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2026 NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Lucria Ortiz, CEO | YMCA Southcoast

Keynote Speaker

Lucria Ortiz is a visionary leader with a track record of organizational innovation and growth. Her 20+ year career spans non-profit, government, and legal sectors, marked by a passionate commitment to empowering individuals and communities. Lucria excels in fundraising, securing millions of dollars for vital initiatives and transformative programs focused on poverty reduction, criminal justice reform, youth and workforce development. Lucria has held key roles, including currently as President and Chief Executive Officer of YMCA Southcoast in Massachusetts, President and CEO of The Opportunity Network, a national college and career access organization, and President & CEO of the Yonkers Family YMCA, leveraging her expertise for societal impact. An expert in board governance, strategic planning, fundraising, community building and diversity, equity and inclusion, she is a respected national voice in nonprofit. A sought-after speaker and board member, Lucria has sat on the board of the YMCA of the USA, currently sits on the board of the Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs, as well as other nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce and municipal entities. Lucria's influence extends across sectors. Holding a JD from Northeastern University and a BA from Wesleyan University, she combines legal acumen with a profound social purpose, inspiring meaningful change through her work.

Melissa O'Neill Walczak, YMCA of the USA

Workshop Speaker

Melissa O'Neill Walczak is a YMCA movement executive with more than 30 years of experience helping organizations strengthen leadership, improve sustainability, and expand community impact. Her career spans program and membership leadership, operations, financial development, communications, and executive leadership, including service as both a YMCA CEO and COO. This broad experience provides her with a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing local Ys, from daily operations to complex organizational change and leadership transitions.

In her role with YMCA of the USA, Melissa partners with CEOs, boards, alliances, and Y-USA colleagues to advance organizational health, governance, leadership continuity, and long-term sustainability. She supports Ys navigating growth, executive transitions, strategic collaborations, and evolving community needs, helping leaders translate complex challenges into clear priorities and practical action. Known for her thoughtful approach, ability to build trust, and commitment to strong communities, Melissa is passionate about connecting people with possibilities and helping organizations move forward with purpose and confidence.

Lisa Drennan, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting

Workshop Speaker

Lisa Drennan is the Founder and Principal Consultant of MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting, where she helps organizations create environments where individuals of all abilities can participate, contribute, and belong. Prior to launching MERGE, Lisa served as the South Shore YMCA's first Association Director of Inclusion, leading organization-wide efforts to expand access and inclusion across programs and services.

Lisa has worked with YMCA associations across the country, providing training, leadership development, strategic planning, and inclusion consulting. She previously served as National Co-Chair of the YMCA of the USA Diverse Abilities Working Group, helping advance inclusion initiatives and resource development throughout the YMCA movement.

A recognized national speaker and trainer, Lisa is passionate about helping YMCAs move beyond accommodation and compliance to build cultures of belonging that strengthen communities and ensure everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Emily Golinsky, Bright Moose, LLC

Workshop Speaker

Emily is an international keynote speaker and presenter. Following her retirement from a 15-year role as Executive Director at the therapeutically-based Camp Starfish (NH), Emily founded Bright Moose, LLC to provide training, coaching, consultation, and professional development to camps, schools, youth programs, and organizations, guided by the motto "Help Others Shine Bright!" Emily is an Education Advocate for youth with special needs, a certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor, and an honored recipient of the Peter Kerns Award for the Advancement of Professional Development. She holds a BS (Health Psychology) and MS (Camp Administration & Leadership), and recently completed her Higher Education Teaching Certificate through Harvard. Fair warning: she is also a member of the National Sarcasm Society and an avid collector of terribly awesome puns.

Alyssa Blask Campbell, Seed & Sew

Workshop Speaker

Alyssa Blask Campbell, M.Ed., is the founder and CEO of Seed & Sew and a globally recognized expert in emotional development. She co-created and researched the Collaborative Emotion Processing (CEP) Method, transforming how adults understand and support children's emotions across home, school, and community settings. She brings this work to a broader audience as the author of two bestselling HarperCollins books: Tiny Humans, Big Emotions, a New York Times bestseller, and Big Kids, Bigger Feelings, a USA Today bestseller. Alyssa hosts the Voices of Your Village podcast and leads the development of research-backed professional learning, tools, and digital platforms that support educators, caregivers, and systems serving children of all ages. She speaks internationally for organizations such as UNESCO and has been featured in The Washington Post, CNBC, NBC News Daily, and Vermont Public. Learn more at seedandsew.org and follow @seed.and.sew.

