

Steering Committee Biographies

Environmental Mitigation Community Fund

anaïs peterson (anaïs//they)

Earthworks

anaïs is a queer, mixed race Asian American prose poet, lyric essayist, and organizer focused on fossil fuel extraction and the petrochemical buildout in Appalachia. anaïs is currently occupying Osage territory (Pittsburgh, Allegheny County) where anaïs graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in urban studies and English writing.

anaïs' writing explores themes of climate grief and rage, community care, gender and queerness, and imagining the possibilities of liberation.

anaïs is currently working as the digital content coordinator for Off Menu Press. anaïs is also currently the petrochemical campaigner for Earthworks where anaïs is working to slow and stop the building of petrochemical and fossil fuel infrastructure in the Ohio river valley.

Prior to joining Earthworks, anaïs worked extensively in the student fossil fuel divestment movement which included helping to coordinate Fossil Fuel Divestment Day in 2020 and organizing a 13-day occupation at the University of Pittsburgh. anaïs also has a background in training and political education as a sprog trainer with the Sierra Student Coalition.



Caleb Mussleman (he//him)

The SOMA Gathering

Caleb is a pastor at The SOMA Gathering church in Beaver Falls, Beaver County and an assistant coach for the Geneva College men's soccer team. He works in full-time campus ministry with the Coalition for Christian Outreach at Geneva College as the coordinator of campus ministries. He strives to provide a platform for service opportunities and community outreach for Geneva College student athletes. Caleb also spends time off the field developing the mental, emotional and spiritual identity of the players on the team. In addition, he heads up the Alumni Mentoring Network which focuses on matching alumni with juniors and seniors to provide professional and spiritual development.



Cheryl King, PhD (she//her)

Franklin Center

Cheryl is the executive director of the Franklin Center of Beaver County. Through the Franklin Center, she works to facilitate access to life-changing opportunities for the low-income, the underserved, and those in need.

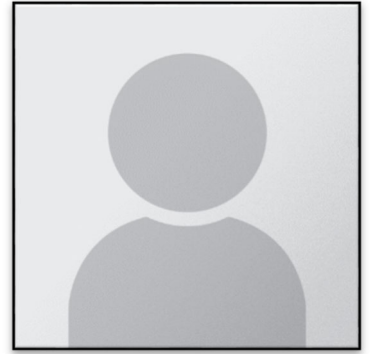


Cindy Gormley, PhD (she/hers)
Aliquippa Economic Development Corporation

Cindy is the executive director of the Aliquippa Economic Development Corporation. She believes that “no job is too challenging or time consuming. That’s the exciting part of it all!” Adding, “partnerships are a prerequisite for any project as well as community participation, planning, academic research, knowledge sharing and well-developed goals. To take skills and enhance a community is what I expect to achieve in every project.”

Cindy looks for motivating projects that most would walk away from and is willing to spend time organizing, structuring and leading a project and/or a staff to achieve higher goals.

Cindy says “success comes with patience, energy and knowledge. By creating the right staff and understanding the details, goals are accomplished. Humor is a requirement as well as people that are willing to go outside the "routine" or "norms". Progress is created by going above and beyond, which is what I specialize in.”



Daniel Rossi-Keen, PhD (he/him)
RiverWise

Daniel is the owner of eEquip Books, a community bookstore on Franklin Avenue in Aliquippa, Beaver County. Daniel is also the executive director of RiverWise, a nonprofit employing sustainable development practices to create a regional identity around the rivers of Beaver County. Daniel lives in Aliquippa with his wife, Pamela, and his four children.



Norman Mitry (he/him)
Heritage Valley Health System

Norman (Norm) is the president and chief executive officer at Heritage Valley Health System, which was founded in 2007 and currently includes approximately 3,800 employees and over 600 physicians. Norman graduated from RMU and is currently based in Aliquippa, Beaver County. He used to work at UPMC Health Plan.



