



14TH ANNUAL NEVADA RURAL PREPAREDNESS SUMMIT 2026

WILDER TIMES *STRONG ROOTS, STRONGER FUTURES*

“Where deep roots grow resilient communities”

Elko Conference Center, Elko, NV | June 11-12, 2026

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Lee Cabaniss is a Nevada Certified Emergency Manager and the Emergency Manager for Elko County. Lee leads emergency management, communications, safety, and strategic planning across one of Nevada’s largest and most rural counties and has served in that role for the past five years. He has more than 23 years of experience in emergency medical services, including over 15 years as an EMS Chief Officer, and continues to maintain his paramedic certification.

A graduate of FEMA’s National Emergency Management Basic and Advanced Academies and a Professional Continuity Practitioner, Lee’s career spans healthcare, local and state government, federal coordination, and international operations — including seven years working in Kuwait as an EMS Operations Chief.

Lee speaks and writes on rural system design, cross-sector collaboration, and the future of emergency management.



**LEE CABANISS,
NVEM**

**JASON BLEAK**

Jason Bleak serves as an Agency Manager within the Nevada Health Authority. His current responsibility is over the Rural Health Transformation Program. Prior to joining the NVHA Team, Jason spent 20 years serving two of Nevada's smallest Critical Access Hospitals as their Chief Executive Officer. He has served in board leadership for the Nevada Rural Hospital Partners, Liability Cooperative of Nevada (LiCON) and Nevada Hospital Association. Jason holds licensure as a long-term care administrator and is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives. He has enjoyed volunteering his time as an EMT, high school football coach and a religious leader. He was born and raised in the frontier town of Panaca, Nevada and still enjoys the outdoor beauties of rural Nevada as often as possible.

Lorea Arostegui is a licensed Master of Social Work with over 20 years of service in Clark County, Nevada. She began in the Department of Family Services before joining the Office of Emergency Management and the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center (formerly Vegas Strong Resiliency Center) on October 1, 2017. That same day, she assisted with death notifications following the Las Vegas mass casualty shooting and continued supporting impacted individuals as a social worker. She now serves as the county's Mass Victimization Advocate. The Vegas Strong Resiliency Center received the National Victim Service Award (2020), the Congressional Crime Survivors & Justice Caucus Allied Professional Award (2023) and was designated Nevada's first Statewide Victim Assistance Center (2021). Lorea advocates for trauma-informed victim services in emergency management and serves at the Multi-Agency Coordination Center, co-chairing the Formula 1 and Super Bowl Safety Committee for IFAC and Reunification Centers. She has assisted communities nationwide after mass violence and disasters, contributing expertise in behavioral health, response, recovery, and community healing. Most recently, she served as Deputy Individual and Family Assistance Center Manager for the 2023 UNLV shooting, deployed to the Disaster Resource Center in Los Angeles with NOVA in January 2025, and supported emergency shelter victim services in Las Vegas during the July 2025 power outages and extreme heat.

**LOREA AROSTEGUI**

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**GREG KLIMETZ**

Gregory V. Klimetz is an Adjunct Instructor of Mass Fatality Management under the Institute for Corporate and Public Safety at NW Arkansas Community College and the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium. Based in Gulf Breeze, Florida, Greg has over 30 years of experience as a Funeral Director and holds a degree in Mortuary Science from Gupton Jones School of Mortuary Science in Atlanta, Georgia. He has served as a member of the Federal DMORT Mass Fatality Team since 1996 and was a charter member of the Florida Emergency Mortuary Operational Response System (FEMORS) established in 2003. Throughout his career, Greg has specialized in mass fatality response, serving as a Victim Information Center Logistics Officer, Database Administrator, and Disaster Portable Morgue Team member. Following the DMORT deployment for Hurricane Katrina, he was selected to lead the development and administration of the Victim Identification Program (VIP), a mass fatality data management system now utilized by multiple states and medical examiner jurisdictions. Greg is also a certified Mass Fatality Incident Response Trainer and has completed extensive Incident Command System (ICS) training. His deployment experience includes major national disasters and incidents such as Hurricane Katrina, the World Trade Center response, the Haiti Earthquake response, the Joplin Tornado, and several aviation disasters. In addition to his mortuary science background, Greg also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music from William Carey College and has completed additional training in forensic photography and medicolegal death investigation.

