



*Colorado Cancer Coalition*  
2022 Colorado Cancer Coalition  
Annual Symposium Speaker Bios

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## John Arend

Manager, Colorado Central Cancer Registry

John Arend is the Program Manager of the Colorado Central Cancer Registry (CCCR) at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) with more than 15 years of experience in cancer surveillance. John is a Colorado-native and received his Master's in Public Health in Epidemiology from the Colorado School of Public Health. Prior to his work in cancer surveillance, John spent two years in a rural Nicaraguan community as a Peace Corps Volunteer and, despite contracting Dengue Fever, had an amazing experience.

John is a self-proclaimed homebody and enjoys spending time “doing nothing” with his wife and two children.

## Mary Bachran

Mayor of Paonia, Colorado

Mary Bachran is a long-term resident of Paonia, Colorado and is currently serving as Mayor. She is a psychologist by training and has worked on health issues with The Endocrine Disruption Exchange.

## H. Davis Blanton, MD

Faculty Physician - Medical Student Clerkship Director, Family Medicine Center

Dr. Blanton grew up in Shelby, North Carolina, a small town in the foothills of the Appalachians. He earned his bachelors in chemical engineering from Vanderbilt University before moving to rural Arkansas to teach high school chemistry as a member of Teach for America. He returned to North Carolina for medical school at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. Dr. Blanton completed his residency in family medicine in Fort Collins, then moved to rural Idaho where he practiced full spectrum medicine and taught residents in the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho Caldwell RRT for 3 years. He returned to join the faculty in Fort Collins in 2018 bringing specific interests in medical education, endoscopy, adolescent medicine, and outpatient procedures. He is a member of the American Academy of Primary Care Endoscopists and has been a physician liaison to the Colorectal Cancer Task Force of the Colorado Cancer Coalition since 2019.

## Emily Boyd, NP-C

Nurse Practitioner, San Luis Valley Health

Emily works as a nurse practitioner at San Luis Valley Health Cancer Center in Alamosa, CO. She has been working in oncology for almost two years. While it is a challenging field, she enjoys learning and providing care to her rural community. The Cancer Center allows patients an opportunity to receive excellent cancer care close to home without having to travel far distances. Emily was involved in the first ever cancer research trial at SLV Health and looks forward to more opportunities. When she is not at work, she enjoys time with her husband and two little girls camping, skiing, and running.

## Emily Daniels

Stage IV lung cancer survivor

Emily Daniels is a stage IV lung cancer survivor. Emily was diagnosed with ALK+ lung cancer in 2018 while 33 weeks pregnant with her son, Brady. Emily spearheaded Links for Lungs, a non-profit that raises money and awareness for lung cancer research. This year Links for Lungs celebrated their 5th Anniversary and has raised almost \$1M. Emily is a patient advocate and speaks with other lung cancer (and cancer) patients and their caregivers about providers, medications, side effect management and emotional and physical advice and resources.

Emily and her husband Brian live in Wheat Ridge, Colorado with their two kids, Paige (8) and Brady (4.5). She and Brian consider themselves very fortunate to live close to both their families and have a community that is incredibly supportive. Emily enjoys spending time outside, walking with friends, yoga, baking and cooking and traveling!

## Ashley Libby Diaz, PT, MBA, ACC

Southwest Colorado Regional Cancer Network Lead

As a young adult breast cancer survivor, Ashley has become a vocal patient advocate who finds reward in giving back to the cancer community. Currently, she leads the Southwest Colorado Regional Cancer Network and sits on the boards of the Colorado Cancer Coalition and BRAVE (Breast Restoration Advocacy & Education) Coalition Foundation. She also serves on the National Breast Implant Registry (NBIR) steering committee, where she represents fellow breast cancer survivors. In her day job, Ashley serves as a fractional CMO and strategic advisor to medical device and technology companies, including iSono Health, an early-stage company developing a portable, wearable, automated, 3D breast ultrasound system. Ashley lives in

Durango, CO and just ‘celebrated’ her 8th Breast Cancer Awareness Month as a survivor by completing her first ultramarathon with her husband.

