



Leadership North Carolina Class XXIX

Duke Energy Economic Development Session

Beaufort and Carteret County

March 1-3, 2022

Speaker Directory

Mr. Wayne Justice

Special Activities Coordinator
North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores
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Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512
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Wayne Justice has served as Special Activities Coordinator at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores since 2006. He earned a B.S. in Marine Biology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in 2003. Wayne is a founding member of the Aquarium's Conservation Advisory Committee, Lead Biologist for the Aquarium Shark Tagging Program, and Coordinator for the Aquarium's Marine Mammal Stranding Program. Wayne is also an accomplished saltwater angler and PADI certified Divemaster. He enjoys spending his free time exploring uncharted waters surrounding his home in Morehead City, NC, with his wife and two kids.

Ms. Emily Foy

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Emily has been a Special Activities Coordinator at the Aquarium since January 2021. She received her B.S. in Biological Sciences from Clemson University in 2013. Over the course of her career, she has worked at several environmental education and outdoor recreation organizations all over the Southeast including the Department of Natural Resources in South Carolina, Seacamp in the Florida Keys, and most recently as the Director of School Programs and Summer Camps at the Chincoteague Bay Field Station in Virginia. When she's not at work, you can find Emily outside going for hikes, exploring new places, kayaking, or anywhere near the water!

The Honorable Machel Baker Sanders

Secretary

North Carolina Department of Commerce

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In February 2021, Governor Cooper appointed Secretary Machel Baker Sanders to lead the North Carolina Department of Commerce, enlisting her experience as former Administration Secretary, her strong background as a business leader, and her extensive knowledge of what it takes to build a globally competitive workforce. Secretary Sanders's vision for North Carolina's post-pandemic economic restoration is to work with partners to attract better paying jobs, support small businesses, and stimulate our state's innovation and entrepreneurial economy. Her bold and purposeful leadership aims to ensure North Carolina's diverse state is an inclusive one that works for all people.

Sanders brings 30 years of strong management and leadership experience to Commerce as a seasoned pharmaceutical and biotechnology executive, previously serving as vice president of manufacturing and general manager of Biogen's largest manufacturing facility in Research Triangle Park. She's also held leadership positions overseeing manufacturing, global quality assurance, and quality control functions at Biogen, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, and Diosynth-Akzo Nobel.

A graduate of North Carolina State University, Sanders holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a Master of Health Administration from Pfeiffer University. As a native North Carolinian and mother of twin daughters, she is passionate about improving the status of women in our state. Some of her work includes creating a Women's Innovation Network at Biogen and the Lady Cardinals STEM Program for High School students while at North Carolina Department of Administration. After all, as Sanders puts it, "Improving the status of women in North Carolina is not just a women's issue — it is a family, poverty, and economic issue."

Sanders is also a strong supporter of diversity, equity and inclusion, believing that "you can't be what you can't see." She previously served as the Chair of the North Carolina Commission on Inclusion, North Carolina Complete Count Commission, and the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force. Additionally, she serves on the Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Programs (ICCHP), the Commission of Indian Affairs, and the North Carolina State University Board of Visitors.

As North Carolina's Commerce Secretary, Sanders serves on many boards and commissions, including the Rural Infrastructure Authority, the board of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the NCWorks Commission, the state's Travel & Tourism Board, and the Carolinas Pandemic Preparedness Task Force. Sanders also serves on the boards of two public life science companies. At Radius Health based in Cambridge, MA, she sits on the Board of Directors and is a member of the Nominating Committee. At Novant, Inc., based in Research Triangle Park, she is a member of the Compensation Committee.

Secretary Sanders's experience and passion to improve the lives of North Carolinians uniquely positions her to lead North Carolina's portfolio of work in economic, community, and workforce development.

Mr. Christopher Chung

Chief Executive Officer
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In 2015, Christopher Chung joined the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) as Chief Executive Officer and brings more than 24 years of state-level economic development experience to the role. As a public-private partnership, the EDPNC is responsible for a number of economic development functions on behalf of the State of North Carolina, including new business recruitment, existing business support, international trade and export assistance, small business start-up counseling, and tourism, sports, and film promotion. With a staff of 70 professionals and an annual operating budget of more than \$25 million, the EDPNC is focused on improving the economic well-being and quality of life for North Carolina's more than 10 million residents. Since 2015, the EDPNC has helped North Carolina win more than 1,000 corporate expansion projects, resulting in nearly 133,000 announced new jobs and \$35 billion in announced new investment across the state.

