



***Monday Keynote Speaker – Sponsored by Emerald Sponsor CoBank***

***Harry “Butch” Reynolds, Olympian, Gold Medalist, World Record Holder and Subject of the Award-Winning ESPN 30 for 30 Documentary “False Positive”***

Butch Reynolds was a 400-meter runner who competed at the 1988 and 1996 Olympics, winning a silver medal in the 400 in 1988 and a gold medal that same year in the 4x400 relay. A three-time gold medalist in the 4x400 relay at the World Championships, Reynolds helped U.S. teams win in 1987, 1993, and 1995. He also won silver medals in the 400 at the Worlds in 1993 and 1995 and a bronze in 1987. At the 1993 World Indoor Championships, Reynolds also won a gold medal in the 400.

One of Reynolds’ greatest accomplishments came in August 1988, where he ran 400 meters in 43.29 seconds – setting a world record that stood for over 11 years, bettering Lee Evans’ famed 400 world record set at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. In 1990, Reynolds was suspended for alleged drug use by the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF). He fought his suspension in court for almost two years. Eventually, his battle took him to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declared him eligible to compete at the 1992 Olympic Trials. Reynolds made the 4x400 relay team for the 1992 Olympics, but the IAAF would not allow him to run at the Olympics. Reynolds later won a libel suit against the IAAF in the U.S. court system, but the IAAF refused to recognize that verdict, and it was eventually overturned on appeal.

Reynolds is a graduate of The Ohio State University, where as a student-athlete he set a school and track record by running 44.10 seconds in the 400 at the Jesse Owens Invitational. Butch worked as a trainer and speed coach on the 2005-2006 Ohio State Buckeye Football Team that reached the National Championship game under then Head Coach Jim Tressel.

Today, Butch continues the fight to clear his name from the fraudulent tests. He trains athletes seeking to achieve their peak performance and manages the Butch Reynolds Care for Kids Foundation.

For more information go to [www.butchreynolds.com](http://www.butchreynolds.com) or contact Larry Lundy, President LMG at [llundy@lmg.com](mailto:llundy@lmg.com).

### **Monday Fireside Chat with FCC Commissioner Anna M. Gomez**

**Commissioner Anna M. Gomez** is the first Latina-American to be confirmed to the **FCC** in over two decades. She believes the FCC does best when its work honors the people it serves.

Commissioner Gomez is committed to ensuring we have a vibrant, strong, competitive telecommunications and media marketplace that promotes U.S. economic prosperity and security while also meeting the needs of all consumers.

There is much work to be done to ensure that every person in every community, regardless of geography or income, has access to high-speed broadband. She has experienced the fear of not being able to afford a telephone bill and knows what it means to risk the loss of connection. Ensuring that everyone in rural, Tribal, suburban, and urban communities can get and stay connected is critical to next-century success for us all. As a Latina American, she brings her perspective to the Commission on ways to address the needs of all communities—including the Latino community.

She knows we must be vigilant about protecting consumers. From spam calls and scam texts, to promoting localism and diverse media ownership, to ensuring the internet is open and that consumers can go where they want online without limits, Commissioner Gomez believes consumers' interests must lead communications policymaking. That also means ensuring our first responders can communicate in times of crisis. Her years of working with public safety leaders and first responders has given her an appreciation of their unique—and vital—communications needs. It also means ensuring our connections are secure and resilient.

Anna brings over 30 years of public and private sector experience in domestic and international communications law and policy to her position. Commissioner Gomez most recently served as a Senior Advisor for International Information and Communications Policy in the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy at the Department of State where she led U.S. preparations for the International Telecommunication Union World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC-23).

She served as the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Deputy Administrator from 2009 to 2013, where she led efforts that resulted in a new \$7 billion public safety broadband network program. She also served for 12 years in various positions at the FCC, including as Deputy Chief of the International Bureau and as Senior Legal Advisor to then-Chairman William E. Kennard. Commissioner Gomez also served briefly as Counsel to the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Subcommittee on Communication, and as Deputy Chief of Staff of the National Economic Council during the Clinton Administration. Prior to joining the State Department in 2023, Commissioner Gomez worked in private practice focusing on telecommunications law.