Meg Helming, YMCA of the USA

Workshop Speaker

Meg Helming has spent her entire career in the nonprofit sector, with roles in Boston, New York City, and across Northern New England. She spent seven years at the YMCA Alliance of Northern New England, where she coordinated the Y's public policy strategy in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. She is now Director, State Advocacy at YMCA of the USA and supports YMCA advocacy strategy in 10 states in the northeast. Meg holds a bachelor's degree from Smith College and a Master's in Public Administration from Suffolk University. She lives in Maine with her husband and two young sons.

Mike LaChance, Retired YMCA CEO

Workshop Speaker

Mike LaChance recently retired as CEO of the YMCA of Greater Nashua after a remarkable 40-year career in the YMCA movement, including 33 years with the Greater Nashua YMCA and 23 as CEO. Under his leadership, the organization grew from a small, struggling Y into a thriving, multi-branch association serving more than 40,000 individuals annually across southern New Hampshire and northern Massachusetts. Throughout his career, Mike championed youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility while leading major facility expansions, acquisitions, innovative partnerships, advocacy efforts, and significant growth in philanthropic support. He is widely respected for building strong, collaborative relationships that have benefited both the Y and the broader nonprofit community.

A passionate advocate for the YMCA mission, Mike has been deeply engaged in public policy at the local, state, and federal levels. He has worked alongside elected officials, business leaders, and community partners to advance policies that expand access to child care, youth development, chronic disease programs, and nonprofit services. His leadership has helped secure public funding, strengthen partnerships, and elevate the YMCA as a trusted voice on issues impacting children and families. Earlier this year, the YMCA of Greater Nashua was recognized with Y-USA's Excellence in Advocacy Award.

A graduate of Lock Haven University with a degree in Recreation Management, Mike has received numerous honors for his leadership and community impact, including multiple Business Leader of the Year awards and several community service recognitions. He and his wife, Sharon, split their time between New Hampshire and Florida, where he enjoys golf, travel, and cheering on his favorite teams

Tabitha May Tolub, Project Adventure

Workshop Speaker

Tabitha May-Tolub (she/her) is a compassionate and dynamic leader with more than 25 years of experience in leadership development, training, organizational health, and community engagement. Based in Massachusetts, she is known for helping individuals, teams, and organizations navigate transition with clarity, connection, and purpose.

Tabitha serves as Director of Education & Training at Project Adventure, where she provides strategic and operational leadership for education, training, and facilitation programs serving youth, educators, schools, and nonprofit organizations. She oversees a team of managers, trainers, and consultants, ensuring high-quality program delivery, operational effectiveness, and alignment with organizational goals. She also leads the development and expansion of imPAct, Project

Adventure's leadership and team development initiative for nonprofit organizations, while cultivating partnerships and contributing to organizational strategy and health.

Prior to joining Project Adventure, Tabitha was the Principal and Founder of TMT Consulting, a mission-driven practice focused on leadership, community, and belonging. Through training, facilitation, coaching, and consultation, she helped individuals and organizations strengthen leadership skills, navigate conflict, build meaningful relationships, and foster connected communities. Her work was grounded in authenticity, simplicity, relationships first, and leading without ego.

Tabitha has also served as a partner with KJR Consulting and as National Director of Training and Partnerships at Multiplying Good, where she expanded training initiatives and strengthened organizational engagement. Earlier in her career, she founded Roots & Wings Training and Consultation, supporting schools, nonprofits, and businesses in aligning mission, values, and culture.

She holds a degree in Psychology from Clark University and completed graduate studies in Marriage and Family Therapy at UMass Boston. Drawing on her deep understanding of human dynamics, Tabitha creates growth-centered environments where people feel empowered to learn, connect, and thrive. Whether coaching leaders, facilitating dialogue, or guiding organizational change, she leads with humility, heart, and a commitment to helping others succeed.

Kim Harty, Independent Consultant

Workshop Speaker

Kim Harty brings more than 30 years of nonprofit leadership experience, primarily with YMCAs throughout New England. Throughout her career, she has led multiple YMCAs and nonprofit organizations and served in association-level leadership and strategic support roles. Kim is a certified executive coach, holds certification in interim executive leadership, and is a member of the New England YMCA Alumni's pilot Y Staff Advisory Program, providing coaching and transition support to YMCA organizations.

Zachary Boutelle, Aligned Culture Institute

Workshop Speaker

Zach Boutelle is the founder of Aligned Culture Institute and creator of the Aligned Community Framework, a leadership and culture framework built to help mission driven organizations create healthier, more consistent, and more transformational environments. His work focuses on leadership alignment, staff culture, member experience, accountability systems, belonging, and contribution. Zach works closely with YMCA and nonprofit leaders and brings a practical, field based perspective on

how culture is shaped through daily leadership behavior, staff reinforcement, and repeatable operating rhythms.