North Dakota & South Dakota Change Network

Meet The Cohorts
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Nik Aberle
Rapid City, SD

Alexa Althoff
Fortuna, ND

Victoria Arneson
Williston, ND

Urja Aryal
Dickinson, ND

Jennifer Ball
Sioux Falls, SD

Justin Bauer
Rapid City, SD

Erin Belgarde
Belcourt, ND

Patty Bordeaux Nelson
Madison, SD

Karlee Brown
Carrington, ND

Nick Eilts
Aberdeen, SD

Sarah Emlquist Squires
Bismarck, ND

Fenecia Foster
Crooks, SD

Anne Funderburg
Brookings, SD

Corrie Guerts
Bismarck, ND

Carol Grode-Hanks
Mitchell, SD

Joyce Jefferson
Rapid City, SD

Jana Jenkins
Killdeer, ND

Lindsey Kimber
Britton, SD

Hamzat Koriko
Grand Forks, ND

Britney Leinen
Sioux Falls, SD
Meet the Cohorts

North Dakota Change Network
South Dakota Change Network

Shelley Lenz
Dickinson, ND

KayCee Lindsey
Crosby, ND

Lisa Martin
Madison, SD

Shauna McDowell
Minot, ND

Melinda Padilla Lynch
Bowman, ND

Carl Petersen
Parade, SD

Amy Rambow
Watertown, SD

Taryn Reidt
Chamberlain, SD

Anna Robinson
Belle Fourche, SD

Mertyn Sell
Rapid City, SD

Kati Seymour
Sioux Falls, SD

Jennifer Skoog
Christine, ND

RubyAnn Stiegelmeier
Dickinson, ND

Justin Summers
Sioux Falls, SD

Jasmine Tosseth-Smith
Bismarck, ND

Jessi Whetsel
Watertown, SD
 Nik Aberle

Rapid City, SD

Nik is a storyteller. After graduating from Northern State University he struggled to find the connection between all of his interests and hobbies before realizing that he enjoyed them all the most when telling a story. Whether he was writing an actual story, crafting a narrative with design, or choreographing a fight scene for film, it was the story they all told that was the most appealing to him.

Nik moved to Rapid City with his partner and two dogs in 2012 and since living in the Black Hills has been a graphic designer, writer, pine cone photographer, prairie dog translator, fight choreographer, arts instructor and more. While our world seems to be wired for specialists, Nik prides himself on his vastly broad knowledge and experience base and would love to learn about the passions of anyone he encounters.

Having recently realized he’s queer and a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, Nik has started working on reconciling that with his storytelling of the past and what he wants from the future. Through his sculpture, writing, design, and interactive media he hopes to make it easier for others in his community to tell their stories in a way that resonates with them.
As a connoisseur of the rural and specialist in the mundane, Alexa Althoff shrugs off her decade long stint in broadcast and print journalism to turn a cinematic lens to North Dakota. After failing to pursue her passion of soldier of fortune and international woman of mystery, she found herself in the Bakken oilfields. This provided a rich creative climate to highlight the blight and inequity, the wealth and decadence, as well as the closeness and self-reliance of such a unique area. With a deep disdain for self-written biographies and limited word count—rest assured, she has ceased writing this to continue her daily routine of editing footage, tilting at windmills, and haranguing local government officials in the hope of a better tomorrow.
Dr. Victoria Arneson currently holds an AA, Bachelor’s in Education, Masters Degree in Mathematics and Doctorate Ed.D in Curriculum Instruction. She is currently employed as a Curriculum Director for Williston Basin School District #7 in Williston, North Dakota. Dr. Arneson is a member of her local education association (WEA), state leadership association (NDCEL) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, member of the grant writing team, Make the World Better and Kappa Delta Pi. Dr. Arneson was recognized as a Top 20 under 40 citizen in her hometown. In her free time, Dr. Arneson enjoys spending time with her five kids and two grandkids. She enjoys reading and sets a goal of 500 books a year. She also enjoys traveling and has visited Greece, Italy, Ireland, England, Mexico and the Caribbean. Dr. Arneson believes that education can change anyone’s life for the better and strives to always be kind and spread joy wherever she goes.
Urja Aryal