Born in Orlando, Florida, Commissioner Gomez spent her childhood in Bogota, Colombia before her family relocated to New Jersey. She now resides in Virginia. Commissioner

Gomez earned her B.A. in Pre-Law from Pennsylvania State University and her J.D. from George Washington University Law School.

### ***Tuesday Comedian – Sponsored by Aldrich Advisors***

#### ***Cam Bertrad, Comedian and Season 16 Finalist America's Got Talent Contestant***

Cam Bertrand (stand-up comedian originally from Tampa Florida) is one of the fastest rising comedy stars in the country. Cam's comedy can best be described as "sophisticated ignorance". He prides himself on being able to turn even the dumbest conversations into ones that will have you up late at night asking yourself "What is that .01% of germs that GermX can't kill after all this time?!.."

He's opened for some of the biggest names in comedy today including Bert Kreischer, Joe Rogan, Pete Davidson, Michael Che, and Mike Epps. He was a contributing writer on two seasons of MTV's Wild'N'Out (Seasons 11 and 12), has over 100 million views on TikTok (@camthecomical) and his recent Dry Bar Comedy special has been seen by millions online. In 2021 Cam became a finalist on season 16 of NBC's America's Got Talent!

***Dr. William Aderholdt*** is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of ***Grand Farm***, a non-profit organization energizing and guiding an innovation ecosystem to solve challenges in agriculture. William joined Grand Farm in 2019 as it was getting started and was the first hire of the initiative. He helped develop and establish the strategic vision and programs that he now has the opportunity to lead through the immense effort of an extremely talented team. Grand Farm, providing a fresh approach to innovation ecosystems, has been the lead, co-lead, and a consortium member on many of the economic resiliency federal programs established in response to COVID-19 – including NSF Engine Type II, EDA Good Jobs Challenge, and EDA Tech Hubs. It has a nearly 600-acre Innovation Campus in Casselton, North Dakota, where the initiative is headquartered, and teams starting in Georgia and Montana. William is passionate about the process of innovation — how collaboration, competition, and collision work in chorus to inevitably lead to solutions to the world's largest challenges. A process which has repeated itself countless times throughout human history, all around the world.

William, his wife Lana, and their two children call Fargo, North Dakota home. Fargo and North Dakota captivated Lana and William during the Fargo Marathon in 2016, during which the decision was made to move there from Montana. William was drawn to the community because it was large enough to make a global impact and small enough to have focus. He earned both his PhD and master's in education, and a B.S. in Cell Biology and Neuroscience from Montana State University. While completing his dissertation, he learned software development and data science – providing a foundation of understanding in emerging technologies he now uses every day in his work.

***Michelle Begemann***, Vice President of Sales, MidAmerica, ***Cigna HealthCare*** has over 20 years of experience in employer sponsored health care benefits in the Kansas City area and other markets. The experience she exudes includes marketing, business to business sales, Third Party Administration, Public & Labor, leadership, and overall client and broker partner relationships. Starting her career on the broker side has always given her a

different outlook when working with the broker partners, as she understands their need for information to help ensure everyone has a clear vision of what is available. Having extensive sales background where she focused on small groups, up to national account size groups, her intent is to make sure each client and/or potential client is comfortable and values the long-term partnership.

As the Vice President of Sales, she is focused on developing her sales teams with knowledge and help ensure they have successful sales cycles. Michelle attended Baker University where she received a Bachelor of Science in Business Management. She currently lives in the Kansas City area with her husband and children and three dogs.

**Rhonda Chatham** has an appreciation and love for rural communications. She grew up with her father, Roger Futch, working in a rural telecom company. Seeing first-hand the challenges and rewards of serving a rural community with the highest technology possible has allowed her to combine industry passion with her business skills. Her role requires leadership, organization and relationship building as well as business management skills. She also spends a great deal of time on industry education of political powers and relationship building to benefit the membership of the **GTBA**.