Chris previously held various executive and management responsibilities at the Missouri Partnership (2007-2014) and the Ohio Department of Development, now known as JobsOhio (1997-2007). He attended The Ohio State University (OSU), graduating Phi Beta Kappa with a double-major in Japanese and economics. He also completed significant coursework towards a Master's in Public Policy and Management. Chris resides in Raleigh, North Carolina, with his wife Emily and daughter Elizabeth.

Mr. Gary Salamido

President and Chief Executive Officer
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Gary Salamido was named president and CEO of the NC Chamber in 2019. He has decades of experience and a proven track record representing North Carolina business interests at the N.C. General Assembly. Gary led the Chamber's lobbying, advocacy, and political efforts before being named its chief operating officer and acting president in 2018, then president and CEO in 2019. Gary's leadership in advancing policy at the NC Chamber has helped propel the state to the top of a number of best-in-business rankings.

Prior to joining the NC Chamber in 2011, Gary worked 19 years at GlaxoSmithKline, the last 10 years serving as GSK's director of state government affairs. A pharmacist by education, he obtained his Bachelor of Science in pharmacy from the Albany College of Pharmacy in Albany, NY, and a master's degree in pharmacy administration from the University of Texas at Austin. He has experience in hospital and community pharmacy practice and completed the American Pharmacists Association Foundation's Executive Residency in Association Management.

Gary resides in Raleigh, NC, with his wife, Lisa. They are proud parents and grandparents, with a daughter and son-in-law who are both NC State alumni, a son who is an Appalachian State University alumnus, a daughter who attends NC State University, a granddaughter, and a dachshund named Hugo.

Ms. Leah Friedman**LNC Class XXVIII Alumna and Alumni Representative**

Communications and Public Policy Consultant
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Leah is a communications and public policy consultant and business owner with more than 20 years of experience across corporate, government, and newspaper industries. As owner of Leah Friedman Consulting, she partners with clients to share her expertise in communications, public relations, strategic planning, and government relations.

As a reporter for 15 years, Leah learned to listen, ask questions, get curious, and be fearless. She uses these skills to advise senior leadership and build sustained relationships with clients, stakeholders, colleagues, and the community. Leah also owns Raleigh Green Gables, a professional organizing business, where she promotes the benefits of living with less to stay organized.

Leah serves on the board of NC Arts in Action, which brings free dance classes to 4th graders in Triangle public schools. She also serves on the board of the Exploris School. She lives in Raleigh with her husband, Stephen Feldman, their 14-year-old daughter, 12-year-old son, and her favorite child, Sage the dog (10). Eventually, she wants a farm in the NC Mountains, so she can rescue Great Danes and alpacas.

Dr. Laura Ullrich

Senior Regional Economist
Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
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Laura Ullrich is a senior regional economist at the Charlotte branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. Previously, Ullrich was associate dean for undergraduate programs and a professor of economics at Winthrop University. She earned a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Georgia and a master's and doctorate in economics from the University of Tennessee. Prior to graduate school, she worked as a business consultant for Ernst & Young, specializing in executive compensation determination. In 2014, she served as a Fulbright Scholar teaching economics in Kosovo and has spent considerable time working on local economic development issues in Bolivia.

Ullrich's research interests include higher education, school finance reform, local and state level tax and expenditure analyses, welfare policy, and the economic impact of local development. She is an active member of her community, currently serving on the Executive Committee of the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance. She also serves on the board of Family Promise of York County, the Rock Hill Technology Incubator, the Carolina Immigrant Alliance, and the Winthrop Eagle Club

Mr. Danya Perry

Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
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Danya Perry serves as the Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion with Wake County. In this role, Perry leads Wake County's efforts to advance diversity, build equity, and accelerate inclusion. Through creating a clear vision and providing strategic direction, Perry seeks to promote belonging and support working environments where all have an opportunity to succeed. Prior to joining Wake County, Perry held two critical leadership positions for the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce. He served as Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity, where he led the Triangle DEI Alliance, and as Director of Equitable Economic Development.

Mr. Girard Newkirk

Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer
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Girard Newkirk is the Co-Founder and CEO of Genesis Block, an organization focused on building entrepreneurial communities and creating inclusive environments that inspire creativity and community. He serves as a mentor and a business coach as well as filling leadership roles in organizations including the Cape Fear Collective, the Cape Fear Museum, the Cape Fear Community College IT Advisory Board, Wilmington Downtown Inc., and the Wilmington Arts Councils.