Urja, younger of two siblings, was born in Nepal. She moved to the US and has been living in Dickinson, ND for more than 6 years. She graduated from Dickinson State University with Bachelor’s Degree in Human Resource Management and Business. Urja works as a Support Coordinator for individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Besides work, the past decade of her life has also been filled with experience from volunteering in various places, events and with people of different ages and abilities. She enjoys exploring the outdoors with her dog (Bella) and loves to travel, especially chasing waterfalls.
Jennifer Ball

Jennifer Ball is an associate professor of pharmacy practice at South Dakota State University College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions. She practices in family medicine as faculty in the Sioux Falls Family Medicine Residency Program and Pierre Rural Family Medicine Residency Program. Jennifer leads a variety of innovative practice projects primarily focused on prenatal care, addiction care, and social determinants of health which have awarded her over $2.5 million in grant funds. She is excited to be part of the Change Network and build upon her leadership skills to collaborate with others and enhance trauma-informed care across South Dakota.

Jennifer has her Doctor of Pharmacy from Purdue University. She completed a community practice residency at University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics and fellowship in ambulatory care and academia at Purdue University and the North Central Nursing Clinics.
Justin Bauer grew up between Montana and South Dakota. While living in Montana he spent most of his time in Wolf Point and Polar on the Missouri River Valley. He also spent a considerable amount of time in the Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge of the Missouri Breaks near the Fort Peck Damn. Justin attended grade school at Crazy Horse School in Wanblee, South Dakota. He graduated from Madison High School in Madison, South Dakota. He is a member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribe. In 2003 Justin joined the Army. Justin deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2005 to 2006 and in 2007 to 2009. He then went to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from 2009 to 2010 with the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 211th Sapper Company. He left the Army in 2013 and returned to South Dakota to attend college at Dakota State University where he worked for their Diversity Program under Jennifer Heins Aranda with great support from Dr. Stacey Berry, PhD. In 2015 he moved to the Black Hills to work for the state of South Dakota’s State Treatment and Rehabilitation Center. In 2017 Justin found his way into wildland firefighting in the summers while attending school at Black Hills State University. He is currently employed with the Rapid City Fire Department as a lead with the Bureau of Land Management Veteran Wildland Fire Fuels Mitigation program. Justin currently lives in Rapid City with his partner Esta; their three dogs, horses, chickens, and bees. He has a single class left in order to graduate with a Bachelors of Science in Human Services with a minor in Psychology.
Erin Belgarde

Erin is actively working to spark economic growth. She is the strategic planning coordinator for Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (TMBCI), including coordinating the Promise Zone program. She also runs project development for the Turtle Mountain Recovery Center.

She sits on the State Board Commission of National Community Service as the Tribal Representative and directs the TM AmeriCorps VISTA Program.

Belgarde is a graduate of Valley City State University and is currently enrolled in a master’s in legal studies in Indigenous Peoples Law at the University of Oklahoma Law. She is an enrolled member of MHA Nation and Descendant of Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.
Patty Bordeaux Nelson

Patty Bordeaux Nelson, a member of the Sicangu Oyate, (People of the Burnt Thigh) Rosebud Lakota Nation, South Dakota. Lakota name is Win’ya Luta Wi’n (Red Woman).

Patty was reared in a bilingual home with her grandparents. Her home community is White River, South Dakota. She is a mother of three sons, one daughter; grandmother of five and one great grandchild.

She received a Bachelor’s of Social Work from George Fox University, Newberg, OR. and, a Master’s of Education from South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD.

Patty, also completed in 2015, a two year study in Ministry.

2014, Patty retired from her life’s work as an advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Patty is a storyteller following in the tradition of her grandmother. She uses her Lakota voice to educate, to advance constructive relationships connecting Lakota and non-Lakota.

She has been a member of Oak Lake Writer’s Society since 2008. She is published in He Sapa Woihanble/Black Hills Dream, and, We Are Still Here.

Patty authored a chapter in the History of Lake County.

Patty served on the 2020 #Native Reads Selection Committee that completed The Oceti Sakowin Great Books from Indigenous Communities.

