



**Dr. Julius Mullen Sr., Ed.D, NCC,  
LPCMH, NCC, M.Ed.**

***Board President***

*Chief Inclusion Officer, Children & Families First*

Leading, teaching, coaching and mentoring are among life's most precious gifts for Dr. Julius Mullen Sr. Julius is the Chief Learning & Community Officer for Children & Families First of Delaware where he was the Chief Inclusion Officer for three years, and Chief Clinical Officer for 15 years. In his executive roles, Julius has helped to spearhead an array of projects including a Brain Science Training

Institute, Trauma Informed Management, Leadership Development Initiative, Equity-Diversity-Inclusion Task Force, Trauma Response Team, Innovation Lab, Parent-Driven Education Platform, and a Youth Resilience Mentoring Program. Overseeing millions of dollars, he's led a number of non-profit programs in behavioral health, education, child welfare and community development. Although he's grateful for his individual accomplishments and accolades, he credits a team of talented colleagues for exemplifying compassion, resilience, and excellence throughout his professional career.

His love and expertise for brain science/trauma informed care, professional development, youth mentoring and diversity have given him an extensive platform to share his knowledge at national, state and local levels. He has conducted hundreds of presentations to thousands of professionals, community leaders, parents and youth. Dr. J can also be found on the campus of Wilmington University where he enjoys teaching psychology, counseling, education and preventions science from undergraduate to doctorate level courses. When not in the classroom, Julius mentors aspiring executives, doctorate students and community leaders as they pursue their professional aspirations.

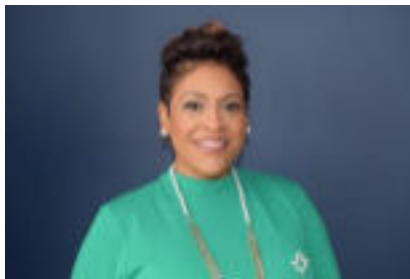
Julius is also a proud graduate (2016) of the Executive Leadership Institute which is an educational partnership with Loyola University Chicago's Quinlan School of Business. He completed his doctoral studies from Wilmington University in Innovation and Leadership in 2004 and earned his master's degree in counseling in 1998. Being a national certified counselor and licensed professional counselor of mental health has given him the pleasure to practice in the state of Delaware where he is credentialed in trauma-specific interventions.

Dr. Mullen believes everyone should advocate for what one is passionate. Through the lens of advocacy, Julius serves on several national and state-wide boards and affiliations including Trauma Matters Delaware (president), Executive Leadership Institute for Social Current (advisory committee tri-chair), Children

Home Society of America (wicked problems committee and innovation committee), Delaware Healthy Mother & Infant Consortium, Child Protection Accountability Commission, Sussex County Health Coalition (former president), Beebe Healthcare advisory committee and Delaware Blue Zones steering committee. Dr. Mullen and his wife Natasha are both clinical mental health experts who also direct a small grassroots youth leadership organization called IMPACT Delaware comprised of two gender-based programs, MAN UP and UNIQUE. They have been deserving recipients of many accolades such as two Jefferson awards for their community advocacy and leadership but none greater than the fruits of their labor. 100% of their youth (N=311) graduated from high school, 96% of whom were college graduates, college attendees, military enlistees or gainfully employed (IMPACT Outcome Study, 2020). Julius and Tasha answered to call from the community by publishing three children's books, Just Love Me, I Got a Big Brain and I Will Man Up which advocates for childhood compassion, resiliency, and diversity.

In Julius' spare time, he loves spending time with his family/friends, enjoying one of his home cooked special dishes with others or traveling to the Caribbean islands.

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## **Dr. Cha-Tanya Lankford, Co-Vice President**

*Director for Pressley Ridge Treatment Foster Care Program*

Dr. Cha-Tanya Lankford, LCSW has served as the Director for Pressley Ridge Treatment Foster Care Program in the state of Delaware since 2005. In this role, Dr. Lankford is responsible for the administrative, programming, and clinical development of the organization as well as financial management of the state's foster care contract.

Dr. Lankford has practiced as a licensed clinical social worker since 2001. She currently holds clinical licensure in the states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Dr. Lankford has over twenty years' experience in the field of human services and has held leadership and clinical positions in an array of settings working with children, adults and families impacted by mental health, addiction, and trauma. She has enjoyed serving as an adjunct professor at Delaware State University's School of Social Work which allows her the opportunity to mentor and clinically supervise professionals in the field. Dr. Lankford has presented at multiple state and national conferences focusing on clinical leadership in the child welfare sector.