Rhonda was appointed by Governor Brian Kemp to serve on the Georgia Emergency Communications Agency (GECA) Board and serves on the Georgia Broadband Advisory Board as well as the BEAD- Digital Equity Task Force.

Rhonda earned a Bachelor of Business Administration with concentration in Accounting from North Georgia College, which is now University of North Georgia. She believes using technology to connect people is essential for all communities to thrive and grow.

**Volodymyr "V" Chornodolsky** currently serves as Business Development Partner at **Nokia** in the Broadband Partners group. V has worked in the telecommunications industry for the past 10 years. He has had the opportunity to spend time in many of the rural communities and has fiercely advocated for their quest to bridge the digital divide and bring broadband to all corners of this country. V is skilled in negotiation, sales, and management with a Bachelor of Science (BS) focused on Political Science and Government from The Catholic University of America.

V has been active in broadband national associations, serving on the Board of WTA which proudly represents more than 360 rural telecommunications companies throughout the United States and over 85 industry vendors. V also serves as the Chair of the Associate Member Committee and on the Board of BroadbandMT (formerly The Montana Telecommunications Association) which represents the locally owned, rural telecom/broadband providers of Montana. V previously served on the Alaska Telecommunications Associate Committee.

When not traveling to industry events or customer visits V enjoys spending time with his wife Veronica, Daughter, Sonia and Son, Bohdan outside of Richmond, VA. On most mornings you can find him on his Peloton putting in the miles!

**Dan Dahl** joined **UNITEL** in 2022 and brought with him nearly ten years of experience in the insurance industry. Prior to UNITEL he served as a regional sales director for one of the largest financial and employee benefits brokerages in the state where he helped businesses enhance their executive and employee benefit programs.

With over a decade of experience in the industry, Kipp Kissinger specializes in Self-Funded Health solutions. His expertise encompasses developing tailored benefits strategies that enhance organizational health and cost efficiency. Kipp is dedicated to empowering clients with innovative approaches to employee benefits, ensuring they navigate the complexities of healthcare with confidence and clarity.

**Gerard J. Duffy** has been Regulatory Counsel for **WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband** since its formation and was counsel to WTA's Western Alliance predecessor. He has long focused on rural telecommunications issues and has experience with commercial mobile radio, Internet, and cable television matters.

Gerry was born and raised in Rochester, New York. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Villanova University and a Juris Doctor (with honors) degree from the George Washington University Law School. He also holds graduate degrees in economics from the University of Illinois and in accounting from Virginia Tech.

Gerry and his wife Janette reside in not-so-rural Bethesda, Maryland and are the proud parents of Maureen, Christopher, Daniel and Katie, and the even prouder grandparents of Colin, Julia, Chelsea, Hunter and Emma.

**Godfrey Enjady** started **Mescalero Apache Telecom, Inc. (MATI)** in Mescalero, NM and has served as its General Manager since its formation on August 4, 2000. Mr. Enjady additionally serves in the following positions: President of the National Tribal Telecommunications Association, Member of the FCC Tribal Broadband Task Force, Chairman of the Tribal Affairs Task Force for the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association, Chairman of the Tribal Affairs Committee for WTA, Member of the Connect New Mexico Council. Mr. Enjady previously served as a member of the FCC Intergovernmental Advisory Committee. Mr. Enjady has previously testified numerous times before Senate Indian Affairs Committees and has had countless meetings with Congress and the FCC advocating for Tribal Telecommunications issues.

**Evan Feinman** is the director of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, the primary program deploying broadband created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. He has previously served in multiple roles within government, on political campaigns, and in the private sector; most recently directing both the Virginia broadband effort and a state economic development agency. Evan received his bachelor's degree from UVA, his law degree from Washington and Lee, and has been awarded multiple public policy fellowships. Evan lives in Richmond, VA with his wife Annalisa Feinman, a Richmond public defender, and his two children, Bennett and Betsy.

**Mark Gailey** is President and General Manager of **Totah Communications, Inc.** headquartered in Ochelata, Oklahoma. He has been employed with Totah since 1996.