Patty resides in Madison, South Dakota with her husband, David Nelson.
Karlee Brown

Karlee Brown is the current Economic Development Director for the City of Carrington. She is a 2010 graduate of Carrington High School and then went on to earn her Bachelors of Education Degree from Minot State University. Karlee moved back to her hometown of Carrington just over a year ago when she was offered the Economic Development Director position. She had been looking at moving back to her hometown for some time but was just waiting for the right opportunity to come up. Through her past work experiences she was able to bring all that knowledge/skills into her new position as the Economic Development Director. Karlee was very excited about her new position but also grateful she got to bring along her fiancé, Eric, and daughter, Brooklyn to Carrington so they could live in this wonderful community also. Karlee has dove head first into her role as Economic Development Director and has helped her community create a handful of incentive programs along with being accepted into the Citizens Institute of Rural Design's workshop program which is focused on Carrington's Main Street revitalization. Karlee is extremely excited to be included in the ND Change Network program and to use this opportunity to continue to grow into her position.
Nick is a Mitchell, South Dakota native. Moved to Aberdeen SD to attend NSU for English BA. After university worked as a DSP for Lifequest in Mitchell SD until accepted into the English Lit Masters program at the University of Montana in Missoula. After receiving his masters degree, Nick moved to Los Muermos, Chile, where he taught English as a second language for 3 years. Currently supervising the YAPAtorium Youth Center in Aberdeen SD.
Sarah
Emlquist Squires

Sarah Elmquist Squires is the executive director of the North Dakota Newspaper Association. She joined the organization in 2020 following two decades as a newspaper editor in Minnesota. Sarah has won numerous industry awards, specializing in investigative reporting and open government advocacy, and was the recipient of the Minnesota State Fair Community Spirit Award.

Sarah attended the University of Minnesota Morris as a post-secondary enrollment option student, then Saint Cloud State University. She served as a board member of Southeast Minnesota Libraries Cooperating, a regional governing board for libraries in Southeast Minnesota charged with assisting libraries and distributing state grant dollars. Over the years she has enjoyed volunteering and coordinating local library fundraisers and other literacy efforts.

She has a passion for studying local history, government affairs, and theater, and enjoys cooking, gardening, and spending time with her Saint Bernard, Axl, and her cats, Allie Mae and Pesky.
“Roundabout” is perhaps the most accurate way to describe Fenecia Foster’s path to discovering her passion for education. Prior to beginning her teaching career, she explored every exit she came across as she made her way around the roundabout. Those exits included three summers working at an outdoor ministry camp, a year in Slovakia as a volunteer, and two years in seminary preparing to become a pastor. She tried to avoid teaching because it was her family’s trade, but she fell in love with it once she tried it. Those temporary exits taught her about authenticity, vulnerability, and the power of relationships.

As the Dean of Curriculum and Instruction at Southeast Tech, Fenecia is responsible for institutional effectiveness, institutional and programmatic accreditation, program assessment, compliance, and the professional studies academic programs. She has learned firsthand the importance of establishing clear goals yet being flexible, collaborative, and innovative in order to meet our shared goal of student success.

Given that the majority of students at Southeast Technical College are underrepresented, underserved, nontraditional, and/or academically underprepared, Fenecia sought out additional education to enhance her ability to lead and administer programs for students on a larger scale. She has completed all coursework for her doctoral degree in Developmental Education Administration through Sam Houston State University and anticipates graduating in December 2021.

Fenecia enjoys spending time with her children, Naomi and Elliot, as well as traveling, cheering for the Minnesota Twins, learning to golf, conquering escape rooms, and participating in community events.
Anne Funderburg

Anne grew up in Spencer, Iowa, but has since moved to Brookings, South Dakota with her husband, Preston, and they have lived in Brookings now for 3 years. They recently added to their family; an adopted cat, Kal-El (after Superman). Anne graduated in May of 2021 from South Dakota State University with a degree in Leadership & Management of Nonprofit Organizations. Her passion for nonprofit work stems from her believing that every person should have an equitable chance to thrive and find happiness. She believes kindness will get you furthest in life and practices that motto every day. She has accepted a full-time position with Brookings Area United Way to fight for education, financial stability, and health of all Brookings County residents. Since working at United Way, Anne has had the chance to work on projects focused on early childhood education like Born Learning Trails, to helping apply for the Community Development Block Grant by going door-to-door doing survey work that will provide a new collaborative community center in Brookings. As for hobbies, Anne loves spending time with her family, being outside enjoying the sunshine, board games, watching movies (especially Marvel), and fantasy football. She is a thrill seeker, also – whether that is skydiving, zip-lining, amusement parks, parasailing – she is always up for an adventure. She is excited to have the opportunity of South Dakota Change Network to get to know other professionals in the area and work together as a team to make a difference in our communities.
Corrie Geurts was born and raised in North Dakota. She graduated from Wahpeton High School and received her Bachelor’s in Addiction Studies from Minot State University. After college, Corrie decided to switch paths and go into restaurant management. After a decade in restaurants, she decided to hang up her nonslip shoes to find an 8 to 5 job. The last 8 years, she has been the Director of Administration at North Dakota EMS Association. The Association assists emergency personnel in numerous areas such as advocacy and continuing education.