Dr. Lankford is a 2011 graduate of the Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) from the University of Michigan- Ann Arbor in partnership with Social Current and holds a Certificate in Traumatic Stress Studies from the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute located in Massachusetts.

A self-proclaimed life-long learner, Dr. Lankford earned her Doctor of Business Administration

earlier this year to solidify her business acumen in the child welfare sector. Dr. Lankford holds multiple clinical and professional certifications, is active in service to her community and was recognized with the Pressley Ridge Entrepreneurial Leadership Award in 2008 and the Pressley Ridge Distinguished Service Award in 2011.

Dr. Lankford has a passion for macro level systems change and is an active member of the Public Policy Committee with the Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA).

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## **Allison Dovi, PhD, Co-Vice President**

*Psychologist*

Allison Dovi, PhD is a psychologist in private practice and specializes in the evaluation and treatment of youth and families with histories of childhood trauma and/or problematic sexual behaviors. She also specializes in assessing risk in adults exhibiting

inappropriate sexual behaviors. She is also certified in Trauma-Focused

Cognitive Behavioral Health (TF-CBT) and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). A graduate

of Michigan State University, Dr. Dovi obtained her PhD in School Psychology at the University of

Houston and completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Child Abuse Research, Education, &

Service (CARES) Institute located at the Rowan University School of Medicine.

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## **Ava Carcirieri, Secretary**

*Director of Special Court Programs, Family Court*

Ava Carcirieri is a graduate of the University of Delaware with a Masters and Ph.D. in Sociology, and also holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. Her research focus areas are gender and law, and she currently holds a position with Delaware Family Court as the Director of Special Court Programs. In this capacity, she leads several Improvement initiatives related to the Court's response to domestic violence, child

welfare, technology use, and juvenile justice. Beginning in early 2020, Family Court began down the challenging and rewarding path towards becoming a trauma-informed organization; Ava leads the internal workgroup, and regularly works with staff and stakeholders to bring resources and trainings to the Court.

One of Ava's primary passions centers the challenge of building of trauma awareness and resources into government organizations, and working to build systemic change and sustainability into workplace cultures.

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## **Tiffany Walter**

*Area Manager and Vice President for County Bank of Delaware*

Tiffany Walter, is an Area Manager and Vice President for County Bank of Delaware. She has a bachelor of science degree from Wilmington University in Organizational Management and twenty years of experience in the banking industry. Tiffany is

passionate about serving the local community in various ways through her work and personal life. She currently resides in Milford with her husband, three children, and two dogs.

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## **Debra Berke**

*Director, Center for Prevention Science and Psychology Programs, Wilmington University*

Debra L. Berke is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and a Master of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies. She also holds a Ph.D. in Family Studies from the University of Delaware. Dr. Berke is the Director of Psychology Programs and the Director of the Center for Prevention Science at Wilmington University. Prior to joining the Wilmington University faculty in 2009, she taught family studies and women's

studies at Messiah College for 15 years. She also directed the Gender Studies Project at Messiah College. Dr. Berke has been a consultant for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the State of Delaware, and other community organizations. She has served in several offices in the National Council on Family Relations including on the Board of Directors and 2022 National Conference Program Chair. She

has also served as the President of the Family Science Association. In 2015 she joined the Trauma Matters Delaware Steering Group. Since that time she has been instrumental in furthering the cause of using a trauma informed approach by overseeing the development of an undergraduate certificate in Trauma-Informed Approaches and a graduate certificate in Trauma and Resilience at Wilmington University. She has also done multiple trainings for local and state agencies as well as nationally and locally. She loves to do Zumba, Pound, eat, read, travel, and taste wine! Her fur babies, Thor and Walden, keep her laughing and her spouse keeps her fed!

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## **John Himics**

*Partner, First Ascent Design*

John manages digital marketing, web and traditional assets for small to medium sized businesses, nonprofits and schools.

As an Adjunct Professor at the University of Delaware Horn Entrepreneurship, John teaches Entrepreneurial Marketing, focusing on conveying real world marketing experience to undergraduates and ensuring that they know what

marketing tools are in the toolkit after graduation.

John has a Mechanical Engineering degree and started his career as a manufacturing engineer at DuPont before discovering a passion for marketing that led to First Ascent Design. John has been a rock climber since the age of 10, and has a passion for the outdoors.

John is also an Adjunct Professor at University of Delaware Horn Entrepreneurship, a member of Delaware Technical College's Business Advisory Board, and a Rotarian at Caesar Rodney Rotary.

Trauma matters to me because it forms the lens through which you see the world. So much can be explained by taking a step back and understanding that you cannot truly understand someone else's perspective. Being trauma-informed, to me, means interacting with people with compassion.