## Andrea (Andi) Dwyer

Director, Colorado Cancer Screening Program

Ms. Andrea (Andi) Dwyer is the Director and a founding member of the Colorado Cancer Screening Program (CCSP) at the University of Colorado Cancer Center and co-Investigator on the Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network (CPCRN). CCSP is now growing the prevention and cancer control work to hereditary and lung cancer screening initiatives. At the state level, Ms. Dwyer is on the Executive Committee of the Colorado Community Health Worker (CHW) and Patient Navigation (PN) Collaborative and former Chair of the Colorado Cancer Coalition. On the national front, Andrea is the Chair of the Patient Navigation Roundtable, supported by the American Cancer Society and long-time member of the National Colorectal Roundtable. Ms. Dwyer also advises Fight Colorectal, a national colorectal survivorship nonprofit, in their health promotion and research aims.

## Hilary Gee Goeckner, MSW

Director, State and Local Campaigns, ACS CAN

Hilary Gee Goeckner, MSW is director of state and local campaigns for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. In this role she leads work with ACS CAN staff and coalition partners across the country to improve access to comprehensive biomarker testing, clinical trials, fertility preservation and other health care access issues. Prior to this role, Hilary served as the Kansas government relations director for ACS CAN, leading statewide advocacy efforts promoting evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. Before joining ACS CAN, Hilary served as director of health policy at Kansas Action for Children. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Anthropology and Global Health from Williams College and a master’s degree in Social Work from Boston College. She lives in San Diego with her husband, toddler and a very fluffy cat.

## Audra Fleming

Ray of Hope Executive Director

Audra joined Ray of Hope as Executive Director in late 2019. Her vision is to grow the capacity of support that Ray of Hope offers and make the foundation an indispensable partner with the health care facilities that provide treatment to Colorado cancer patients. Having lost both her parents to cancer, Audra leads with compassion and determination and thrives on building lasting partnerships throughout the state.

## Jessica McDermott, MD, MSCS

Hematologist/Oncologist University of Colorado Cancer Center and Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC

Jessica McDermott, MD, MSCS is a hematologist/oncologist practicing at the University of Colorado Cancer Center and Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC. She was recently appointed the Deputy AD for Diversity and Inclusion in Clinical Research at CU Cancer Center. She is also a SWOG DEI Champion and serves on the Clinical Trials and Treatment Task Force with the Colorado Cancer Coalition. Beyond diversity and equity initiatives, she is involved in many clinical trials and outcomes research at both of her clinical locations with a particular focus in head and neck cancer.

## Ryan Mockabee

Director of Programs, Clinica Colorado

Ryan Mockabee is a dynamic problem solver - with a focus on the intersection of innovation, well-being, & healthcare inequities. After graduating from the University of Florida in 2017 with a B.S. in Behavioral & Cognitive Neuroscience, he relocated to Colorado. As Director of Programs & Development at Clinica Colorado, a 501(c)3 safety net medical clinic focusing on primary care for uninsured Coloradans, he leverages creative solutions & novel approaches to help the organization provide the highest quality of care to its patients. Through an emphasis on technology, behavior, and iterative experimentation he hopes to make meaningful changes to the way healthcare is delivered, especially to patients of the highest need.

## Donald Moore

Chief Executive Officer, Pueblo Community Health Center

Donald Moore is Chief Executive Officer at Pueblo Community Health Center (PCHC) since 2009; 30,000 Puebloans trust PCHC to be their usual and regular source of quality primary health care. From 1999 to 2009 he served as PCHC's Chief Operations Officer and directed its administrative and clinical support services.

He obtained his Master of Healthcare Administration in 1992 from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. Donald is a Fellow in the American College of Medical Practice Executives, and a member of its Certification Committee.

In addition to serving the PCHC Board, Moore has extensive volunteer, non-profit governance experience which includes serving on the boards of Colorado Access, Colorado Community Health Network; Colorado Community Managed Care Network, Community Health Provider Network, Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment Board of Health (President), Pueblo Triple Aim Corporation (President), Southeast Colorado Area Health Education Center.