Corrie wears many hats at the Association, but has a passion working with the Mental Health Committee. A peer support program is currently in development to help support first responders’ well-being and promote resiliency. Unfortunately, for those in Emergency services, it is not if the bad call will occur, but when. We want Responders to have the tools to cope with the situation and the aftermath when the bad call occurs.
Carol Grode-Hanks

Dr. Carol Grode-Hanks serves as Vice President for Academics at Mitchell Technical College where her focus is creating opportunities for students. She works closely with faculty at Mitchell Tech, as well as college and university representatives across the state and region to help develop high-quality programs and courses in an array of disciplines. Dr. Grode-Hanks has been instrumental in helping to develop programs that are valuable to the regional workforce, as well as keeping abreast of new trends in technology, most notably involved in revamping programs in Wi-Fi and Broadband Technology and Geospatial Technologies. She has also played a significant role in helping to develop transfer criteria for general education courses at the South Dakota technical college system level.

Believing that knowledge is the foundation of success, Grode-Hanks encourages educational opportunities on campus and within her community. She partnered with local elementary schools to bring technical education to the classroom. Community projects include theatre and youth programs.

Dr. Grode-Hanks is a member of the Upper Midwest Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, National Exchange Club, Kiwanis International, Junior Achievement, Big Friend- Little Friend, and serves as a Jenzabar product advisory board member.

Grode-Hanks earned a BA in English at Northern State University, a M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction at South Dakota State University, and an Ed.D in Educational Administration-Adult and Higher Education from the University of South Dakota.
Joyce Jefferson is a first person interpreter of Dakota Territory and South Dakota African American pioneer sheroes. As an advocate to heal racism, she presents a play about the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 and a program called “Daddies’ Dreams” with her group Dakota Daughters. Unknowingly, Jefferson began this career when she went on a Passport in Time excavation of former slave, Kathyrne Reynolds’ homestead in the Black Hills. With the help of others, she began a research project that evolved into a six-week exhibition that turned into her telling the stories of African Americans who were discovered. She combined her artistic talent with the newly found South Dakota history and weaved poetry, narration and song to present a ten-minute presentation. She took this presentation to the Oscar Micheaux Film Festival in Gregory, South Dakota. There the president of the South Dakota Humanities Council invited her to join their speakers bureau. Today she not only has Humanities Council engagements but a grant through the South Dakota Arts Council’s Touring Arts Program. She has not only shared African American sheroes history to every corner of the state, but regionally to North Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Minnesota. On a national level through the National Association for Interpretation, her group keynoted a national conference and Joyce brought storytelling to national parks sites. This has led Jefferson to the pinnacle of her career hoping to elevate her story and storytelling to an even higher level through the South Dakota Change Network.
Jana Jenkins

Jana Jenkins is a wife of over 30 years to an amazing partner, mother to 5 young adults, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, and one wonderful granddaughter. Jana was born in West Africa but grew up in Kenya before moving to Texas where she met her husband. Jana served as a missionary in East Africa for 19 years, initiating Churches, a community library, an International school, and worked in radio programming, facilitated adoptions, and foster care. Jana returned to the U.S. and with her husband started East Africa Diaspora Community, a nonprofit serving East African new Americans. Jana returned to college during her time in Chicago and received a Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management from North Park University. Before relocating to North Dakota, she also served as a houseparent for Single mothers in Chicagoland. Jana enjoys opening her home and hosting both her diaspora friends and others in the community. In her free time, she likes watching movies, taking long hikes in North Dakota’s beautiful landscape, and spending time with her family and friends.
Lindsey Kimber is the Executive Director for Glacial Lakes Area Development in Britton, South Dakota. As the Economic Development Director, her work includes community and business development, housing, tourism, and youth engagement.