Totah Telephone Company was started in 1954. His Father Jess was President and General Manager from 1966 to 1998. His Mother Marilyn also worked in the front office of Totah while Mark was growing up. Mark grew up in the telephone business starting at the ground level in yard maintenance. He progressed into install and repair, construction, cable splicing and minor switching work. He was employed by Contel of Arkansas, later GTE Arkansas, from 1987 until 1996. He graduated from Oklahoma State University 1987 with a BS in Business Administration. Majoring in Marketing and Management.

Mark is active in a number of associations. He serves on the Board of Directors of WTA and is a Past President. Currently serves as the PPC Co-Chair. He served on the board of Directors of OPASTCO and as Chairman in 2009. He has also served on the Board of Directors of Kansas Telecommunications Industry Association, Kansas Rural Independent Telecommunications Association, and Oklahoma Telephone Association. He is past chairman of KTIA and KRITC and past president and treasurer of OTA. He currently serves as Secretary of the Oklahoma Telephone Association. He has served on the Board of NTCA, Serves on the Industry Committee. He is on the Leadership committee of US Telecom.

He is also involved in various Committees and social activities in and around his hometown of Ochelata, OK. He serves on the Convention Visitor's Bureau of Bartlesville. He has served as Vice Chairman of the Board of the Bartlesville Development Corporation and the Chairman of Washington County Industrial Trust Authority. He has also served on the local advisory board of BancFirst Bartlesville Branch. He has supported local youth in sports as a coach and referee. He and wife Angie actively support Caney Valley Schools. Mark served recently on the advisory group to get the school bond passed for upgrades at the Caney Valley School's campus and Athletic facilities in Ochelata and Ramona Oklahoma. He and Angie also support the CV Band, CV Cheer, CV Yearbook, and various sports.

Mark and Angie were married June 1987 and have five children. He and Angie are active Church members of New Harmony Baptist Church. Mark currently serves as Chairman of Deacons, Sunday School Director, on the Stewardship/Finance Committee, the Missions Committee, Youth Committee, Church Council, and the Long-Range Planning Committee.

**Mitch Gailey** is General Manager of **Totah Communications**

**Martha Galley** is the Chief Sustainability Officer at **Calix**. This function furthers the goals regarding issues that drive three areas: 1) Our Culture: leading initiatives related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, 2) Our industry: advancing women in telecom with the founding of the Women @ Calix Employee Resource Group, 3) The world at large: growing our environmental and sustainability efforts.

Previously, Martha was the chief customer success officer responsible for helping customers successfully adopt and realize value from their investments in our strategic

products and platform. Her team included Global Support, Customer Success, Education and Professional Services along with Renewals.

Prior to this, she held leadership positions at Digital Equipment Corporation, Microsoft, and Salesforce.

At Salesforce, her team built the Global Programs, Services and Content Assets for Customer Success, driving adoption for over 200K customers world-wide for Sales, Marketing, and Support cloud products as well as developer tools, with an annual renewal portfolio over \$800M.

At Microsoft, Martha ran enterprise sales for the majority of her tenure as GM of the business with Verizon, then leading the sales teams for the western US portfolio of telecommunications, media and entertainment companies, with full P&L responsibility of sell-to and sell-through business. In her last role with Microsoft, Martha built the Telco Partner Channel and Go-to-Market strategy for launching Office365 as part of Value-Added bundles to Small Business customers across all major markets in Latin and South America.

She is a graduate of Smith College where she serves on the Presidential Board and is a published scientific author.

**Carrie Hackenberger** is an experienced public policy advocate whose skill in the legislative, regulatory and campaign process guides clients through complex challenges and creates valuable opportunities. She joined HBS Colorado in February 2022 after serving as Associate Director of the American Petroleum Institute Colorado where she helped lead the organization's legislative and policy efforts across the state. Carrie serves HBS Colorado, along with HBS's multi-state offerings. Carrie took over as Executive Director for the **Colorado Telecommunications Association** in July 2023.