Fernando Treviño (he/him)
Department of Environmental Protection

Fernando is the DEP's special deputy secretary for environmental justice. His work focuses on ensuring the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental policies, regulation, and laws; as well as with respect to the identification of environmental issues that affect the most vulnerable communities. Prior to the DEP he served as Pennsylvania state director for NDRC and Pennsylvania director of constituency outreach and partnerships for For Our Future. He also served as deputy executive director of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs in Philadelphia, where, among other responsibilities, managed the city's Language Access Program and acted as the Mayor's liaison to the Commission on African and Caribbean Immigrant Affairs, Commission on Asian-American Affairs, and other diverse coalitions. Fernando graduated from the UANL School of Law in Mexico and received a postgraduate certification on International and Comparative Law at Temple University's James E. Beasley School of Law.



Heather Hulton VanTassel, PhD (she/hers)
Three River Waterkeeper

Heather is an environmental conservationist passionate about nature-based solutions that lead to the sustainability of our planet and equality for all. Heather's passion began in a small rural community in western Pennsylvania and flourished as a first-generation college student at Carlow University majoring in biology. Heather went on to earn her doctorate degree in evolution, ecology, and organismal biology at The University in California, Riverside (UCR). Heather has held positions at UCR's Center for Conservation Biology as a research specialist, Audubon South Carolina as a program manager of sustainable solutions, The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina as the state conservation coordinator, and at The Carnegie Museum of Natural History as the assistant director of science and research. Heather has had formal training and certification as a master naturalist in South Carolina's low country, project management professional, wetland delineator, and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace practitioner. Heather has a strong passion for both the environment and equity and believes that working towards sustainability also requires an equal effort towards social environmental justice. In her free time, Heather enjoys hiking, spending time with her friends, family and pets, and (of course) recreating on our three rivers!



Kolbe Cole (she/hers)

TRAILS Ministries

Kolbe is a graduate of New Brighton High School and Youngstown State University. She currently lives and works in Beaver Falls, Beaver County and is very active in her community. She advocates for youth and members of her community to have a better standard of living and would like to advocate that for all residents of her community, and across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



Lisa DePaoli, PhD (she/hers)

Center for Coalfield Justice, DEP Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB)

Lisa (Coffield) DePaoli is the communications manager for the Center for Coalfield Justice. She grew up in rural Washington County, has family in both Washington and Greene Counties, and has always loved animals and spending time outdoors. A first-generation and nontraditional college student, her deep interest in human beings and ecology led her to earn a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh in 2012. She has worked on research projects and taught at the university level in the U.S. and in field schools in Latin America. The knowledge and experience she gained increased her concern for environmental and social justice issues, which she believes are best addressed at the local level, or from the "bottom up." Lisa works to understand issues from the local to the global, seeks to make a positive difference, and loves to talk to people about what interests or concerns them. In her free time, she enjoys reading, spending time with her family, "fur kids," and friends, and walking in the woods with her dogs.



Mary Lou Harju (she/hers)

United Way of Beaver County

Mary Lou is the executive director of United Way of Beaver County. With a career of over 25 years in human services, Harju understands the need for funding for local charitable organizations. She started her work in western Pennsylvania with Lutheran Senior Life, helping develop facilities in Beaver, Armstrong and Lawrence counties for more than 13 years. Harju also spent four years at Ambridge's Trinity School of Ministry, where she served as the school's director of marketing and communications.



Matt Mehalik, PhD (he/him)

Breathe Project

Matt serves as the executive director of the Breathe Project, a coalition of local residents, environmental advocates, public health professionals and academics advocating for healthier air for the Pittsburgh region. From 2007 to 2016, he served as program director for Sustainable Pittsburgh where he created Champions for Sustainability. Matt teaches environmental policy and community resiliency courses at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College since 2008. He has written multiple peer-reviewed publications in sustainability, design, and education and has co-authored "Ethical and Environmental Challenges to Engineering" with Michael E. Gorman and Patricia Werhane. Matt's Ph.D. is in systems engineering from the University of Virginia. He serves on the boards of Conservation Consultants International (CCI), Pine Richland School District, and Phipps Conservatory and chairs the Green Sanctuary Team at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the North Hills.



