



ILCMA Winter Conference 2024

Speaker Bios

NICOLE ARANAS

Nicole Aranas currently serves as Deputy Village Manager in the Village of Lombard, having served the Village since 2013. Before joining Lombard, Nicole served as the Community Development Director for the Village of Itasca for ten years. Nicole began her career as a municipal attorney providing legal counsel to public entities, officials, employees, boards and commissions. In total, Nicole has more than 23 years of public sector experience. Nicole received her undergraduate and master's degrees in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and holds a law degree from the University of Illinois College of Law.

SCOTT COKER

Scott Coker joined the City of Macomb as the Public Works Director in 2017 and became the City Administrator in 2019. Previously, he was the Director of Facilities for Western Illinois University in Macomb. He worked at WIU for 14 years before coming to the City of Macomb. Scott has daughters Sydney, Hayley, and Macy and wife Barb.

GWEN CRAWFORD

Gwen has been with EDG for 20 years. Her responsibilities include preparing various long-range financial analyses, including bond analyses and other projections, and economic impact studies relating to existing and proposed redevelopment projects undertaken within Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts and Business Development Districts (BDDs) created and administered through the TIF Illinois process. Gwen prepares TIF District and BDD Redevelopment Plans and subsequent amendment procedures as well as tracks annual reimbursements pursuant to Redevelopment Agreements and Intergovernmental Agreements in existing TIF Districts and BDDs. Together with legal review by Jacob & Klein, Ltd., The Economic Development Group is responsible for directing more than \$79 million in TIF District real estate tax increment and Business Development District sales tax funds each year. Ms. Crawford received her Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in mathematics from Illinois State University.

DAN DI SANTO

Daniel W. Di Santo is the Village Administrator in the Village of Oswego, a fast growing western suburb of Chicago and the largest municipality in Kendall County with a population of 36,000. Dan holds a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, a Master of Public Administration from Northern Illinois University, and is an ICMA Credentialed Manager and AICP certified planner. Dan has served in his position

since 2015. Prior to working for Oswego, Dan was the Assistant Village Manager for the Village of Bensenville, and a Planner and Assistant to the City Manager for the City of Naperville.

RYAN DOYLE

Ryan Doyle specializes in new business development and the risk management of the public sector. Such insurance programs include self-insured retentions, first-dollar, all lines aggregate and alternative risk. Ryan has developed solid long-term relationships with markets for all lines of coverage. He also has similar relationships with many risk management vendors and wholesalers. Because of these relationships, Ryan is capable of placing unique risks and large exposures.

Ryan began his career when he joined Gallagher in 2009. Ryan received a bachelor's degree from Illinois State University, where he successfully completed the Katie School of Insurance Leadership Program. He is the recipient of the Power Broker Award presented by Risk & Insurance magazine in 2020.

HEATHER GALAN

Ms. Galan graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and received a B.S. degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering. In 2007, she received her Professional Engineer's License from the State of Illinois. Ms. Galan has 20 years of experience in Civil Engineering. This includes 7 years with a private consulting firm working as a staff Civil Engineer focused on private and public development. Following work in the private sector, Ms. Galan spent 8 years working for the Lake County Department of Public Works as a Senior Civil Engineer, Principal Engineer, and Engineering Division Supervisor. In 2019, Ms. Galan joined the Village of Gurnee as the Village Engineer/Assistant Director of Public Works and was appointed as the Director of Public Works at the end of 2020. Currently Ms. Galan oversees Public Works Administration, Street, Utility and Fleet Divisions which includes a total of 32 full time staff as well as several part-time and seasonal staff.

DR. PAM GALLAHUE

Pam Gallahue is a seasoned municipal government professional having served in many roles over the span of her 28-year career with the City of Naperville.

Pam started her career in the Police Department, moving next to the Transportation, Engineering and Development Business Group before being appointed as the City Clerk in 2007. From 2012-2015 she also managed the Information Technology Department and was promoted to the Director of the Community Services Department in 2021 where she oversaw the City Clerk's Office, community grant programs, citywide special event coordination, and the City's sustainability efforts. In August 2023, Pam was promoted to Deputy City Manager.

Pam has a PhD in Public Administration from Northern Illinois University and served as an adjunct professor at NIU in the MPA Program.