Carrie's primary area of expertise is telecommunications, environmental and energy-related policy, regulatory and legislative issues. Carrie is a respected strategic advisor in both Colorado and across the country for a multitude of sectors, whether it be telecommunications, marijuana, agriculture, financial services and more. She was recognized by the *Denver Business Journal* in its 2020 list of Outstanding Women in Business and as a 40 under 40 in 2022.

Prior to joining API Colorado Carrie served on the staff at Rockwell Automation, an industrial automation company in Denver.

Carrie is a proud Colorado native and earned her bachelor's in business administration and computer information systems from Colorado State University and a master's in global energy management from the University of Colorado in Denver. She is an alumni of the Colorado Agriculture Leadership Program and a staunch advocate for rural communities.

**Cassidy Hjelmstad** is the Chief Executive Officer/General Manager of **SRT**, North Dakota's largest telecommunications cooperative. She champions economic development for the

region, digital inclusion and education for customers, advocacy for telecommunications at state and national levels, and financial stability for the health of the broadband cooperative and its employees and members. While serving as SRT's Chief Marketing Officer, Cassidy successfully advanced SRT's business goals, built its brand, and positioned SRT for its next phase of broadband growth.

Prior to joining SRT in 2010, Cassidy was Director of Community Relations for the Phoenix Suns. She earned a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications-Journalism, and Communications Studies from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Cassidy is a Member of the NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association Government Affairs Committee and NTCA Smart Rural Community Advisory Committee; Board Chair of the Minot Area Chamber Economic Development Corporation; Board Vice Chair of Prairie Grit Adaptive Sports; an Honorary Commander with the Minot Air Force Base 91st Missile Wing; Chair of the Broadband Association of North Dakota (BAND) Marketing Committee; and Board Member of DCN and NISC.

Originally from Newburg, North Dakota, Cassidy and her husband, Travis, live in Minot with their three children: TJ, Thomas, and Claire.

**Evelyn Jerden** is the Senior VP-Regulatory Dynamics of the **LICT Corporation** which owns 15 small, rural ILECs ranging from 600 to 6,000 access lines. Evelyn is a CPA who has worked on Rural Local Exchange Carrier issues since 1979. Evelyn began her telecommunications career with Ernst & Young's Telecommunications Group prior to joining Western New Mexico Telephone Company, a subsidiary of LICT, in 1992 as the Director of Revenue Requirements. She is a Subset 2 representative of the NECA Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the NECA Board Common Line/Traffic Sensitive Committee. She is a member of NECA's Cost Issues Task Group and Co-Chairperson of the Western Telecommunications Alliance's Public Policy Committee. She was a member of the Rural Task Force appointed by the Federal/State Joint Board on Universal Service to review the universal service support mechanisms for RLECs. Evelyn has participated on various RLEC industry associations' USF, separations, and intercarrier compensation committees. She has taught seminars and spoken at numerous conferences on these topics and has testified in front of state commissions.

**Jeff Johnston** is a lead communications economist in **CoBank's Knowledge Exchange Research Division**, where he focuses on the communications industry. His work revolves around identifying emerging technologies, business models, risks and opportunities within the industry, and providing strategic analyses to both internal and external stakeholders.

Prior to joining CoBank in 2018, Mr. Johnston was an equity analyst covering the tech, media and telecom sectors. Jeff has also held various senior management positions in the telecommunications industry. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from York University, and he is also CFA charterholder.



**Larry Jones** is Vice President/Chief Financial Officer for **Chickasaw Holding Companies** and has almost 35 years of experience in telecommunications, specializing in regulatory advocacy. Early in his career, he served on the Oklahoma Toll Pool Steering Committee, the Oklahoma High Cost Board and numerous other state committees. Other opportunities have included: serving as Chairman of the Board for the Oklahoma Telephone Association twice, Treasurer of the OTA, chairman of the OTA Economic Development Committee, serving on the OTA Accounting and Finance committee, serving on the OTA legislative committee, and serving as Convention Chairman for the Oklahoma Telephone Association Summer Conventions in 2000 and 2005. Larry was elected to the Oklahoma Telephone Association Hall of Fame in 2005 and in 2024 was awarded the OTA Bill Barnes Award, which is the highest honor awarded by the OTA. Larry currently serves on the Board of Directors for WTA - Advocates for Rural Broadband, the Government Affairs Committee for NTCA, and the Leadership Council for US Telecom. Larry has been at the forefront of advocacy for USF contribution reform to include those who financially benefit the most from our investment in broadband.