Girard was featured on Startup TV and in the documentary "Wilmington on Fire II." His awards and achievements include 2021 Genesis Block Coastal Entrepreneur, named 2020 Most Intriguing People by Greater Wilmington Business Journal, named 2020 Wilmington Biz Top 100, selected for the 2019 Google for Startups Black Founders Exchange, 2019 Coastal Entrepreneur Award Winner for Emerging Company, 2018 Global Goodwill Ambassador, and 2018 Startup World Cup Regional Champion, Nairobi, Kenya.

Ms. Joan Maxwell

President
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Joan grew up in rural Fairfield, NC. She graduated from Mattamuskeet High School and was the first person in her family to graduate from college. She earned a BA in History from the University of North Carolina. In 1988, Joan and her husband, Owen, founded Regulator Marine in an abandoned A&P Grocery Store in Edenton. Regulator now operates in a 121,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility, is one of the most well-respected brands in the boating industry, and has dealers both domestically and internationally.

In a historically male-dominated industry, Joan remains active in the boating industry's leading organization, the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), where she served as the first female Chairperson and was recently inducted into its Hall of Fame. She remains active with NMMA, serving on the boat manufacturer's divisional board.

In her local community, Joan has served as President of the Chamber of Commerce and currently serves on the Edenton Chowan Partnership. Joan focuses on learning innovative ways to improve the business that God has entrusted to her care. Currently, she is a member of C12, a Christian-based leaders' roundtable that focuses on building better businesses for a greater purpose.

Joan demonstrates and demands from her leadership team at Regulator Marine a high level of integrity and positive leadership. Her service is evident in her dedication to not only Regulator Marine, but also to the local community in which Regulator is located. Joan established a Volunteer Program at Regulator Marine that pays employees their regular wages during working hours while they volunteer their time and services to various local organizations of their choosing. In 2018, Joan established the "In His Service" program at Regulator, which oversees Regulator's charitable giving, as well as its employee emergency assistance fund. Joan's passion is to personally live out Regulator's core values and to lead her team to do the same.

Mr. Patrick Woodie

President

NC Rural Center

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Since 2013, Patrick Woodie has been the president of the NC Rural Center, introducing a new era of community engagement while remaining focused on its mission of promoting sound economic strategies in rural North Carolina. Patrick initially came to the Center as the vice president of programs after leading local and regional economic development initiatives in Western North Carolina. Patrick, raised in Alleghany County where he served as a county commissioner from 2000-2004, is a graduate of Wake Forest University and Wake Forest University School of Law.

Ms. Julie White

LNC Class XIX Alumna

Deputy Secretary for Multi-Modal Transportation

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Julie White is the NC Department of Transportation's Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation. In this role Julie oversees the Rail, Aviation, Ferry, and Integrated Mobility Divisions including over 800 employees and \$570 million a year in state and federal funds. Julie serves on the American Public Transportation Association Board of Directors and as the chair of the Southeast Rail Corridor Commission. She has over two decades of public service in state and local government. Julie was awarded the WTS Women in Transportation Community Advocate Award, the NCDOT Road Gang Award, and the Triangle Business Journal's Women in Business award. She earned a Master of Public Administration from NC State University and a Bachelor of Arts from Michigan State University.

Mr. Marshall Cherry**LNC Class XXVI Alumnus**

President and Chief Operating Officer
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Marshall Cherry has served at Roanoke Electric Cooperative located in northeastern North Carolina for over 29 years and has been the organization's President and CEO since December 2021. Prior to becoming the president and CEO, Cherry served as the chief operating officer since 2014. Throughout his tenure at Roanoke Electric, Marshall has gained broad experience in customer relations management, communications/public relations, information technology, organizational development, non-profit management, and economic development.

As Roanoke's new chief executive, Marshall looks forward to leading a robust four-year strategic plan labeled "Vision 2025." This plan will include advancing equitable energy efficiency financing, stimulating a market that increases electric vehicle transportation, engaging more member-owners to participate in the cooperative's deployment of smart energy devices, and completing the build out of a regional broadband network. During his service as chief operating officer and leading the organization's corporate strategy, Roanoke Electric was inducted in the Palladium Group's Hall of Fame for Executing Strategy.

Marshall received a B.S. in Business Administration from Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC. He is also a graduate of two of North Carolina's leading economic development leadership programs—North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center's Leadership Institute and Leadership North Carolina. He received an honorable discharge from the US Army Reserves after eight years of service. A father of five, Marshall and his wife, Cheryl, reside in Winterville, NC.