Jackie Harris is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Clark County, Nevada. She has over 40 years in the field of behavioral health, focusing on assisting those who are healing from trauma. Jackie also provides training to enhance the resilience of our behavioral health workforce, emergency responders and all who work in the area of trauma recovery. Jackie currently works for the State of Nevada and is located at the Resiliency & Justice Center in Las Vegas, Nevada as the Behavioral Health Program Coordinator. She is responsible for behavioral health programming for those impacted by mass violence and violent crime. Jackie has responded to mass violence incidents throughout her career including 9/11, Route 91 and UNLV.

**JACQUELINE HARRIS,
MA, MFT**NEVADA DIVISION of PUBLIC
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VANESSA JUSTICE

Vanessa is a Social Services Manager with the State of Nevada Department of Human Services, Division of Social Services. In addition to her role as Emergency Manager, she serves as a Tribal Liaison for her agency. She has proudly served the State of Nevada for 24 years. In her current role, she oversees programs that empower families, improve access to essential services, and strengthen community partnerships.

Dr. Deborah Kuhls is the Nevada lead for the Western Regional Alliance for Pediatric Emergency Management (WRAP-EM) and serves on WRAP-EM's Advisory Council. She is the Chief of Trauma at UMC's Adult and Pediatric Trauma Centers and is Professor and Chief of Acute Care Surgery and Associate Dean for Research at the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV. She was in-house during the 2017 One October mass shooting in Las Vegas and is Second Vice President of the American College of Surgeons as well as the immediate past Chair of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) COT Injury Prevention and Control Committee, which embarked upon a public health approach to firearm injuries. She serves on UMC's Disaster Committee and teaches the ACS course entitled "Disaster Medicine and Emergency Preparedness" (DMEP). She has authored peer-reviewed articles on injury and violence prevention, firearm injury prevention, disaster preparedness, the care of critically injured patients and medical education.


DEBORAH KUHLs, MD


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**HYUNHWA LEE, PHD,
MSN, APRN, PMHNP-
BC, FAAN**

Dr. Hyunhwa “Henna” Lee is an Associate Professor with Tenure and the Interim Associate Dean for Research at the UNLV School of Nursing, and is also a Program Director of the Bridge to Behavioral Health (B2H) Program. Dr. Lee mentors and chairs both Ph.D. and DNP nursing students for their scholarly projects and also works with undergraduate and graduate students from multiple disciplines, including medicine, psychology, health science, life science, and computer science. Additionally, she teaches both undergraduate and graduate students for evidence-based practice and research in nursing, informatics, and quality improvement as well as nursing theories and family health promotion. Dr. Lee studies biobehavioral mechanisms for recovery from chronic mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) or concussion, using peripheral epigenetic markers and digital biomarkers for post-injury symptoms, such as cognitive declines, psychosocial problems, and problems with walking and physical balance and eye movement.

Irene Navis, AICP is Managing Partner of Navis Strategic Services. Navis is the Nevada Coordinator for the Western Regional Alliance for Pediatric Emergency Management and serves as the CBRN Domain Manager for the Pediatric Pandemic Network under multi-year federal grants. Navis is a member of the Nevada Emergency Medical Services for Children Advisory Committee and the Nevada Public Health Pediatric Work Group. Navis served as Clark County, Nevada Assistant Emergency Manager from 2012-2018. She has held key roles in response and recovery on major events, including the 1 October 2017 Las Vegas shooting and 2020 pandemic, as well as a number of local weather-related disasters. Navis has been a certified planner since 1996. On behalf of Clark County, she served on the DHS State, Local, Tribal, Territorial Government Coordinating Council, focused on critical infrastructure protection and cybersecurity, from 2011-2018. Navis is also a published co-author in several professional journals and conference papers, and has presented at many state, national, and international conferences over the past three decades.



IRENE L. NAVIS, AICP



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**SARINA NEZ**

Sarina (Rupert) Nez, a citizen of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, is the great granddaughter of Lizzie (John) and Henry Moses Rupert, granddaughter of Syble (Burt) and Harold Rupert, daughter of Kenneth Rupert. She is also a descendant of the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, the great granddaughter of Rose (Douglas) and Willie Dixon, granddaughter of Nina (Dixon) and Raymond Allen, daughter of Betty Allen Rupert. She was born and raised in Carson City, Nevada.