Larry is very involved in the local community, serving as Chairman of the Board of Arbuckle Memorial Hospital for over 30 years. He is a member of the Sulphur Chamber of Commerce and has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors. He is a member of the Sulphur Noon Kiwanis Club and has served many positions including: President (earning recognition as Outstanding Club President), Vice-President, Treasurer, and Board Member. He currently serves as a Committee Member of the Chickasaw Scholarship Trust.

Larry is a member of the First Christian Church of Sulphur and has served in many capacities. He currently serves as an Elder, Sunday School teacher and as Church Board Chairman. Larry and his wife Jan have two children: Josh Jones and wife Amanda of Sulphur and Melissa Pembroke and husband Zac of Mustang, and four grandchildren: Gwen Jones and wife Graycyn, Season Jones, Ella Pembroke, and Eli Pembroke along with one great-granddaughter Alice Jones. Larry is an avid (although terrible) golfer and enjoys travel and mystery novels.

**Thomas J. Karalis** is a native of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Fluent in six languages, Tom received his Bachelor of Arts in Communications at Drummondville College in Drummondville, Quebec, Canada. He continued his post-graduate studies in Business/Corporate-Communications at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

After College, Tom played professional hockey for 13 years in the U.S. and in Europe. He played on 3 Championship teams, was named Captain and was a 3 time All-Star.

After retirement, and 20 years in the industry, Tom became the EVP of **OTA - The Oklahoma Rural Broadband Association** in 2019. Tom has been involved in the State and Federal arena promoting rural issues, has presented at Industry forums and has served on State and Federal groups advocating the importance of rural Telephony. Tom is also the Oklahoma Administrator for TRS Relay Services. Finally, Tom proudly became a US Citizen in 2015. Tom is an avid golfer and loves to travel with his kids.

**Eric Keber** is Vice President of Government Affairs at **WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband**. He works in WTA’s Washington, D.C. office representing WTA’s member companies’ interests on Capitol Hill and at various federal agencies. Before beginning his work for WTA in 2007, Eric spent seven years working on Capitol Hill for two members of Congress.

Eric is a graduate of Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA. He grew up in New Jersey and currently resides in Alexandria, Virginia with his wife and two daughters.

**Kipp Kissinger, UNITEL** has over a decade of experience in the industry. He specializes in Self-Funded Health solutions. His expertise encompasses developing tailored benefits strategies that enhance organizational health and cost efficiency. Kipp is dedicated to empowering clients with innovative approaches to employee benefits, ensuring they navigate the complexities of healthcare with confidence and clarity.

**Catherine Moyer** is the General Manager and CEO for **Pioneer Communications**, a telephone and communications company that serves residents and businesses across southwestern Kansas. Catherine currently serves on the CoBank board of directors and is chair of the board’s Compensation and Human Resources Committee. She serves as Chairman of the board of directors of Telcom Insurance Group, is the Chairman of Rural Trust Insurance Company, and is the Chairman of the Kansas Lottery Commission. Catherine is the Past Chairman of the Communications Coalition of Kansas. And she serves on the Farm Credit Council Board. She is a past board member of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, and past chairman of the board of directors of OPASTCO, a telecommunications trade association that was joined with NTCA. Catherine holds a bachelor’s degree from Middlebury College in Vermont and a law degree from Washburn University.