Fun fact is that my first job was teaching rock climbing classes. The part of climbing I love the most is that it's a sport of self-improvement. It's you vs you, not you vs another person, and as such the community that forms around climbing is so supportive.

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## **Tanya Johnson**

*Organizational Development Coordinator, Pressley Ridge-Treatment Foster Care*

Tanya Johnson has dedicated her professional career to the human services field serving in an array of positions for the past 27 years. Mrs. Johnson, a Licensed Master Social Worker & Mental Health Clinician, has provided counseling services for more than two decades with families impacted by trauma, abuse and violence. Families in distress, foster care youth; sexually violated teens and the severely mentally ill are those of whom she has a passion to serve. Her career has afforded her the opportunity to practice in North Carolina, Illinois, Pennsylvania, the California Bay Area, and for the past several years here in the great state of Delaware.

Mrs. Johnson would say that teaching and serving others is her greatest passion. Helping individuals develop effective coping strategies to move onto fruitful and productive lives healed of their past is her greatest reward.

Currently, Mrs. Johnson works for Pressley Ridge- Treatment Foster Care as an Organizational Development Coordinator and previous Program Supervisor. An advocate for ending Human Trafficking throughout the state of Delaware. Mrs. Johnson sits on the Wilmington University Ad Hoc Human Trafficking Advisory Board, An Adjunct Instructor for Wilmington University, and past Zoe Ministries Executive Board Member.

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## **Sharon Merriman-Nai, Member**

*Facilitator of the State Epidemiological Outcomes Work Group (SEOW), CDHS*

Sharon Merriman-Nai earned a Master's in Counseling at the University of Delaware (UD) and began her professional career as an out-patient counselor in community mental health working with clients who had experienced trauma, many as children. Since 2001, she has conducted research and evaluation on projects that intersect with health and social justice, including prevention of elder abuse, suicide, substance use, and rape and sexual violence. As an associate scientist at the UD Center for Drug and Health Studies (CDHS), she managed a portfolio of school-based surveys, including the Delaware School Survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and the Youth Tobacco Survey. Although she retired from her full-time position in 2019, she continues to work at CDHS as a

facilitator of the State Epidemiological Outcomes WorkGroup (SEOW), a project supported by the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) which promotes the use of data in prevention efforts by highlighting shared risk and protective factors. She has been a member of the TMD Steering Group and Data Committee since 2017. Sharon is also a board member of the Delaware Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. and served on the agency's Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Council. She currently serves as associate editor of the Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect. Sharon started tap dancing when she was 39 and believes that following your dreams ~ even if you will never make it to Broadway ~ is a key to resilience!

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## **Nancy McGee**

*Sexual Assault Network of Delaware Coordinator,  
ContactLifeline, Inc.*

Nancy McGee came to Delaware in 1984 after working in wilderness camps and experiential education programs on the East Coast. She has been working in the human services field ever since. She has a strong background in working with family systems and individuals (teens and adults) with co-occurring disorders. She was a member

of the Steering Committee of Trauma Matters Delaware (TMD) before becoming a TMD Board Member. Nancy provides training in the community on topics such as Human Trafficking, Trauma Awareness/Trauma Responsiveness, Healthy Relationships, Effective Communication, Ethics, Bias Prevention and Sexual Assault Advocacy. She currently serves as the coordinator for the Sexual Assault Network of Delaware (SAND). She is a gubernatorial appointee to the Sex Offenders Management Board.

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## **Michele Savage**

*Education Leadership Specialist, University of DE*

Reigning from Newark, Delaware, Michele is a lifelong educator. Michele believes that trauma-informed care, awareness, and legislation can be the link to improving the lives of the people in our communities. She has gotten to know her community well as a school principal and as a 6th-grade teacher prior to that. Michele has worked at Drew/Pyle Intermediate School, Claymont Intermediate School, Newark High School, and her current school, Shue-Medill Middle School. This year marks her 28th year in education.

She utilizes a growth mindset for her students, and brings trauma-informed care into the classroom. She taught brain science to both students and teachers, as she recognizes that protective supports benefit staff. This initiative led to Michele's school being selected as a Compassionate Champion! She also worked with Dr. Bryan Pearlman to become a Distinguished School. Michele is working to empower her school to become trauma-aware. As part of this effort, she has presented at international conferences, implemented restorative practices school-wide beginning in 2016, and implemented the Second Step SEL Curriculum schoolwide.

In true growth mindset fashion Michele decided to take up running for the first time as she turned 40. Now she officially calls herself a runner and has run over 15 ½ marathons! She loves spending time traveling, listening to music and most especially planning adventures with her husband and 11 year old son!