She graduated from Carson High in 1988. In 2006, she earned two associate degrees from Western Nevada College. She has worked for the State of Nevada for more than 15 years and began her state service at the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. In 2016, she moved to Department of Corrections. In 2021, she joined the Office of Governor Sisolak where she met Director Montooth and in 2022, she fulfilled a long time desire to work for the Department of Native

American Affairs (formerly the Nevada Indian Commission), where she's currently the Management Analyst. Their offices are located on the campus of the former Stewart Indian School, just a few miles south of the State Capitol. Her family ties are strong on this campus; her great grandfather was the third graduate of the school. Like many native children, he was very young when he arrived - 8 years old. He graduated when he was 18 years old and met his future wife while attending. Of the family line mentioned, all attended Stewart except for her parents.

Michael grew up nomadic, eldest of four sons to two soldiers. His parents retired from service in Omaha, NE where he lived for 18 years. He enlisted in 2003 as a CBRNE specialist and deployed to Iraq in 2006 for 15 months where he ran convoy escort missions all over the country. In 2010, he joined the Nevada National Guard 92nd CST as a survey team member and progressed where he had the honor of serving as the Recon NCO (down range operations NCOIC). In 2017, he left the team and served as a military liaison for Nevada's Department of Emergency Management (floods, fires, search and rescue, COVID). In 2023, he commissioned as a Medical Operations Officer and returned to the CST where he now manages the Medical/Analytical section. He is qualified in rotary wing operations, confined space and ropes rescue, HAZMAT tech, AEMT, maritime operations, laboratory operator, ICS, and marksmanship instructor. In his free time, he enjoys woodworking, hunting, camping, and investing an obscene amount of money in his truck. His wife, Taylor, is a laboratory scientist that manages the lab for Renown Medical Center in Reno. Michael has two dogs, a GWP named Shelby the Pretty Princess and a WPG named Sir Murphy the Stout.

**MICHAEL NOYES**

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**ALICIA ROMAN**

Alicia serves as the Fiscal & Projects Officer for the Nevada Health Authority, where she leads the fiscal support for Nevada's Rural Health Transformation Program, as well as supporting other grant programs led by NVHA. In her previous role, Alicia served as the Administrative Services Officer for Nevada Medicaid (formerly Division of Healthcare Financing & Policy) where she managed the contracts, grants/subgrants, rates, accounting, manual provider payments, Medicaid Estate Recovery, recoupments, and Federal reporting teams during her tenure. Prior to Medicaid, Alicia served as contract manager and later promoted to Purchasing & Inmate Services Chief at Nevada Department of Corrections. Alicia's prior career was spent in the private sector, working in operations and logistics management within the heavy civil construction industry for more than two decades. As a long-time Nevada resident, Alicia spends her free time enjoying hiking, kayaking, and time with her family.

Christie's career has focused on the rock record of earthquakes and geological characteristics of the earthquake source. She completed her doctorate at UC Santa Cruz (Earth Sciences, 2007) after graduating from Smith College (Geology, 2000). She was a lecturer at the University of Cape Town (2006-2009), returned to UCSC as a researcher in the seismology group (2010-2011), and held the Wares Chair in Ore Forming Processes and Canada Research Chair in Earthquake Geology as a professor at McGill University (2011-2024). She joined the Nevada Seismological Laboratory in 2024.

**CHRISTIE ROWE**

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SUSAN SCHMITZ

Ms. Susan Schmitz is a disaster preparedness, response, and recovery professional with 19 years of experience blending operational expertise and research into planning and training. With a Master of Arts degree in International Disaster Psychology from the University of Denver, she has a passion for building community resilience, specializing in integrating behavioral health into emergency management. She is currently an independent contractor serving as the project coordinator for Western Regional Alliance for Pediatric Emergency Management (WRAP-EM) since 2023. In this position she supports subject matter experts, contributes to finalization of products, and aids in dissemination of resources. Previously, at the US Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Emergency Management Evaluation Center (VEMEC) Ms. Schmitz developed a resilience training for healthcare employees. This course was shared at numerous national and regional conferences. Additionally, she co-developed “Psychological First Aid for Volunteer Responders” with SF Neighborhood Emergency Response Teams and trained Safety Function Action and disaster behavioral health to first responders and public health staff throughout Florida.

