

2026 Mesa County Community Summit

Tuesday, September 29th | Clifton Community Campus

Registration

8:30 – 9:00 a.m. | Gymnasium

Keynote Address: The Science of Hope

9:00–10:00 a.m. | Room 1

Dr. Angela Pharris explores the science behind hope, how it can buffer stress and adversity, and practical ways to build hope in children, families, communities and the professionals who serve them.

Break

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Breakout Session 1

10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Being A Foster Parent In A Kin-First State

Lindsey Tapp | Room 1

What does it mean to be "Kin-First"? Are foster parents still needed? If these are questions you have asked, join Lindsey Tapp, Colorado Foster Care Administrator, to learn more about Colorado's "Kin First" approach in child welfare and the data supporting kinship care for improved outcomes for children and youth. This presentation explores the vital, evolving role of foster parents in Colorado, emphasizing the continued need for foster parents and the changing roles that foster parents may take on in a kin-first state.

Burnout or Just Part of the Job?: How to Keep the Fire Burning

Scott Pankow | Room 3

We constantly ask ourselves, Is this just part of the job, or am I hitting a wall? This session provides an interactive space to break down what burnout actually is, look honestly at what keeps us motivated, and separate the things within our control from those that are out of our hands. You will walk away with practical ways to regain control and feel refreshed—or perhaps the reflective space needed to evaluate whether this profession is still where you belong.

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Beyond the File: A Story of Resilience, Advocacy, and Hope

Melissa Gutierrez | Room 4

The presentation highlights an important truth for professionals working with youth: meaningful change does not happen overnight. Working with youth is a marathon, not a sprint. Progress can take time, setbacks may happen, and success often requires adults to continue believing in a young person's potential even when the path forward is difficult to see. This session encourages professionals to keep the long-term vision in mind and recognize the lasting impact of patience, persistence, and hope.

Listening as Practice: How Honoring Voice and Story Restores Hope in the Work

Tiffany Montano | Room 2

What if the most important skill in our work isn't something we do to or for people, but something we do with them? Join a BCBA and a licensed clinical social worker for an honest, interactive conversation about assent and trauma-informed care, two practices that, when taken seriously, change everything about how we show up. Expect reflection, real cases, and a renewed sense of why this work matters. Bring a pen.

Lunch Break

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Breakout Session 2

1:00 – 2:15 p.m.

Yoga For All

Carissa Fisher | Room 5

A restorative practice to breathe, unwind, and reset—space for helpers to care for themselves.

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Connections with Family: Using TBRI to Build Trust, Strengthen Relationships, and Promote Healing

Tina Veitch | Room 4

Family Time is more than supervised visits—it is an opportunity to strengthen relationships, promote healing, and support reunification. This interactive session explores how Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) can transform Family Time into meaningful, connection-focused experiences for children and families impacted by trauma. Participants will learn practical, trauma-informed strategies that foster safety, regulation, and connection while reducing conflict and supporting healthy parent-child interactions.

The Architecture of Hope: Seeing the Invisible Patterns That Change Outcomes

Nina Davis | Room 1

In this engaging and interactive 75-minute experience, participants will discover how the invisible patterns within our organizations, communities, and everyday decisions influence outcomes for children, families, and the workforce. Through thought-provoking activities, real-world scenarios, and guided reflection, attendees will learn to move beyond reacting to immediate challenges and begin recognizing the deeper patterns that either strengthen or diminish hope.

The Weight We Carry

Lincoln Folkers | Room 2

In his presentation, *The Weight We Carry*, Lincoln invites audiences on a deeply personal journey that explores grief, leadership, resilience, and the invisible burdens each of us carries. Drawing from experiences spanning rural Uganda to Western Colorado, he shares powerful stories that reveal how compassion, connection, and community can lighten even life's heaviest loads. Rather than offering easy answers, Lincoln challenges audiences to reconsider what it means to truly see another person, and how the simple act of helping carry someone else's weight has the power to transform both lives.