ALEX GORYACHEV

Alex Goryachev is a globally recognized technology operations executive, a Wall Street Journal Bestselling author of "Fearless Innovation," and an expert in advancing innovation culture and monetizing new technology. With over 20 years of experience in the digital transformation industry, he has successfully commercialized emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and others, turning disruptive concepts into ecosystem-centric business operating models.

As the former General Manager of Global Innovation Centers and Managing Director of Innovation Strategy at Cisco, a \$50B technology giant, Alex pioneered the concept of ecosystem co-innovation. He created and led a global network of emerging technology innovation centers in North and South America, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, unifying and advancing strategic co-innovation partnerships and advanced technology programs with internal and external customers, partners, developers, academia, and governments.

In addition to his senior leadership roles in the Office of the Chief Architect and Technology Officer, Emerging Technology Group, and Corporate Development, Alex created award-winning employee innovation and development offerings, providing ~70,000 employees with meaningful opportunities to innovate, regardless of their grade or function. His extensive track record includes building and leading global cross-industry business and technology teams, focused on revenue and market share growth, customer acquisition, and profitability through new digital products and offerings.

Today, Alex is an Innovator-in-Residence at the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Tulane University, and a Technical Advisory Group member in the International Standards Association (ISO), defining global common standards for Innovation Management. He is a regular contributor to Forbes, Entrepreneur, and Chief Executive Magazine, and an Editorial Advisory Board Member for Innovation Leader Magazine.

HOLLY HOFFMAN

"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." —Holly Hoffman from *Your Winner Within*

Born and raised in Eureka, South Dakota, Holly Hoffman was the last remaining member of the Espada Tribe and the last woman standing on Season 21 of CBS' hit reality show "Survivor Nicaragua". Through that experience, and others throughout her life, Holly was inspired to share her message of positivity, determination and confidence with business leaders, teachers, and students across the nation.

A professional motivational speaker and the author of *Your Winner Within*, Holly acknowledges that life is made up of challenges, and we are oftentimes faced with situations that seem insurmountable. But within each of us is an ability to focus our thoughts, emotions, and energy to succeed—if only we have the knowledge, tools, and discipline to do so.

Holly's writing and speaking not only offer encouragement and optimism but a roadmap for self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment. Her methods—the ones she uses everyday in her own life—are intuitive, honest, and adaptable to nearly any situation. Readers and audience members alike walk away inspired to light the fire of successful living within themselves.

Today, Holly is a member of the National Speaker's Association and travels across the country, speaking to schools and universities, healthcare organizations, women's organizations, community leaders and business professionals. In her seven years of speaking, she has traveled to 36 states and been to 180 high schools. Holly inspires her audiences to take opportunities and focus on attitude, determination, confidence, desire, faith, and perseverance.

LAMAR JONES

Lamar Jones began working as the Assistant to the Village Manager for the Village of Lincolnwood in May of 2022. Prior to working for the Village of Lincolnwood, he worked for the Village of Elk Grove Village as the Assistant Director of Human Resources. Lamar has a Master of Public Administration from Northern Illinois University and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Indiana University. Throughout much of his career, Lamar has worked to coordinate Human Resources and Diversity Equity and Inclusion projects within the organizations he's served.

RACHEL JOY

Rachel Joy is the inaugural Director of the Equity and Engagement Department, for the City of Champaign. In her role, she also serves as the Chief Equity Officer for the City and oversees three divisions: community, outreach and engagement, DEI and community, safety, and justice. Prior to becoming director, she served as the Community Relations Manager/Compliance Officer in the City Manager's Office. Rachel holds a B.A. in political science from Wilberforce University and received her master's degree in human services from the University of Illinois at Springfield. Rachel has an extensive background in providing technical assistance for community development projects, compliance monitoring for minority participation in contracting, human rights investigating and program development. Rachel has been with the City of Champaign for 7 years.

HERBERT J. KLEIN

Herbert J. Klein is the President of Jacob & Klein, Ltd., focusing in areas relating to Government Law – representing both municipalities and other taxing districts; Economic Development Law; and Real Estate Law. Mr. Klein has extensive experience in all aspects of Tax Increment Financing and Business Development Districts. Mr. Klein received his undergraduate degree from Eastern Illinois University and his Juris Doctor from Northern Illinois University College of Law. Mr. Klein is a member of the Illinois State Bar Association, the Local Government Law Section Council of the Illinois State Bar Association, and Attorney's Title Guaranty Fund. He is also a member and past Chair of the Illinois State Bar

Association's Business Advice and Financial Planning Section, past member of the ISBA Assembly, and an Illinois Bar Foundation Fellow. Herb is a contributing author to attorney education publications and a frequent speaker at legal education conferences as well as at State and regional economic development conferences.