## Tejas Patil, MD

Assistant Professor | Thoracic Oncology Research Initiative  
Division of Medical Oncology | University of Colorado Cancer Center

Tejas Patil is an academic thoracic oncologist with an interest in identifying novel biomarkers in thoracic malignancies and in the development of targeted therapies for lung cancer. He received his undergraduate degree at the University of Pennsylvania followed by medical school at the University of Southern California. He did his internship, residency, and fellowship at the University of Colorado. His research interests revolve around two general themes. First is to optimize clinical outcomes for patients with lung cancer by using molecular methods to identify prognostic and predictive biomarkers that allow for greater and more personalized selection of anti-cancer therapies. Second is to understand adaptive mechanisms utilized by cancer cells that allow survival following targeted therapies and to develop novel approaches to overcome these resistance mechanisms. In 2019, he was awarded the John Fisher Legacy Young Investigator Award during the 2019 World Lung Cancer Conference for his work on utilizing precision oncology techniques in early-stage lung cancer. In 2021, he was awarded the Hamoui Foundation/LUNGeivity Clinical Research Award for his proposal on MET and EGFR as biomarkers for resistance to RET targeted therapies and the Cancer League of Colorado Research Award for his work on programmed death receptor (PD-L1) expression as a biomarker for tyrosine kinase inhibitor (TKI) efficacy among patients with ALK-rearranged NSCLC.

## Becky Peltier

Health Promotion and Prevention Specialist  
Summit County Youth & Family

Over the past 13 years, Becky has successfully led organizations, teams, programs, and individuals across Colorado, North Dakota, and Minnesota. Her energy comes from her passion for helping communities live a healthy quality of life through community outreach, stakeholder partnerships and implementation of evidence based programs. Becky's current role as the Health Promotion and Prevention Specialist for Summit County Government encompasses managing and leading the funding and programming of the Nicotine Tax to reduce smoking and vaping among youth and adults. In Becky's previous roles she has lead fitness organizations for over 12 years and implemented a variety of exercise and cancer programs. She strives to be a role model to her daughter through hard work ethic, healthy living, faith, and all dimensions of wellness. Becky, her husband Jay, and daughter Kinsley love hiking, skiing, camping, water sports and games.

## Melanie Stachelski, MA, LPC

Colorado Cancer Counseling

Melanie Stachelski (Sta-chel-ski) is a Cancer Therapist, Licensed Professional Counselor, and a 13-year Cancer Survivor.

Melanie is a therapist at Colorado Cancer Counseling in Arvada, CO, where she specializes in supporting people through every stage of a cancer diagnosis. Melanie has been working in the Oncology Field for the past decade facilitating cancer support groups, teaching cancer skills classes, and providing counseling for individuals with cancer, as well as caregivers and family members.

She is passionate about this work because she is a cancer survivor herself. Melanie was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) in 2009 and received a successful Stem Cell Transplant in 2010.

## Lisa Switzer, MA

CEO/ED Western States Cancer Research NCORP

Lisa Switzer, MA, has been with Western States Cancer Research NCORP (WSCR-NCORP) for almost seven years where she now serves as CEO and Executive Director. Before working at WSCR-NCORP, Lisa's career was in non-profit education where she was committed to making education at all levels accessible to every student who desired to learn. She brings that passion

to her work at WSCR-NCORP where the mission is to make clinical trials available to all patients who receive a cancer diagnosis. WSCR-NCRP's team believes their work is guided by a moral imperative that is committed to ensuring broad access to cancer clinical trials as well as a research directive that demands research results reflect society writ large.

When she is not working her day job, Lisa loves to garden, hang out with her black cat, Percy, and sing in Irish music sessions.

## Tamara Terzian, PhD

Executive Director, The Sun Bus and Director, Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology Programs (BSBT)

Assistant Professor, Dermatology Department, School of Medicine  
University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus

Tamara Terzian, PhD, is the Executive Director of The Sun Bus, an initiative of the Colorado Melanoma Foundation (CMF). She is an Assistant Professor of Dermatology and the Director of the Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology Programs (BSBT) at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus (AMC), Aurora, Colorado. Dr. Terzian obtained her PhD in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Claude-Bernard-Lyon I and completed her postdoctoral fellowship in Cancer Genetics at UT MD Anderson under the mentorship of Dr. Guillermina Lozano. She has been an advocate for faculty and staff as the Chair of Personnel and Benefits at the Faculty Council for 6 years and currently as the Secretary of the AMC Faculty Assembly. After 8 years of service at the CMF, in January 2022, she took the Executive Directorship of the Sun Bus, a mobile clinic that offers free screening to the community, in particular to rural and underserved areas. More recently, the Sun Bus was also the site of a clinical and translational research project, and further efforts into developing research programs that investigate the relationship between sun induced skin damage and skin cancer risk are underway. Dr. Terzian is positioning The Sun Bus as an educational, research, and outreach hub, where volunteers from the public and educational and clinical institutions can give back to their community.