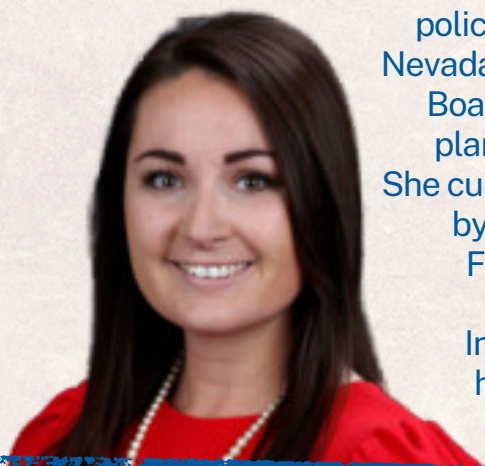
Dr. Rei Serafica is a tenured Associate Professor at the UNLV School of Nursing, a board-certified Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, a Certified Nurse Educator, and is a Program Director of the Bridge to Behavioral Health (B2H) Program. His research focuses on acculturation and its relationship to chronic diseases among immigrant populations. His pioneering work has led to the development of the concept of dietary biculturalism, which examines the phenomenon of immigrants consuming unhealthy traditional foods alongside unhealthy Western diets during the post-migration phase, thereby increasing their risk for food-related chronic illnesses. He teaches across all academic levels within the School of Nursing. As a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, he specializes in graduate-level mental health courses. In addition, he teaches in the Ph.D. program, where he serves as a chair and advisor for doctoral students. Dr. Serafica has mentored numerous students and faculty at various stages of their careers.


**REIMUND SERAFICA, PHD,
MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC,
CNE, FTNSS, FAAN**


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**VALERIE CAUHAPE
HASKIN, MA, MPH**

Valerie began her career in public health, working at both the community and policy level through Carson City Health and Human Services' efforts to become Nevada's first public health agency accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board. Her work included community health needs assessments, improvement planning, quality improvement, and organizational performance management. She currently serves as the Rural Regional Behavioral Health Coordinator, funded by the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health and seated within the Family Support Center, a rural nonprofit providing counseling for individuals experiencing mental illness, substance use, and co-occurring conditions. In this role, Valerie works with state and local partners to identify behavioral health gaps, support community-led change, advise state agencies on local needs and assets, and improve cross-sector collaboration.

The Rural Region she serves includes Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Pershing, and White Pine Counties. She also supports the Rural Regional Behavioral Health Policy Board, which represents the region's needs to the Commission on Behavioral Health and helps advance legislative change each regular session.

Valerie holds a Master of Arts in Kinesiology from California State University, Chico, and a Master of Public Health from the University of Nevada, Reno

Parent of an individual with an intellectual and/or developmental disability in Northern Nevada, Amy Stephenson is a seasoned public sector executive, Navy veteran, and advocate for individuals with disabilities. With over 24 years of experience in Nevada state government, including leadership roles in Finance, Health & Human Services, Veterans Services, and Employment & Rehabilitation, Amy brings a trauma-informed, people-centered approach to her work. Her advocacy is deeply personal. Amy is the proud mother of three adult children, including her oldest, Kasey, who lives with cerebral palsy and developmental delay. This lived experience fuels Amy's commitment to building systems rooted in dignity, inclusion, and resilience for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Amy has served on the boards of NAMI Nevada and High Sierra AHEC, advancing mental health equity and community health education. She is known for building consensus, fostering collaboration, and amplifying underrepresented voices through policy, leadership, and mentorship. Amy holds a Bachelor's in Accounting, an MBA, and is a graduate of Nevada's Certified Public Manager Program. She uses her platform to empower others through storytelling, strategic leadership, and everyday acts of service.



AMY STEPHENSON



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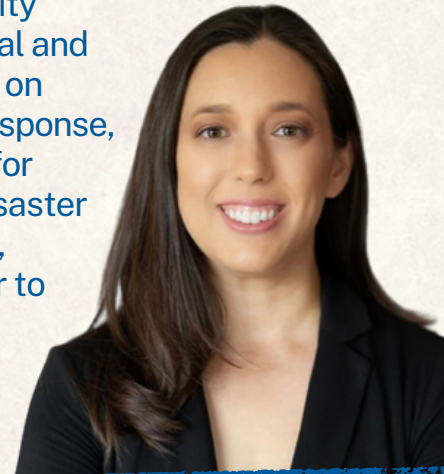


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**MALINDA SOUTHARD**

Malinda serves as a Deputy Director at the Nevada Health Authority, where she leads the agency's community engagement activities, advisory committees, and workforce development. Prior to this role, Malinda held the role of Deputy Administrator at Nevada Medicaid, where she successfully led the agency's redesign of school health services and development of new coverage for the justice-involved population. Malinda brings years of experience in fostering meaningful partnerships with communities and stakeholders. Before her time at Medicaid, Malinda served as the Executive Director of the Nevada Patient Protection Commission and the manager for the state's Public Health Preparedness program. Malinda holds a Doctor of Chiropractic from University of Western States. In her free time, Malinda enjoys baking with her daughter and paddle boarding around Lake Tahoe with her family.