ANNE KRITZMIRE

Anne Kritzmire Is an experienced board member and marketing and finance professional, currently in her "second chapter". After over 3 decades across IBM, Abbott, and Nuveen Investments, she now brings her corporate and elected municipal leadership successes, curiosity, and problem-solving to help individuals and organizations develop and improve their skills in management, trust-based leadership, effective communications and change management.

Anne previously led integrated marketing programs for Nuveen's key product lines, including sales & marketing strategy, website development, public relations, thought leadership content, education, and strategic relationships. As a primary media spokesperson, Anne appeared in multiple publications including the Wall Street Journal, Barron's, Morningstar, and Bloomberg. She led Nuveen's first firm-wide customer relationship management system to serve over 200 professionals, increase sales revenue, profitability, and drive more efficient marketing and management decision-making. As a Long Grove (IL) village trustee, she leads the finance commission, overseeing budgets, audit, financial policies and procedures, and debt restructuring. She is also lead independent trustee for Thornburg's closed-end fund family.

Anne leads her own consulting firm and is on faculty at Lake Forest Graduate School of Management. When asked to describe herself in 6 words, Anne chose Curious lover of people and adventures.

DESMOND LOMAX

Desmond Lomax has a 20-year career in corrections, public safety, clinical services, and law enforcement. Desmond began their career in 2000 as a Sergeant in the Correctional Division of the Utah County Sheriff's Office. In 2013, they joined the Utah Department of Corrections where they served as the Community Programming Unit Director, Program Director/Therapist Supervisor, and Clinical Therapist. In 2012, they opened DNA Health Consultants, where they practiced mental health counseling for individuals, couples, and groups. In 2020, they joined The Arbinger Institute as Co-Director of Public Safety Practice/EDI expert and STEPS RECOVERY CENTER as Director of Clinical Services. At Arbinger, they have been an internal facilitator in Utah and have expanded their focus nationally and internationally.

Desmond Lomax obtained a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling/Counselor from the University of Phoenix between 2006 and 2009. Desmond also received a BA in Political Science from Brigham Young University between 1993 and 2003. In addition, Desmond has obtained a Leading with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Certificate from the University of Utah in February 2021, an EMDR Basic Training Certificate from Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs, Inc. in August 2018, a Certified Public Manager from the NATIONAL CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER CONSORTIUM in May 2018, an IACP Leadership in Police Organizations Certification from the International Association of Chiefs of Police in December 2008, and a Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC) from The National Board for Certified Counselors in September 2012.

JODI LUKA

Jodi Luka is currently the Community & Economic Development Director for the Village of Fox Lake. She is responsible for day-to-day operations of the entire department, but her passion is business recruitment and business retention. Jodi started her career in local government at Lake County after spending 13 years as a Certified Sign Language Interpreter. While working at Lake County as the Jury Commissioner, she earned her Master's Degree in Public Administration and Policy from American University. Upon completion of her degree, she joined the Village of Gurnee as a Management Analyst with the Fire Department and then the Community and Economic Development Departments. She recently joined the Village of Fox Lake and is excited to be part of an evolving community.

BEN MCCREADY

Benjamin McCready is the Assistant City Administrator / Director of Administrative Services at the City of Geneva, where is responsible for oversight of the City's Strategic Planning, Human Resource, and IT functions. Benjamin discovered his passion for local government while attending Augustana College and went on to earn a Master of Public Administration from Northern Illinois University. In addition to his work at the City of Geneva, he's gained invaluable experience taking on diverse assignments while serving communities in downstate Illinois and the Pacific Northwest. He currently serves as Chair of ILCMA's

Communications Committee and has been an active member of ILCMA and ICMA throughout his career.

STEVE MILLER

Steve is a graduate of the University of Missouri - Rolla, with a degree in engineering.

He previously worked at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency in Springfield, Illinois and has also worked for a private engineering firm (Jacobs Engineering) in Paducah, Kentucky.

Steve was employed by the City of Effingham as an Engineer on February 19, 2001 and was appointed as the City Engineer on May 1, 2001 and served in that role for approximately nine years before becoming the first Director of Public Works, and serving in that role for approximately another eight years.