Lindsey is passionate about leadership, supporting rural communities, and health and wellness. Lindsey’s personal goals include increasing community health access through chronic disease prevention programs, improving access to local foods, and creating environments that support physical and mental health.

Lindsey earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Applied Psychology from Bemidji State University and an MBA from Hamline University. Lindsey is a member of the Leadership SD Alumni, Billie Sutton Leadership Institute, Britton City Council, National Small Business Association Leadership Council, Economic Development Professionals Association, Marshall County Working on Wellness Coalition, Glacial Lakes and Prairies Tourism Association, Britton Lions Club, Jim River Hunting Retriever Club, and Britton Economic Development Corporation.

Lindsey loves spending time at the lake with her husband Brad and their yellow lab Cooper. She also enjoys camping, hiking, fishing, baking, and traveling. Her favorite destinations include Italy and New Zealand.
Hamzat Koriko

Hamzat is a professional actor, storyteller, playwright, and director who worked with theater institutions in West Africa, France, Italy before moving to North Dakota in 2004.

Hamzat focuses on Intercultural Competence, Diversity, Inclusion and Multiculturalism, Gender, Postcolonialism, using Arts-based research. He has published a book, The Case of the Missing Girl, (Lambert Academic Publishing); three plays, Quand L’oiseau S’envole [When the bird takes flight] (Harmattan, 2006), L’ombre d’une Nuit [Night Shadow] (Harmattan, 2012) and Jazve, ou la voix du silence [Jazve, the silent speech] (Awoudy, 2018) and co-authored the article The Complicated Identity Negotiation of Women in Kangni Alemdjrodo’s Chemin de Croix and Gustave Akakpo’s Catharsis (IJFS, 2016). His translation of Quand L’oiseau S’envole (When the bird takes flight) was invited to the Kennedy Center (KCACTF) in 2010. In addition, he was a featured author at the 42nd Annual UND Writers Conference at the University of North Dakota in 2011. A former Peace Corps Volunteer, Hamzat has always been driven by the urge to assist people and address challenges using arts. He has won many awards for community engagements and leadership, both nationally and internationally. A multidisciplinary artist and multilingual, Hamzat is a translator and interpreter. Hamzat is a 2021 NEA Translation grant recipient.

Hamzat is the Founder, Executive, and Artistic Director of the African Arts Arena, an art non-profit organization based in Grand Forks that uses art as community engagement tools. In addition, he teaches at the University of North Dakota in the Honors Program Department.
Britney Leinen

Britney Leinen is a community educator who works with communities to help them better understand cancer prevention and screening. She knows that education can empower people to live healthful lives. In addition to community health education, Britney serves as a board member of Establishing Sustainable Connections. Britney holds a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science and International Studies from the University of South Dakota.
Dr. Shelley Lenz is a veterinarian, a scientist, a successful small business owner, and a humanitarian with international programs that focus on financial independence, agriculture resilience and improving people’s lives within their communities. She lives in Western North Dakota on land that her great-grandparents homesteaded in Killdeer in a strawbale house which she built with her own hands.

She earned her Ph.D. in Pharmacology from University of Pennsylvania in 1996 and her DVM from The Ohio State in 2001. She practiced as an equine vet in Lexington, KY for 3 years, a mixed animal vet in South Dakota for 2 years, and a primate Vet at UC Davis for 2 years. She moved home to North Dakota in 2008 to establish her first Veterinary Hospital in Killdeer. Her business quickly grew, and she opened her second veterinary Hospital in Dickinson in 2010. In 2014, she established Sustainable Vets International, a 501c3 nonprofit whose mission is to “Reduce animal suffering globally” by reducing human suffering through food security, adult vocational education and local business development with her largest project in Nicaragua. She is an advocate for strong rural towns and ran for Governor of North Dakota in 2020 as the DEM-NPL endorsed candidate on the platform of “Homegrown Prosperity”.
KayCee Lindsey has served as the Divide County Community Development Director for 11 years and was named the 2020 ND Rural Communities Economic Developer of the Year. KayCee also works with the Williston Region ND Small Business Development Center and obtained her Certificate in Business Advising from Kent State University in 2020. She is passionate about serving supporting the small business community and organizations within Divide County. KayCee & her husband have three children and a kitten. She teaches Sunday School and when she has some downtime, she enjoys sewing and crafting.
Lisa Martin