Mr. Ryan Nance**LNC Class XXI Alumnus**

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Since 2010, Ryan has served in economic development leadership roles from local to state-level, including electric utility and non-profit organizations. He is experienced in the business recruitment, foreign-direct investment, and product development aspects of the profession, with a particular focus on rural prosperity.

Ryan joined North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives in 2019 – supporting the 26 local cooperatives that serve more than 2.5 million members across 93 counties. Preceding that role, he was Director of Business Development for EDPNC, where he led efforts to proactively identify and cultivate new business prospects considering the state for new investment.

Born and raised in Lumberton, Ryan earned degrees from NC State, UNC-Chapel Hill, and is a proud graduate of LNC Class 21. He currently serves on the NC Economic Developers Association board, lives in Apex, and loves outdoor adventures with his two boys.

XXIX Economic Development Session Planning Committee

The following members of LNC Class XXVIII formed the committee to plan and implement the 2022 Class XXIX Economic Development session.

Erika Bell *Mecklenburg*

Community Development Regional Manager
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Erika W. Bell is the Community Development Regional Manager for the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond serving North Carolina and South Carolina. She joined the Federal Reserve in January 2020, bringing with her extensive experience in nonprofit management, youth development, community health, and work with low- and moderate-income individuals and families stemming from an 18-year stint in the nonprofit sector and in leading a small business. Prior to joining the Richmond Fed, Bell served as the chief operations officer of a South Carolina YMCA association (Upper Palmetto) with oversight over 16 branches. She holds a degree in mass communication from Winthrop University and is a member of Leadership North Carolina Class of XXVIII and of numerous community organizations.

She and her husband, Andy, celebrated their silver anniversary in 2021. They have 2 teen/young adult children. They reside on a family farm in South Carolina where she enjoys working on a summer vegetable and flower garden with her family.

Kelly Bennett *Wake*

Vice President, Total Rewards
Martin Marietta
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Kelly Bennett moved to North Carolina in October 2016 to begin a new job in Human Resources with Martin Marietta Materials (a publicly traded producer of building materials headquartered in Raleigh). She grew up in Phoenix, AZ, obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Spanish from Vanderbilt University in 2000, and obtained a Master of Business Administration degree from Harvard Business School in 2008. Kelly's career path has been a bit unique. She transitioned into the HR function when she moved to Raleigh after nearly 15 years working in corporate strategy and mergers and acquisitions. She currently serves as Martin Marietta's Vice President of Total Rewards, and her team is responsible for the company's compensation, benefits, and HR technology activities.

Outside of work, Kelly is an avid hiker and traveler. She loves exploring North Carolina's beautiful state parks on weekends, and she travels often to visit friends and family around the country (including her adorable nephews and niece who live in Seattle, WA). Kelly also enjoys pursuing opportunities to give back to the local community.

Andy Coe, Session Co-Chair *Wake*

Principal
Convergent Nonprofit Solutions
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With 25 years of for-profit and nonprofit experience, Andy is a highly skilled, well-respected, and exceptionally versatile professional. He is an equity principal of Convergent Nonprofit Solutions, a national consultancy focused on developing sustainable funding strategies and raising capital for organizations looking to improve involvement and investment from their constituencies. Andy's primary responsibility with Convergent is to create opportunities for the

firm to apply its unique philosophy about fundraising – known as Asking Rights – which includes a practical approach to working with executive and volunteer leadership to create short- and long-term goals that are ambitious but obtainable and always outcomes-based.

Having co-owned a multi-site small business and led the sales and marketing efforts for a global, multi-million dollar aerospace corporation, Andy understands that attention to detail, clear communication, tenacity, and resourcefulness are critical components to any successful endeavor. His ability to navigate the nuances of internal and external situational pressures has made him a favorite with clients. Andy enjoys long distance running, traveling, and attending sporting events. He and his family have lived in Cary, NC, for 13 years.

Jennifer Harriss, Session Co-Chair *Chowan*

Development Manager, Vidant Bertie Hospital, Vidant Chowan Hospital
Vidant Health

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Jennifer was born and raised in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. After graduating from Rocky Mount Senior High School, Jennifer attended the College of Charleston where she studied Historic Preservation and Community Planning. She went on to receive a Master of Arts Degree from Goucher College.

She is an active member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and the Edenton Garden Club and former President of the Friends of the Edenton State Historic Sites. She and her husband, District Court Judge Meader Harriss, love living in their historic home in downtown Hertford where they are raising two young sons.