Steve has served as the City Administrator since January 2019.

Steve is married to Amy, who is currently employed by the Effingham Unit 40 School District as a Guidance Counselor. They have two daughters Kathryn (who attended EIU) and Jessica (who attended SIU-Edwardsville) in obtaining their master's degrees in English and Business/Marketing Research respectively.

LAURA NEWMAN

Laura Newman has been the City Administrator for Batavia for seven years. Before joining the City of Batavia she worked in the private sector as a Vice President of Administration for a Japanese manufacturer. While Batavia began their DEI journey more than a year ago, Laura says she still feels like "We are just getting started."

RALPH NIKISCHER

Since 2007, I have been dedicated to local government, viewing it as the cornerstone of well-being in our communities. With a focus on modernizing processes, in my roles with the Village of Hinsdale, IL, and the City of Monterey, CA, I streamlined operations for better service delivery.

In 2018, I brought my expertise to the MGP team, blending technology and industry knowledge to drive positive outcomes for local government. Outside of work, I enjoy exploring with my two daughters, gaining a unique perspective that drives my commitment to a better future for both my family and our community.

DAVE NOBLE

David Noble is the Community Development Director for the City of Ottawa, Illinois where he has overseen their TIF program for 19 years. He is a licensed civil engineer who

graduated from the University of Illinois and worked as a consulting engineer representing municipalities and developers for the previous 20 years. Dave's responsibilities include obtaining and administering grants, overseeing city planning, permits and inspections, budgeting, economic development, and administering the Ottawa Enterprise Zone. During Dave's tenure, Ottawa has created four new TIF districts, obtained three legislative TIF extensions, created a new Enterprise Zone, received over \$40 Million in grants, developed an industrial park, and created over 1,200 new jobs.

CORY PORIS PLASCH

Cory Poris Plasch is an experienced local government and nonprofit leader passionate about helping the public sector and nonprofits achieve significant impact & results. Cory has a master's degree in public administration with an emphasis on leadership and strategic management from Northern Illinois University. She has served in various leadership positions in the public and private sector, including Executive Director of the Wisconsin City/County Management Association, Membership Director for the Alliance for Innovation, and most recently as Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at POLCO.

DR. SCOTT ROBINSON

Chair of the Department of Public Administration at Northern Illinois University. His work on emergency management and risk communication have been awarded the Kaufman Award from the American Political Science Association and the Newland Award from the American Society for Public Administration.

SCHENITA STEWART

Schenita Stewart has served as the Chief of Police for the City of Evanston since October 2022. She brings years of experience in both Executive Leadership and Police Operations. Schenita embraces a strong commitment to teamwork and continually creates goals to help her people and organization move forward.

Serving for over 24 years in law enforcement, Chief Stewart has dedicated much of her career with the Village of Lincolnwood Police Department. Her experience includes ensuring positive community partnerships, best practice policy implementation, budget development and implementation. Staff development and training focused on cultural sensitivity, internal investigations, labor-management relations, and accreditation standards (ILEAP).

Schenita is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP), where she serves as a member of the ILACP Rethinking Responses to Common Calls for Service Committee, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).

In addition, Chief Stewart holds a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Chicago State University and has been a team member on the North Regional Major Crimes Task Force (NORTAF) from 2008 to 2018 serving as Team leader 2014 to 2018. Schenita serves as a Mentor in The Charmm'd Foundation's Leadership Academy as a means to further helping others reach their full potential. Understanding the importance of building strong community relationships, Schenita currently teaches Community Relations to police recruits at the Suburban Law Enforcement Academy (SLEA).

SHARON TANNER

Sharon Tanner is the Human Resources Director for the Village of Glencoe. She has 18 years of experience in local government management and in Glencoe, she manages the newly-centralized human resources function. Sharon's path in local government taken her through several roles in the manager's office, starting as an intern in the Village of Hoffman Estates and most recently as the Assistant Village Manager in Glencoe, with stops along the way as a Management Analyst, Assistant to the Village Manager, Assistant Director of Human Resources and Deputy Director of Public Works in Glenview. Sharon is a values-driven professional who is especially interested in continuous improvement of organizations, both in the work done by organizations and in their capacity as an employer. Sharon is an active member of ICMA, ILCMA, the Illinois Public Employer Labor Relations Association and earned the ICMA Credentialed Manager designation and HRCI's Senior Professional in Human Resources credential. She is a proud Saint Louis University Billiken and NIU Husky, and an even more proud mom, runner and hobby baker.

