, health kinesiology, homeopathy and reflexology. She is also a long time peer counselor with years of experience working with at risk youth. She is a Registered Nurse, licensed in the state of NY, and is in the process of pursuing certification in holistic nursing and a master’s degree so she can become a nurse practitioner.

**Lester Strong** is the founder and Executive Director of the Peaceful Guardians Project. He is the former CEO of AARP Experience Corps, which serves 35,000 elementary students who struggle with reading in 23 cities across the United States. Lester has also been a student of Eastern philosophies and meditation for four decades. He is a graduate of Columbia University Business School’s Institute for Nonprofit Management.

**Karla Vermeulen**, Ph.D., is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health and an Associate Professor of Psychology at SUNY New Paltz, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in disaster mental health, grief counseling, and developmental psychology. She also oversees the Advanced Certificate in Trauma and Disaster Mental Health, and the Student Psychological Resilience Project, a campus peer support initiative intended to reduce stigma and build awareness around student mental health issues. In addition to teaching and research, she has coordinated the development and production of training curricula for the New York State Department of Health and Office of Mental Health, the American Red Cross, the United Nations, and other organizations. She is co-author of *Disaster Mental Health Interventions: Core Principles and Practices* (2017) and co-editor of *Disaster Mental Health Case Studies: Lessons Learned from Counseling in Chaos* (2019), both published by Routledge. Her next book, *Generation Disaster: Coming of Age Post-9/11*, was published in August 2021 in the Oxford University Press Emerging Adulthood series. Learn more about the book at [generationdisaster.com](http://generationdisaster.com).