Jennifer is currently the Manager of Vidant Bertie and Vidant Chowan Hospitals' Development Councils. She enjoys working with the hospital volunteers and in her free time you can usually find her cheering for her boys at the baseball field.

Naomi Irvin, Program Chair *Durham*

Chief of Staff - Government Markets
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Naomi Irvin is a California native who began calling North Carolina home in 2006. She earned her BSBA with a Management concentration and MBA with a Marketing certificate from East Carolina University (ECU). With nearly 15 years of health insurance experience, Naomi currently serves as Chief of Staff – Government Markets for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

An avid public speaker, Naomi has been invited to speak at various industry conferences nationwide on an array of topics including embedded compliance programs, effective oversight programs, brand and marketing compliance, leadership, and relationship building. In addition to speaking, she also chairs conferences and participates on conference committees and advisory boards.

When not working, Naomi enjoys spending time with her kids (Josh, Hayley, and Milena) and pup (Juliet Bean). One of the most rewarding things Naomi does with her family is volunteering with the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle and KABOOM!. A devourer and collector of books, Naomi retreats to her home office and packed bookshelves when she needs a break.

Todd Griffin *Catawba*

Director, Customer Experience and Delivery

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Todd is a 21+ year Cisco veteran in services delivery and sales. He has been responsible for helping customers define and implement network-related solutions to enable business success to drive the value realization of Cisco solutions. This includes operational excellence in service delivery execution to assure customer objectives and outcomes leading to faster time to value. He has led service delivery for some of Cisco's largest global customers including Bank of America, General Electric, and Walmart, among others. Todd has spent the last several years as the vertical lead for Retail, Logistics & Manufacturing in the Global Enterprise Theater and Manufacturing IoT in the Global Enterprise Segment. Recently, Todd has responsibility for Cisco's Key Accounts in the Northeast Region of the Global Enterprise Segment, which include Fortune 100 pharmaceuticals, financial services, and insurance companies.

Todd is known for innate skill in finding innovative solutions to overcome traditional obstacles and ability to strategically lead efforts in project management and implementation. He has led global deployments of Cisco's Collaboration, Core Networking, Data Center, Cloud Security, and Managed Services solutions. Todd is focused on delivering excellence through collaboration, mentorship, continuous improvement, and innovation and is valued for strong executive presence and ability to work with all levels of an organization and its stakeholders. Todd has been a leader in building cross-functional teams to achieve outstanding results.

Todd is active in his community, church, and supporting causes like ALS and St. Jude. Todd is a graduate of Appalachian State University in Information Systems. Todd lives in Conover, NC. He is married and has three sons. Todd enjoys all things outdoors including golf, water surfing, and snow skiing.

Syretta Hill *Durham*

Executive Director

StepUp Durham

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Syretta has served as the Executive Director of StepUp Durham, an employment training and placement nonprofit, since it opened its doors in September 2015. Prior to working at StepUp, she worked at Habitat for Humanity of Wake County, leading a community development initiative that resulted in increased civic engagement and decreased crime and garnered national attention.

Syretta's leadership philosophy is rooted in relationship building, asset-based development, and racial equity principles. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of South Florida and a master's degree from Temple University.

Natalie Jenkins Peel *Pasquotank*

Community Leadership Officer

North Carolina Community Foundation

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Natalie has been with the NC Community Foundation for over 9 years. She manages local affiliate foundation board success, strength, and growth in eastern North Carolina. Prior to joining NCCF, she held the position of Director of Visual Arts & Marketing for a Regional Arts Center. She attended Virginia Episcopal School and is a graduate of Meredith College.

She enjoys the arts, traveling, and fishing. She has served on several community-based boards including The Benjamin House and Elizabeth City Rotary Club and as a Vestry Member at Christ Episcopal Church. She and her husband are both from eastern North Carolina and are raising their three children in Elizabeth City.

Claudie Johnson *Out of State*
President and Chief Executive Officer
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Claudie Johnson Jr., CFP®, is President and Chief Executive Officer for 1st Choice Credit Union. As President and Chief Executive Officer, Johnson directs and leads the full range of business activities, including policy development, staffing, budget, operations, planning, and reporting. He is also responsible for creating and maintaining community development programs that enhance the Credit Union's reputation and support the vitality of the community they serve.

Prior to joining 1st Choice, he worked with Self-Help Credit Union as a VP Regional Manager where he led a five-branch network of branches to identify business development activities that advance local community economic development, programs, and activities. He also serves as an active participant in key community development and policy initiatives.

