



## Colorado Public Health Parks and Recreation Collaborative

### Speaker Biographies

**Alexis Romero** (Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment) Lexi is a Health Promotion Specialist working on a Health Disparities grant designed to improve connectedness, physical activity, pride, and safety in three (3) Pueblo County neighborhoods.

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**Angelina (AJ) Nelson** (Meadows Park Action Coalition) AJ is a junior home-schooled student within Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs. AJ serves as Vice-President of the Meadows Park Action Coalition and has served as an assistant coach in the Girls on the Run program since 2018. Hailing from an immediate and extended family of tobacco users, AJ is determined to not consume any tobacco or e-cigarette products and to educate and inform others of the negative health risks associated with them.

**Brian Kates** (City of Colorado Springs) Brian is the Co-founder of Colorado PHPR Collaborative. He has been with City of Colorado Springs employee since 1994. Brian has been the director at the Meadows Park Community Center since 1998. Brian has his Master's in Counseling and Human Services. He has made healthy eating and active living a cornerstone of the MPCC.

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**Colter DeWitt** (Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment) Colter is a Health Promotion Specialist working on a Communities That Care grant designed to promote Positive Youth Development and close access to youth-friendly spaces.

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**Gretchen Smith** (Boulder County Public Health) Gretchen has a Master's degree in Social Work and a background in engaging young people. She has a passion for social justice and health equity which brought her to work in tobacco prevention and public health. In her current role at Boulder County Public Health, she provides community education and engages youth in tobacco prevention and cessation. She is a Boulder County native and enjoys the outdoors with her dog, Rose.

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**Heather Kennedy** (Center for Public Health Practice at CU School for Public Health) Heather Kennedy, MPH, PhD, currently works at the Center for Public Health Practice at the Colorado School of Public Health as a Program Manager of two grants supporting youth-adult partnerships in tobacco control and mental health social action. Heather is a youth engagement activist and scholar. As an activist, she has created over a dozen youth leadership groups and engaged teens in local, state, and federal policy advocacy. As a scholar she is involved in a variety of community engaged research and teaching activities. She has several peer-reviewed publications advancing the knowledge base for high-quality youth-adult partnerships. At 17, Heather learned the power of her voice, and ever since she has been a stalwart advocate for supporting adults to engage youth authentically.

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**Julia Senecal** (Institute for Human-Animal Connection) Julia has a Master's degree in Social Work and is the Humane Education Programs Manager at the Institute for Human-Animal Connection within the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver. Senecal has engaged in research efforts exploring the impact of human-animal-environment interventions on the self-regulation capacities in youth with psychosocial challenges, the social capital implications of animal-welfare legislation, and the efficacy of humane education curriculum in building empathy in elementary school children. Julia is passionate about promoting the broader implementation of humane

education as a way to empower youth to engage in practices that support global and ecological stability, sustainability, and equality for humans, animals and the environment.

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**Jonathan Judge** (Rise Above Colorado) Jonathan is the Program Director at Rise Above Colorado. He designs, implements, and monitors the social media activity and leads large-scale community art projects across Colorado. Jonathan is an alumnus of the Peace Corps and holds a Bachelor's degree from University of Nebraska-Wesleyan, a Master's in International Studies from University of Denver, and he always returns his grocery carts.

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**Kevyn Glanton** (Meadows Park Action Coalition) Kevyn is a Sophomore at Palmer High School in Colorado Springs. He is the President of Meadows Park Action Coalition (MPAC). He is also a member of Young Marines. Kevyn is a survivor of organized gang involvement and is now committed towards improving his life and the life of others.

**Kristen Greenwald** (Mind Springs Health) Kristen has her Master's in Social Work from the University of Denver, with a Certificate in Animal-Assisted Social Work. She specializes in Child and Family Therapy. Kristen utilizes treatment modalities such as Play Therapy, Horticultural Therapy, CBT, DBT, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Narrative Therapy, and Motivational Interviewing. She specializes in the mental health benefits of human-nature connection. As a horticultural therapist Kristen has implemented youth and adult horticultural therapy programs for mental health centers, as well as the YMCA. In previous years she has participated in program development and research initiatives for humane education and mental health nature-based interventions for children.

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**Nariah Smith** (UpRISE and La Junta High School) Nariah is a senior at La Junta High School. She is a board member for UpRISE, state winner (2019) in the science fair, French horn player, poetry competitor in Speech and Debate, and minor operative for tobacco stings for the Rocky Ford and La Junta police department. Nariah is planning on attending CSU in Fort Collins in the fall to study to be a veterinarian. Nariah has 13 pigeons, and one mutt named Tommy.

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**Naomi Amaha- Gollnick** (American Heart Association) Naomi serves as the Vice-President of Health Strategies for the American Heart Association in Colorado. She previously oversaw state government relations operations across six states. Before joining the AHA, Naomi worked in the Washington D.C. area on public affairs and communications. Her career began when she served as an aide to a California State Assembly Member. Naomi holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology and Communications from the University of California, Davis. When Naomi is not working or volunteering, she enjoys traveling, working out, learning to ski, and spending time with her partner Cory and their four dachshunds.

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**Richie Harris** (Meadows Park Action Coalition) Richie is a junior at Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs and is an officer within the Meadows Park Action Coalition. With high interest in sports participation and spectating, Richie aspires to attend broadcasting school following graduation in 2022. He is actively involved in his high school and Meadows Park Community Center, where he is employed and works with elementary school-aged youth during out-of-school time programming.

**Vanessa St. Clair** (Boulder County Public Health) Vanessa has been working in tobacco control and prevention for over 5 years. She received her master's degree from the Colorado School of Public Health with a focus on community health. Her tobacco control and prevention experience has focused on smoke-free public and organizational policy initiatives in Boulder County. She lives in Golden and enjoys traveling and exploring the outdoors with her dog, Sebago.

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**Victoria Harwell** (Denver Public Health) Tori is a senior at Kent Denver School. She is a youth advisor at Denver Public Health that is working on Youth Sexual Violence Prevention and Youth engagement. She loves to hike and read in her free time.

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