Roger Davis, PhD (he/him)

Community College of Beaver County

Roger serves as the president of the Community College of Beaver County. A resident of Rochester, Beaver County, he is an active community member in the region, cultivating a campus-wide sense of community growth and engagement. Dr. Davis is a board member of the March of Dimes Western Pennsylvania, the Beaver County Chamber of Commerce, Beaver County Educational Trust, Heritage Valley Health System, Beaver County Tourism Advisory Board, Flourish Beaver County Board, and The Franklin Center of Beaver County, where he currently serves as Board Chair. He also serves as a team evaluator for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), is a member of the Allegheny Conference/Pittsburgh Regional Alliance Talent Steering Committee, the Remake Learning Council, and as a board member for EntreEd, The National Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education. He also serves as an educational leader in several projects including the Build Back Better Regional Challenge. He is a dynamic speaker and is often called upon to speak at regional and national conferences and professional development programs. President Davis earned a doctoral degree in Urban Educational Leadership from Morgan State University, a Master of Science degree in adult education with honors from Coppin State College, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. His experience in non-profit, for-profit, traditional, and non-traditional institutions has included tenure at SUNY Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY, Bauder College in Atlanta, GA, University of Maryland Global Campus in Adelphi, MD, and Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD.



Seth Whitted (he/him)

Whitted Media, The Genesis Collective

Seth Whitted, aka WititWednesday, is a family man, creator, Hip Hop Artist, public speaker, and author. Seth is the producer of most of his work. Seth is also a writer, engineer, music producer, videographer, editor, and the marketing mind behind the entire movement. Seth is passionate about teaching young people how to actively listen to others develop conflict resolution strategies, practice empathy, and build their public speaking skills.



Terrie Baumgardner (she/hers)

Clean Air Council, Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC)

Terrie is the outreach coordinator for the Clean Air Council, a member-supported environmental organization, and a member of the Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC). She says she does this work “for my grandkids and the Earth, with thanks to the wonderful mentors/kindred spirits of BCMAC, CAC, and Breathe, who see fracking infrastructure for ‘the chemical plant being built around us’ (Cliff Lau) it is, and the monstrosity erected to rationalize it as an Ozymandias.”



Tom Torres (he/him)

Ohio River Valley Institute, DEP EJAB

Tom Torres is an organizer and nonprofit professional with a strong commitment to popular education and movement building. Originally from northeast Georgia, Tom’s work has spanned a number of rural communities, including the Deep South and Appalachia, and has focused on regional economic development, fighting climate change, and providing people with the tools and resources they need to build collective power in their communities.



Veronica Coptis (she//hers)

Taproot Earth

Veronica transformed the Center for Coalfield Justice to be rooted in local community members' experiences and led by those most impacted by the intersections of environmental and economic injustice. Through her leadership at the Center for Coalfield Justice, Veronica has helped in the formation of the Pennsylvania Climate Equity Table and the regional People Over Petrochemicals Coalition and advised many other movement formations to center traditionally neglected voices.

Veronica came into this work being directly impacted by a coal mine expansion in her rural community that rarely challenged the fossil fuel industry. Through waiting tables while in college, she heard story after story of how dirty energy extraction was impacting her neighbors, which inspired her to volunteer with the Center for Coalfield Justice. She then began organizing with the Mountain Watershed Association, helping communities facing the expansion of fracking in western Pennsylvania establish community groups to protect their water, air, and homes.

Veronica is a proud first-generation college graduate with a degree in biology from West Virginia University. Veronica lives in southwestern Pennsylvania with her husband and two children. She enjoys hiking and geocaching at Ryerson State Park and other areas around Greene County with her husband and daughter.