Lisa Martin is a member of the Change Network. She is finishing her master’s degree in Library and Information Management at Emporia State University. She has served as the Children’s and Teen Librarian at the Madison Public Library for 7 years. Lisa has six children, a husband, and a cat (but not necessarily in that order). When not doing school work, library work, or laundry, Lisa runs. So far she has always come back home.
Shauna McDowell
Minot, ND

Shauna is an Atlanta, Georgia native, but a North Dakota transplant, is the founder and Executive Director of Minot Insulin Services Inc based in Minot, ND. She also is the Online Sales Manager for 4R Home Thrift. She loves being active with her organization and trying to help those that need it. In her down time she enjoys crafting and spending time with loved ones.
Melinda Padilla Lynch

Melinda Padilla Lynch is a curvy mix women who is passionate about trying new things and exploring life. You will find her trying a new coffee shop, talking to complete strangers and wearing heels at the most inconvenient times. Melinda prides herself in her networking, organizational skills and pushing boundaries. Never afraid to ask the hard questions and share an honest thought, Melinda loves making lifelong connections with variety of people. She is originally from Kansas City, born and raised, moved to rural ND in 2011. She is trying to find her voice and place, while still adjusting through some culture shock. She has 2 crazy full energy boys, madly in love with your husband, and obsessed with muddy obstacle course races. She seems to stretch every hour of the day. She works part-time at the Bowman Police Department as an administrative assistant, helps her husband with their construction business and facilities a conference geared towards Law Enforcement Administrative Support employees.

She looks forward to the next adventure with this great group.
Carl Petersen

Carl Petersen is Oóhenú_pa (Two Kettles) band of Lakota and a Resident Citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, with assorted European Ancestry, from the small community of Parade near Eagle Butte South Dakota. He attended High School at Cheyenne Eagle Butte BIE School and recently graduated from university at Dakota State in Madison SD with a B.S. in Computer Game Design. He currently serves as the Administrative Officers Assistant for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.
Amy Rambow

Watertown, SD

Amy was born and raised in South Dakota. She is married to Lance and has 3 children Dylan, Alex and Julian. She is very active in the Watertown community sitting on many boards and committees. Amy is the founder and President of Watertown Love, treasure for Karing Kapers, the volunteer coordinator for Watertown Community Cares and a board member of Equality South Dakota. In her free time she likes to craft, garden, camp and search for adventure!
Taryn Reidt

Taryn Reidt is the executive director with the Chamberlain-Oacoma Area Chamber of Commerce/CVB. She has been a mother for nearly nineteen years, a wife for over twenty, and a SoDak transplant! Tara has lived in South Dakota for about four years after moving from the Pacific Northwest. She loves to laugh, stop and smell the roses, and lift people up. Tara is honored to be a part of the Change Network.
Anna Robins grew up moving around the American midwest, but now calls the Black Hills region of South Dakota home. She has had a passion for movies, music, and storytelling from a young age. The range of her artistic work has included three documentaries, two short films, four albums, an EP, and an award-winning band. Two of her films received multiple awards and festival features, and her latest project was supported with a grant from the South Dakota Arts Council.

Robins finds inspiration and perspective in her community work involvement along with her creative endeavors. After college she served in volunteer communities for four years, before moving to Rapid City, South Dakota and doing freelance work for multiple nonprofits and small businesses. In 2017 she co-founded and organized a women-in-music event that held annual gatherings for three years. Now living in a small ranching town, Robins and her partner run a creative studio producing products and services that inspire, entertain, and build community, while also fostering creative minds through collaborative and educational initiatives.

When she is not working on a project, Robins enjoys outdoor recreation, traveling, TV/movies, small town events, and exploring other creative and crafty activities.
Merlyn Q. Sell is a theatre artist and educator currently located in Rapid City, South Dakota. After growing up in Deadwood, she lived in both California and Virginia, gaining her BA in Theatre from Sonoma State University and her MFA in Shakespeare & Performance from Mary Baldwin University. She returned to the Black Hills in 2017 and has been active in Rapid City’s theatre community since then. She is also a creator and performer for the podcast The Horned Moon Presents. Merlyn strives to make compassion a priority in her life and her artistic work. She is excited to bring her performance and storytelling experience to the service of her community.
Kati Seymour

Kati Seymour is a dynamic individual who allows her passion for youth, leadership and creating positive social change to come shining through in everything she does. She believes in hope, possibility, and perseverance. Using humor, personal stories, and humility, effectively demonstrates how to deal with life’s challenges and constantly teaches people that the only limits a person has are those they place on themselves.

