ATHENA Steering Committee

Honorary Co-Chairs

Kim Pegula
President and CEO | Pegula Sports & Entertainment

Crystal Peoples-Stokes
Assembly Member | New York State Assembly

Crystal Peoples-Stokes
Assembly Member | New York State Assembly

Ann Evanko
President and Managing Member | Hurwitz & Fine, P.C.

Rhonda Frederick
President and CEO | People, Inc.

Amy Habib Rittling
Partner | Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman, LLP

Carol Horton
VP of Marketing and PR | The Buffalo News

Laurie Irish Jones
ECEO | Irish Companies

Donna L. DeCarolis
Vice President of Business Development | National Fuel Gas Company

Eunice Lewin
Board of Trustee | State University of New York

Sharon Randaccio
President and CEO | Performance Management Partners

Mary Roberts
Executive Director | Martin House Restoration Corporation

Kari Root Bonaro
Director of Communications & External Affairs | Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

Rupa Shanmugam
President and COO | SoPark Corporation

Shandra Spicer
President and CEO | Spicer Group

Whitney Walker
Community Impact Coordinator | The John R. Oishei Foundation
Kim Pegula | President and CEO | Pegula Sports & Entertainment | Honorary Co-Chair

Kim Pegula is an American businesswoman and, along with her husband, Terry Pegula, one of the principal owners of the Buffalo Bills in the National Football League. She is also one of the key personnel of Pegula Sports and Entertainment, which is the holding company that manages the Bills alongside with the Buffalo Sabres of the National Hockey League, Buffalo Bandits of the National Lacrosse League, Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League, HarborCenter and Black River Entertainment.

Crystal Peoples-Stokes | Assembly Member | New York State Assembly | Honorary Co-Chair

Assembly Member Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, has faithfully served New York State’s 141st Assembly district since 2003. An advocate with clear and principled service, she has always put policy before politics. Crystal continues to fearlessly fight for diversity, specifically in making sure Minority and Women Owned Businesses have a fair chance in obtaining state contracts. Beyond diversity and MWBEs, her passions include education and healthcare.

Ann Evanko | President and Managing Member | Hurwitz & Fine, P.C.

President and Managing Member of Hurwitz & Fine, P.C. where she focuses her practice in Employment Law, Corporate Law and Business & Commercial Litigation. She is active in the community as serves as Chair-Elect of the Board of Directors for the WNY Women's Foundation and is also on the Board of Directors for the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

Rhonda Frederick | President and CEO | People, Inc.

Rhonda Frederick began her now 35-year career at People Inc. in an entry-level direct-care position, working in both group homes and day habilitation programs. She steadily moved up the ladder over the years, a rise culminating in her being appointed president and CEO of Western New York's largest human service provider in the fall of 2014. Rhonda currently serves as president of the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY) and just joined the Board of Directors for the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

Amy Habib Rittling | Partner | Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman, LLP

Amy is a Partner at Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman LLP where she co-chairs the Litigation and Dispute Resolution and chairs the Labor & Employment practice groups. Outside of work, Amy is Vice-Chair of the Zoological Society of Buffalo and is on the governing boards for the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, Women and Children’s Hospital Foundation of Buffalo and the Buffalo Club.
Carol Horton | VP of Marketing and PR | The Buffalo News

Carol has been at the Buffalo News since 2012, first as the Director of Marketing, and for the past three years as the VP or Marketing & PR. Prior to joining the Buffalo News, Carol was the Marketing Manager for the Desert Sun from 2007-2012.

Laurie Irish Jones | ECEO | Irish Companies

Laurie has been the CEO of Irish Welding and Irish Propane since 2005. She has been active in the community, previously serving as Chairman of the Board for IBDEA, President of the NYS Propane and Gas Association and President of the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership Alumni Association.

Donna L. DeCarolis | Vice President of Business Development | National Fuel Gas Company

Donna L. DeCarolis has been employed with National Fuel since March of 1983 where she began her career as a Management Trainee in the Research and Statistical Services Department. She continued to move up the ranks, eventually being promoted to Assistant Vice President in 1999. In May 2001 Donna moved to National Fuel Resources, Inc., where she served as Vice President and was later promoted to President. In 2007, Donna was named Vice President of Business Development for National Fuel Gas Company where she became responsible for new business development and strategic acquisitions. She is on the Board of Directors for the Buffalo Niagara Partnership. She is also on the Boards of the Amherst Chamber of Commerce, the Buffalo Sabres Foundation, the Martin House Restoration Corporation and is on the Dean’s Advisory Council for UB’s School of Management.