## Kori Walsh, BA

Regional Health Connector, Centennial Area Health Education Center

Kori is the Eastern Regional Cancer Network (ERCN) Lead who earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Applied Behavioral Sciences with a minor in child development. She is a Regional Health Connector (RHC) for Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Lincoln, and Elbert counties, and her host agency is Centennial Area Health Education Center (CAHEC), which is located in Greeley. Prior to this role, she worked in a community mental health Center as a case manager in the same four-county catchment area in rural Colorado that her current role as a Regional Health

Connector (RHC) covers now. In that position, she was able to work with many different individuals facing a variety of situations, allowing her the opportunity to develop many skills that she values both personally and professionally. She has lived and worked in this community for almost 15 years and is proud to call this her home. Kori has always had a passion for helping others and is dedicated to helping individuals in her community thrive. She believes that everything happens for a reason, and she is honored to have this opportunity to learn and grow, and to be a part of an agency dedicated to educating everyone about healthcare, and working to improve rural healthcare so our communities are able to live long and healthy lives. Kori can be reached at [kwalsh@cahec.org](mailto:kwalsh@cahec.org).

## Jackie Wesley

Survivor

Fighting Together to Save Lives

Jackie Wesley is a nineteen-year breast cancer survivor. During her journey in life, she has experienced an abundance of illnesses. She experienced benign lumps from the age of fifteen to the age of thirty-seven. At thirty-nine years old she was diagnosed with stage IIIB Ductal Invasive Carcinoma Breast Cancer. The cancer had spread to the lymph nodes and the chest cavity tissue. Jackie underwent a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction, chemotherapy, and radiation. She also had to do a five-year regimen of maintenance.

During Jackie's battle with breast cancer, she decided to become an advocate for the cause. She began participating with Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, American Cancer Society, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, and Day of Caring.

She was instructed by the spirit of God to tell her story. She was also instructed to start her nonprofit organization to help people fight for their lives and to celebrate their lives. That's when her nonprofit organization was birthed and named "Fighting Together to Save Lives"

She has written and directed a stage play entitled; "Living with Breast Cancer through Christ ". She has also created several annual events called: "Stepping for a Cure" which focuses on breast health care, nutrition, and exercise. Along with focusing her attention on educating the African American and faith-based community on breast cancer.

Out of continued direction of the holy spirit, she has now hosted the first African American celebration event. "Dancing with Breast Cancer Stars; Celebration of Life" black-tie dinner and dance.

As African American women die at a higher rate, it's important to believe we can live and not die! The Fighting Together to Save Lives board is committed to educating all nationalities of

women and men on the importance of monthly self-breast exams and if in doubt; see your primary physicians. As Fighting Together to Save Lives continues to grow in partnership with the community, we will continue to share her journey.

## Marie Wood, M.D., FACP

Oncologist, University of Colorado Cancer Center

Dr. Wood is an experienced breast oncologist, with more than 30 years of expertise. Dr. Wood completed her medical studies and fellowship in Colorado before moving to the east coast to practice medicine at the University of Vermont. 20 years later, in February of 2022, she returned to the University of Colorado to continue practicing with a research focus in cancer prevention. She currently serves as the Director of Breast Medical Oncology and Director of Cancer Clinical Trials office at the University of Colorado. She sees patients in clinic at Anschutz Medical Campus and Highlands Ranch Hospital in Colorado. She also serves as the co-chair of the prevention committee for the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology in addition to serving as the deputy director for cancer prevention and control within Alliance.

## Ben Fischer-Valuck, MD

Radiation Oncologist, HealthONE

Both Dr. Fischer-Valuck and his wife grew up in the Denver suburbs and went to Wheat Ridge High School. He attended Tulane University in New Orleans for undergraduate and graduate school studying biochemical engineering prior to completing medical school at LSU School of Medicine. After medical school, he completed an internship in Internal Medicine at University of Colorado and then Radiation Oncology residency at Washington University in St. Louis, where he served as Chief Resident in his final year of training. He is a board certified radiation oncologist specializing in the treatment of brain tumors, gynecological and genitourinary malignancies, lung cancer, and general radiation oncology. He has practiced in the academic and private practice setting, and his current primary location is Swedish Medical Center. His wife, three daughters, and he enjoy traveling, the outdoors, live music, and Denver sports.