**Christine O’Connor** serves as the Executive Director of the **Alaska Telecom Association**. She has worked in strategic and leadership roles in Alaska’s telecom industry for over 20 years, beginning when she was elected Board President for Nushagak Cooperative in Dillingham, Alaska. Her later work at Matanuska Telecom Association included sales, regulatory, and financial matters. She has served as executive director for Alaska Telecom Association for 10 years, supporting Alaska’s telecommunications providers and advocating for expanded broadband service. Christine’s roots and experience in rural Alaska have given her a deep commitment to broadband access for all Alaskans, as well as appreciation of the unique challenges involved.

Christine is a lifelong Alaskan and a graduate of Alaska Pacific University. She returns to Bristol Bay with her family every summer to setnet in the greatest sustainable salmon fishery in the world.

**Derrick B. Owens** is Senior Vice President of Government & Industry Affairs at **WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband**. He manages WTA’s Washington, DC office and is responsible for working with Congress, Executive Branch agencies, and the Federal Communications Commission. He also serves as the association’s lead spokesperson on

policy matters and is responsible for WTA's industry outreach efforts. Derrick also serves as staff director for WTA's public policy committee where he works directly with the membership to develop policy positions on legislation and regulations affecting rural telecommunications companies.

Prior to joining the WTA's staff, Derrick worked at the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) where he served in a number of senior-level advisory positions. Prior to NTIA, Derrick worked for his hometown Congressman in Washington, DC serving as an advisor on telecommunications and other legislative matters.

Derrick has a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. Derrick serves on several boards of directors and is a member of both his college and high school athletic halls of fame.

**Ryan Ponder** is Vice President of Legal, Regulatory, and Government Affairs of **Matanuska Telecom Association, Inc. (MTA)**. He oversees legal, regulatory, government and tribal affairs, contracts, grants, and community initiatives. During his seven years at MTA, Ryan led the legal team responsible for deploying AlCan ONE, the first all terrestrial, international cross-border fiber network connecting Alaska to the contiguous United States; he's been instrumental in getting significant legislation passed in the State Legislature, and most recently, he supported the efforts of MTA's CEO, Michael Burke, working with the FCC to extend the Alaska Plan, now known as the Alaska Connect Fund. Ryan currently serves on the boards of both Alasconnect, Inc. and Alpenglow Networks, Inc.

Before joining MTA, Ryan spent four years at the Regulatory Commission of Alaska. He frequently leverages his experience from serving on a six-person special operations team in Iraq from March 2003-2004, where he focused on identifying, disrupting, and neutralizing threats within the Sunni Triangle's civil component. After returning from Iraq, Ryan worked on Capitol Hill, earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Brigham Young University and a law degree from the University of Missouri Kansas City. Ryan is also a proud father of six children, whose ages range from 15 years to 7 months.

**Mark Sloan**, Client Manager, **Cigna HealthCare** has over 30 years of experience in employer sponsored health care benefits in the Kansas City metro area. His experience includes underwriting, data analysis, marketing, and direct client management. His market knowledge and healthcare background have made him a valued partner to his clients and internal colleagues. As a Client Manager, Mark is responsible for the on-going management and retention of many valued clients.

His clients have multi-line products including Medical, Consumer Driven Health Plans (HRA/HSA), dental, prescription drug, behavioral care programs and Stop Loss coverages. Responsibilities include overall client satisfaction, financial plan performance, product offering portfolio and strategic consultation. This entails working with his clients to ensure

Cigna's clinical and technical resources are utilized appropriately to provide for optimal plan performance.

Mark attended the University of Nebraska as well as the Bloch Leadership Academy. Mark lives in the Kansas City area and cheers for the Huskers, Chiefs and Royals.

**Matthew Smith, Seemless Transition LLC** is the world leader in creating and building cybersecurity and AI frameworks. He brings over 15 years of experience in writing and implementing visible, industry recognized standards while also building sector, national, and international coalitions. Matthew led the contract team in the creation of the NIST Cybersecurity Framework as outlined in Presidential Executive Order 13636. He is the editor of ISO/IEC 27110 - Cybersecurity framework development guidelines. He is also the author of the NICE Workforce Framework for Cybersecurity and the NIST IoT Security Capability standard. Currently, Matthew advises regional telecommunications providers as a vCISO while also advising DOE, INL, SSA, and NIST.