Claudie is also the Founder of JareMarc Advisors, a fee-only financial planning practice focused on retirement, wealth management, debt relief, and financial counseling. He began his career in Dayton, OH, as a management trainee at Society Bank, now Keybank. He subsequently held several key positions, including Vice President for its Private Banking Group. Moving to Charlotte, NC, in 1998, he joined First Union Bank as a Vice President for its Private Banking Group. After earning his Certified Financial Planning™ certification in 2004, he joined Merrill Lynch as a Senior Financial Advisor and later was recruited as a Wealth Management Advisor for Fifth Third Bank.

Claudie is a member of The Board of Trustees of Heidelberg University, a board member of The Charlotte Rescue Mission's Endowment Committee, Social Serve, and the Board of Visitors at Johnson C. Smith University. He has served on boards of various organizations, including Johnston YMCA, United Way, The Family Center, 100 Black Men of Charlotte, Summit House, and United Negro College Fund.

Claudie is a graduate of Leadership North Carolina Class XXVIII and was named to "Who's Who in Black Charlotte" in 2010. A native of Sidney, OH, Johnson holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Heidelberg College, where he was a four-year letter winner in basketball, the team's Most Valuable Player his senior year, and the school's second all-time leading scorer and first all-time in games played. He was elected to the school's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2017. Claudie and his life partner, Vivian, recently relocated to Atlanta and have two adult sons, Christian and Cameron.

Kevin Platé *Mecklenburg*
Senior Vice President, Levine Cancer Institute & Clinical Network Development
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Kevin Platé has been in healthcare administration for the past 23 years and currently serves as Senior Vice President at Atrium Health in Charlotte, NC. In 2010, he was asked to help design a new model of oncology care as part of Atrium's Levine Cancer Institute (LCI). LCI now has 27 locations ranging from the foothills to the coast of North Carolina, as well as Georgia and South Carolina. Throughout his time at Atrium, Kevin has established numerous

nationally recognized and award-winning programs and opened many new practice sites to support communities across NC.

Kevin received his bachelor's degree in Marketing from Clemson University, and his Master's in Business Administration from Gardner-Webb University. While taking part in Leadership North Carolina Class XXVIII, Kevin discovered his passion to get more involved in higher education and is now working towards his Doctorate of Education at Appalachian State University. In his personal time, he enjoys spending time with his three amazing daughters, playing guitar, and cheering on Clemson Tigers football!

Chester Williams *Halifax*

Chief Executive Officer

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Chester B. Williams is a 40-year-old Enfieldale in Enfield, NC. He is a 2002 graduate of North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University with a BS in Mathematics and BFA in Professional Theatre. He also matriculated at Indiana University to earn a Master's in Mathematical Physics. He has worked in education for over 10 years in Indiana, Virginia, and North Carolina, respectively.

Chester does exciting work to uplift the youth and communities in Halifax County and the Roanoke Valley in Northeastern North Carolina, creating opportunities for the youth to shape a healthier world in their own communities and beyond. Chester is the "Founder/Chief Empowerment Officer," and also supports the ABC2 World Changers, the youth of ABC2. Together they created a large Community Garden to provide fresh seasonal produce for the Enfield Farmer's Market. Proceeds from farm sales go directly to scholarships and training programs for the youth and teens in the community, continuing a loop of investment and commitment that is evident in all Williams's efforts. The World Changers also host Teen Unity Summits, bringing together young people to highlight social issues impacting teens today, as well as cooking classes with younger children and their families.

Chester is a visionary and a tireless optimist who stands beside his World Changers and helps facilitate the vision they have for a powerful and just future. He sees the community garden as a vehicle for everything from self-esteem building to financial literacy and service learning. Chester partners with numerous organizations and agencies and serves on numerous committees and boards—the Rural Health Group Board, Southeastern Halifax Coalition, and iCreate Art Initiative, to name a few—as he believes collective engagement and partnership are key to a vibrant and healthy community.

Julia Wright *Wake*

Economic Development and Local Government Manager

Dominion Energy North Carolina

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Julia Wright serves as an economic development and local government manager at Dominion Energy. Julia began her career in the natural gas industry in 1996. She has held a variety of roles and has a strong knowledge of the natural gas industry.

She is a graduate of Barton College with a BS in Accounting and holds a North Carolina Real Estate license. Julia is a long-time resident of Johnston County, residing in Clayton for over 23 years with her spouse. Reading and travel are her passions.