CASSANDRA VOHS-DEMANN

Cassandra Vohs-Demann is a creative dream builder, dynamic leader, and business owner with over thirty years of experience as a coach, professional musician, performer, writer, composer, community builder, speaker, and producer. A Place to Shine Coaching draws from her years of experience to provide tools, resources, and support to help others build confidence to shine. Cassandra has a natural ability to connect with people and she is dedicated to helping her clients grow in all aspects of their lives.

Cassandra has also owned and operated her other company A Place to Shine Music for over thirty years. Her company serves as the umbrella for her performing arts school, production company, songwriting and performing career. Her dedication to building a vibrant music community earned her Woodstock Chamber of Commerce's Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2019. She served as vice chair of the Woodstock Arts Commission and currently serves on the Woodstock Opera House advisory commission as well as other committees that support the community.

Cassandra is a sought-after concert artist in the region for festivals, fundraising events and concert series and has released original music on all major platforms. She has composed or provided music for a number of nonprofit organizations to support their missions and is the Founder/Artistic Director of the Woodstock Community Choir, a 501c3 nonprofit

organization that was adopted by the City of Woodstock after less than 4 years. Believe in what is possible...

EVAN WALTER

Evan Walter is the Village Administrator of the Village of Burr Ridge. Mr. Walter has over 10 years of experience in local government and has served in his current role since 2020. Prior to his time in Burr Ridge, Mr. Walter began his career working for the Village of Glenview in a variety of roles as an intern and continued on to the City of Elgin for several years where he jointly worked out of the City Manager's Office and the Public Works Department.

DALENA WELKOMER

Dalena has been a member of Baird's public finance team since 2004. Her experience cuts across many types of debt financing including general obligation, special revenue, special district, water and sewer, and tax increment. She brings a depth of knowledge working on tax increment financings having served such issuers as the villages of Bedford Park, Bradley, Heyworth, Maple Park and Oswego and the cities of East Peoria, Streator and St. Charles. She serves on the Women in Public Finance Chicago Chapter Board of Directors and as a Regional Coordinator for the Downstate IGFOA Central Region. Dalena graduated magna cum laude from Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois where she received a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance with a minor in International Business and Economics.

ROBIN WEAVER

Robin Weaver is a retired city manager and a Senior Advisor with ICMA and ILCMA (Illinois City/County Management Assoc.) providing support services to members in a voluntary capacity. She has more than 35 years of local government experience including post-retirement consulting services and international work in Jordan and Kosovo. Robin's career path includes time as a Member in Career Transition (MICT). She is particularly experienced and focused on sustainability, citizen engagement, public works, coalition building and the recruitment/retention of talented people in the local government profession.

Robin actively serves with the ICMA International Committee, serves on the ICMA Awards Committee and also served on the ICMA Task Force to Guide Veterans transitioning to Local Government. She is an ICMA Coach and an ILCMA mentor. She has served as President and on many committees of both ILCMA and IAMMA. Additionally, she is a Board Director and Membership chair on the Legacy Project. The Legacy Project encourages women in local government. Awards include IAMMA's Outstanding Mentor Award (first recipient), the ILCMA Lifetime Achievement Award and she is an ICMA Life Member. In 2020 Robin received the Outstanding Service to the Profession Award from NIU. Volunteer community activities have been broad but now center on environmental advocacy, racial justice, Settlement of asylum seekers, voter registration and Multiple Myeloma coaching. Robin earned both her B.A. in Political Science and her MPA from Northern Illinois University. She teaches an Ethics course in the MPA program there.

Married with three grown children and 6 grandchildren she is active with family and friends and is an avid traveler.

Robin is passionate about excellence in local government and finds it fulfilling to provide assistance to members.

GARY WILLIAMS

Gary Williams has been Carbondale's City Manager since 2015 and has been with the City since 2011. He earned his Bachelors and MPA degrees from SIU, is a graduate of the Delta Leadership Institute, and became an ICMA credentialed manager in 2021. He currently serves on the ILCMA DEI Committee and the IML Municipal Managers Committee. When he's not working, he spends as much time as possible with his wife and two daughters exploring the great outdoors of southern Illinois.