**Ginger Sunbird Martin** is a Community Member of the Gila River Indian Community, Pima decent. She is the daughter of the late Emmett S. White and Jean Reed of Bapchule, AZ. Having been raised in the Community and worked for both for a community government institution as well as a 5-star private enterprise, Ginger is intimately familiar with tribally owned businesses and government organizations. Ginger presently operates her own private consulting service specializing in Native American cultural diversity & inclusion trainings and corporate change programs.

Ginger graduated from Arizona State University with a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies in 2003. Pursuing her interests in cultural history of the Gila River Indian Community, Ginger studied Community water rights and the implication of the water settlement for the Community. Additionally, she became employed as the Cultural Theme Manager at the 100% Community owned 5-star Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa. For 9 years Ginger, has upheld the integrity of the Pima and Maricopa cultures to all visitors, corporate guests and international travelers. Ginger was also employed 4 years as the Cultural Customer Service Director, a first time ever position for hospitals in Indian Country, at Gila River Healthcare. In that capacity, Ginger was responsible for translating and providing cultural sensitivity training and awareness for all of Gila River Healthcare businesses including the hospital, all Community clinics, behavioral campuses and the residential treatment center.

As the operations manager and business owner of **Sunbird Enterprises**, Ginger promotes Native American cultural diversity and inclusion training and programming for many entities working with native communities. Sunbird Enterprises provides and assists with the integration of cultural sensitivity, diversity awareness, inclusion and behavioral corporate change programs. Trainings and facilitations demonstrate how both individuals and companies can become stronger through improved interpersonal communication and cultural customer service skills. She can be reached at 480.689.2087 or visit [www.sunbirdenterprises.com](http://www.sunbirdenterprises.com).

**Carissa Swenson**, Executive Director of **BAND**. She leads the organization in its ongoing mission to represent the interests of North Dakota's rural broadband and telecommunications carriers. She is passionate about telling the stories of how North Dakotans help lead the nation in high-speed Internet access. Carissa has spent most of her life living and working in rural America. She has a deep understanding and appreciation of the value of connectivity in rural communities. She and her husband Doug live in Bismarck with their two sons, Dalton & Patton.

**Chad Theis**, midwestern roots taught him good ole' fashioned values of hard work, sacrifice, and determination. This – paired with his first-class HR expertise – has led him to champion organizations to achieve first-class cultures and reach their business goals.

As Founder and President of **Zelle**, Chad oversees all divisions. Zelle's unique business model is devoted to building impactful relationships with clients to ensure healthy organizational growth and development – an area Chad and his team are proud to implement every day. Chad's experience in the telecommunication space has been instrumental for broadband organizations – implementing new recruiting and HR processes to allow them to grow and thrive. Chad and his team are proud to help businesses that are delivering essential services to our communities.

Chad has Bachelor's degrees in Exercise Science and Sports Management and a Master's degree in Human Services with an emphasis in Multicultural Studies. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his wife and children, exercising, reading, and watching movies. He lives in Lincoln, NE.

**James Wescott** is currently the CEO of **Cambridge Telephone Company**, in Idaho. His prior roles include accounting, sales & marketing, business development, and operations at a Healthcare IT firm and a Marketing Tech firm in the DC area. James is originally from Pennsylvania and Penn State grad. He is married to Angela and they have two daughters. James enjoys coaching soccer, mountain biking, and skiing in his free time.

**Kristi Westbrook** is the Chief Executive Officer/General and has been with **CTC** since 2007, bringing her expertise in human resources, sales, marketing, and business operations to the table. With a love for strategic planning and product development, she's passionate about creating dynamic work environments that boost both morale and business success. Kristi plays a key role in expanding the cooperative through new partnerships and business development opportunities. She's served on the FCC's Telecommunications Interagency Working Group and continues to stay involved in various committees and boards at the local, state, and federal levels. Always up for a challenge, Kristi thrives on finding creative ways to drive growth and foster innovation.