Eunice Lewin | President | Impacto Consulting Associates

Eunice A. Lewin is a founding member of Impacto Consulting Associates, where she spearheads efforts to generate community and government consensus on development projects in Western New York that impact the surrounding community. As a distinguished and respected member of the Buffalo community, Eunice is able to tap into her vast network of contacts throughout the region to facilitate community meetings, discuss projects with government officials, assist in obtaining municipal approvals, meet with community and religious leaders to gather input, and create a collaborative environment on each project. Eunice is a member of the SUNY Board of Trustees, a Founding Member of the Roswell Park Alliance and a Distinguished Alumbus of the University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education. Eunice currently serves on several Boards of Directors including the Independent Health Foundation and the Say Yes Leadership Council. She is also a past commissioner of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, and a former member of the Buffalo Urban League, Hispanic United of Buffalo and Canisius College Board of Regents.

Sharon Randaccio | President and CEO | Performance Management Partners, Inc. | Owner | Red Siren

Sharon is President and CEO of Performance Management Partners Inc., a talent management company. As a reformed bank executive of 15+ years, she uses her business savvy to recruit, advise and coach executives. She works with high performing companies to implement strategies which improve individual, team and corporate performance. Her competence in emotional intelligence is at the core of her practice. Sharon’s unique ability to connect with others enables a quick grasp of business issues and a demonstrated track record of client success. Sharon currently serves on various boards, including the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, United Way, Zoological Society of Buffalo and is heavily involved with 43North and economic development in the region.
Mary Roberts | Executive Director | Martin House Restoration Corporation

Mary is the executive director of the Martin House Restoration Corporation (MHRC) in Buffalo, New York. Hired in 1998, after working in a volunteer capacity for two years, Mary has previously served as the chief operating officer and the director of finance for the organization. She has headed the MHRC since 2006. She currently serves on the boards of Visit Buffalo Niagara, the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

Kari Root Bonaro | Head of Marketing | Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

Kari joined the BNMC Inc. in August 2007. She leads the organization’s strategic communications, public affairs, and outreach efforts. Prior to moving back to Buffalo, Kari served as interim Director of Communications for New York University’s Child Study Center in New York City, and led communications efforts for various not-for-profit organizations focused on health and healthy policy in Washington, DC.

Rupa Shanmugam | President and COO | SoPark Corporation

Rupa is President and Chief Operating Officer of SoPark Corporation. She is also the VP of Operation of a new high tech venture, Precision Scientific Instruments, Inc. (PSi™), which is commercializing disruptive US Patented technology. She has over 25 years experience in the electronics manufacturing industry in the areas of Engineering, Quality and Operations. In 2016, Rupa was one of 100 women in the US honored with the STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead Award. She currently serves on the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County Women’s Leadership Council Advisory Board.

Shandra Spicer | President and CEO | Spicer Group

In 1999, at the age of 18 with a high school diploma, Shandra co-founded Spicer Group after the construction company she worked for closed its’ doors. By working in the construction industry, she gained knowledge of the field and was encouraged to establish a minority woman-owned company to succeed in the Buffalo market. In 2002, Shandra became the sole shareholder and 100% owner. Since 1999, under her leadership and direction, the company has grown from $29,000 in annual revenue over $10 million in annual revenue in 2014 with sales totaling over $40 million since inception. She is on the Board of Directors for the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

Whitney Walker | Community Impact Coordinator | The John R. Oishei Foundation

Whitney Walker grew up in North Carolina and relocated to Western New York after obtaining her Bachelor’s Degree from Niagara University in 2008. Whitney is a Community Impact Coordinator for the Mobile Safety-Net Team, a Basic Human Needs Initiative of the John R. Oishei Foundation. There she has co-written a series of community assessments entitled, “Strengthening the WNY Safety-Net” and works to impact sustainable change in the Buffalo Niagara Region through collaboration. In 2014 Whitney founded F BITES: Food Based Initiatives Transforming Empowered Students and now serves as Board President of this growing nonprofit organization. Whitney received her MSW from the University at Buffalo School of Social work and volunteers her time at the Niagara County Jail, Midtown Bible Church, and Cornerstone Manor. She also serves as Vice President of Aurora Academy Charter High School, and is a member of the YWCA Niagara Frontier’s Advisory Council.