Kati began her professional career in 2005, working in alternative dispute resolution, and has had a varied career in public service since. She currently works for Augustana University in the Human Resources Department. In 2017, Ms. Seymour received a Meritorious Service Award from the Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership Seminar for South Dakota. Additionally, she received the 2015 Richard Hicks Leadership Award for Outstanding Dedication to the Development of Youth Leaders in South Dakota.

Kati graduated from Sinte Gleska University with honors in 2011. Her unique education and personal advocacy journey has taught her that simply because something has not been done, does not mean that it cannot be done. Kati has a unique perspective on policies and legislative procedures as she has worked in some capacity for each current member of the South Dakota congressional delegation. She has a simple philosophy she tries to live by which is “to do all the good I can by all the means I can, for as long as I can.”
Jennifer Skoog

Jen Skoog is co-owner of Norsk Sol Cultural Center in Christine, ND. She grew up in Alexandria, MN and moved to the Fargo-Moorhead area to attend college. After meeting her husband and raising 4 kids, she moved to her farm near Christine, ND, where she currently resides and operates Family Roots Farm. In her spare time, Jen enjoys volunteering for her school district, rolling around in the dirt with her animals, and spending time with family. During her time working as an Accountant in Fargo, Jen found herself fascinated with the different cultures the metro area had to offer. While growing up in a mono-cultural community, lack of exposure to various backgrounds limited her cultural education. After moving to the Fargo-Moorhead area, and discovering friends with various experiences, she saw an opportunity to focus on what multiple cultures within her community had to offer. With support from friends, and a loving (forgiving) husband, Jen is in the process of converting an old church into Norsk Sol Cultural Center. Jen’s main goals with Norsk Sol will be to focus on celebrating, educating, and preserving culture through various events dedicated to food, arts, music, and traditions of the cultures found throughout North Dakota and beyond.
RubyAnn Stiegelmeier believes kindness is the best approach, both in her career as a licensed massage therapist, and her work as a chocolatier. She was born in an old farmhouse on her parents’ certified organic farm and ranch, is the proud aunt of twenty nieces and nephews, and has spent intentional time in the highlands of both New Mexico and Scotland working and studying cultural dynamics to better understand her place among the complex sociopolitical dynamics of our current world. RubyAnn founded Northern Soul Chocolate, a chocolate atelier steeped in Great Plains folklore, to tell stories of incredible people who call this harsh and beautiful area home, and to soften the tough questions that keep our lives separate. She lives in Dickinson, North Dakota with Farley the Rottweiler, and Friendly the Cactus.
Justin Summers

Justin is a business development strategist. Thanks to a stellar ability to put his people skills to good use on incoming new business inquiries and nurturing positive relationships from day one, Justin brings his personable attitude to the table on a daily basis for the business development team. This Utah native and unabashed Jazz fanboy prizes multi-tasking, work ethic and (above all) authenticity in everything he does.

Where He Learned His Stuff: Dakota State University
Jasmine Tosseth-Smith

No stranger to risk-taking, Jasmine is an entrepreneur who runs her own graphic design and marketing business and is currently in a pastoral training program through Evangel church.

Originally from Zimbabwe, she has lived in North Dakota for over a decade, and remembers being one of the few women of color in the community for many years. She is excited about changing diversity in the community, and loves making connections with other people. She is currently pursuing an African catering and pop-up food shop, and is planning her first event later this summer. She says that “food is a common connector” for people, and can’t wait to see the whole community come together over delicious dishes.
Jessi Whetsel is a licensed professional counselor and works as the campus counselor for Lake Area Technical College in Watertown. She has been in South Dakota for two years now, having been born and raised in Oklahoma. Jessi and her husband have two children together and love family breakfasts and movie night. Jessi enjoys reading books and traveling to spend quality time with lifelong friends.
Change Network is funded with the incredible support of