Misty C. Sutton, CEM, is a Curriculum Development Project Manager with the Institute for Corporate and Public Safety at NorthWest Arkansas Community College, where she updates and develops FEMA-supported training for rural and tribal emergency managers, responders, and volunteers. Her work focuses on integrating proactive wellness practices into disaster preparedness and response, helping communities build the psychological and social resilience needed for sustainable disaster recovery. With nearly two decades of experience in disaster preparedness and response, volunteer engagement, community education, communications, and public administration, Misty has dedicated her career to strengthening the well-being of the disaster workforce. She previously supported disaster services across Northwest Arkansas and Southwest Missouri, has deployed to multiple large-scale incidents nationwide, has served as Chair of the Mental Health and Wellness Caucus of the International Association of Emergency Managers, and has contributed to and been recognized for national initiatives focused on disaster workforce mental health, resilience, and retention. Misty holds undergraduate degrees in Emergency Management and Psychology and will complete her Master of Social Work with an emphasis in Disaster Mental Health from the University of South Dakota in May 2026.

**MISTY C. SUTTON**

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**LT COL TIFFANY S.
TATUM**

Lt Col Tiffany S. Tatum is the Science Officer for the 92nd Civil Support Team in Carson City, NV. She enlisted in the Nevada Air National Guard in 2000 and has served with the Civil Support Team Program since 2010.

Lt Col Tatum most recently served as the Science Advisor for the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, VA. The Science Advisor serves as the Medical Laboratory Program Manager responsible for the operation of 57 Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) laboratories across the National Guard. Lt Col Tatum is an ASCP accredited Clinical Laboratory Scientist.

Joey Walker is a nationally recognized threat mitigation expert, retired law enforcement lieutenant, and founder of Leading-Edge Threat Mitigation. With over 25 years of experience in law enforcement and federal training, he delivers practical, real-world strategies for active shooter response, workplace violence prevention, stalking mitigation, and personal safety. Walker has trained corporate organizations, educational institutions, and law enforcement agencies nationwide and has served as an expert contributor to Fox News Digital and the New York Post. He is also the creator and host of the Serial Defense podcast, author of three books on self-defense and active shooter survival, a 10th Degree Black Belt, two-time World Karate Champion, and a 2023 inductee into the Kenpo Karate Hall of Fame.



JOSEPH WALKER



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RODNEY WRIGHT

Rodney Wright serves as the Watch Officer and State Search and Rescue Coordinator for the Nevada Office of Emergency Management. In this role, he oversees the Watch Office and Duty Officer Program, which serves as the statewide point of contact for situational information, resource requests, and coordination support for local jurisdictions. As the State Search and Rescue Coordinator, Rodney assists local SAR units by connecting them with state and regional resources during emergent incidents. Rodney has been with the Office of Emergency Management for five years. Prior to this role, he spent seven years with the Nevada Public Health Preparedness Program as a Public Health Planner and served five years as the Emergency Management Coordinator for Barton Health System

in South Lake Tahoe. He brings more than two decades of emergency medical services experience as a Paramedic, EMS Instructor, Field Training Officer, and Supervisor while working in Las Vegas.

Rodney currently serves on the Great Basin Complex Incident Management Team 3 as a Communications Unit Leader and Incident Communications Technician, supporting wildfire response throughout the United States and managing mission-critical communications for deployed firefighters. He is a Nevada Certified Emergency Manager (NVEM) with the Nevada Emergency Preparedness Association, and an Associate Emergency Manager (AEM) with the International Association of Emergency Managers. He is a graduate of FEMA's National Emergency Management Basic and Advanced Academies. His career spans EMS, hospital emergency management, public health preparedness, and state-level emergency management in both the public and private sectors.

As an instructor and mentor, Rodney has taught a wide range of emergency management and EMS topics and continues to support individuals entering the field. Raised in Nevada, he has lived and worked in both the northern and southern regions of the state, giving him a unique understanding of the distinct needs of Nevada's urban and rural communities. Outside of work, Rodney enjoys camping, riding his side-by-side, traveling, and proudly holding the title of "Best Grandpa Ever" to his granddaughter.



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