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Break

2:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Keynote Workshop Session

2:30 – 3:45 p.m. | Room 1

Discover the science of hope and practical strategies for building it in children, families, communities, and helping professionals. This interactive workshop will explore how hope can strengthen resilience and buffer the effects of stress and adversity.

Conclusion

3:45 – 4:00 p.m.

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Dr. Angela Pharris

Dr. Angela Pharris is Associate Professor and Director of the Child Welfare Impact Institute at the University of Oklahoma, and a Senior Researcher at the Hope Research Center. Dr. Pharris's current research is in Child Welfare and Human Service organizations and the application of Hope Centered and Trauma-Informed framework. The University of Oklahoma's Hope Research Center conducts research and provides training and resources to community foundations and states looking to integrate hope science into their programs and services. Dr. Pharris will introduce the Hope Science framework, explore how hope functions as a goal-oriented plan that can be intentionally taught and nurtured, and create space for participants to connect these concepts to both their personal and professional lives.

Lindsey Tapp, LCSW

Lindsey Tapp, LCSW, is the Foster Care and Relative Guardianship Assistance Program (RGAP) Administrator for the Division of Child Welfare. Lindsey Tapp oversees county practice related to foster care and Relative Guardianship Assistance across the state. Lindsey has worked in the Colorado Child Welfare system in both direct practice and systems level capacities. Prior to this role, Lindsey served children, youth and families as a Child Welfare Case Worker, family therapist, supervisor of a large county foster care agency, and as an education specialist for the Division of Child Welfare.

Scott Pankow

Scott Pankow is a youth in transition caseworker with Mesa County DHS and was an educator for 27 years. He is dedicated to supporting the youth and young adults in our community as they work towards independence.

2026 Mesa County Community Summit

Tuesday, September 29th | Clifton Community Campus

Melissa Gutierrez

Melissa Gutierrez is an Adolescent Supervisor with CPS who has served her community for the past nine years. She is dedicated to supporting youth and families through compassion, consistency, and advocacy. Melissa believes that kindness and compassion are the foundation of meaningful connection and positive change, and she brings that philosophy into her work every day while helping guide and support adolescents through challenging circumstances.

Tiffany Montano

Tiffany Montaña, LCSW, is the founder and owner of WesCo Counseling in Grand Junction, where she provides trauma-informed, neurodivergent-affirming therapy for children, teens, adults, and families. She has nearly 15 years of social work experience across residential treatment, case management, and clinical leadership, along with 10 years supporting children and caregivers involved in the child welfare system. Her background includes therapeutic family time services, therapeutic life-skills work, and coordinated care for families impacted by disabilities, navigating multiple systems. Tiffany's practice emphasizes taking an individualized approach that blends treatment modalities to meet the specific needs of the people she serves.

Carissa Fisher

Carissa Fisher is a 200-hour certified Yoga Instructor and has been teaching in various capacities since 2020. She began her journey as a hot yoga instructor at a local studio here in Mesa County. Carissa enjoys teaching in a much more restorative capacity these days, working closely with organizations within Mesa County such as the Lighthouse Project and Child Welfare.

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Tuesday, September 29th | Clifton Community Campus

Tina Veitch

I was born and raised in Bellingham, WA and moved to Colorado with my husband and adult son in 2021. In Washington State, I worked as a program coordinator for Northwest Youth Services during the era of ARY petitions (At Risk Youth). I have a BA in counseling psychology, a master coaching designation for parent coaching and I am a TBRI practitioner. Outside of work, I enjoy running, riding horses and paddleboarding.

Nina Davis

Nina Davis is a professional Workforce Architect, Keynote Speaker, and Future of Work Strategist with over a decade of expertise in HR and Learning & Development. As the creator of the TMG Method™ and the WITH CARE™ framework, Nina empowers leaders to navigate the evolving landscape of Human Intelligence (HI) + AI synergy. A dedicated advocate for "NexGen" talent and youth development, she specializes in transforming workforce capability through resilience and purpose. Nina's mission is to help leaders architect environments where innovation meets empathy, ensuring a sustainable legacy for the communities and families they serve.

Lincoln N. Folkers

Lincoln N. Folkers is the Executive Director of The Arc Mesa County and President & CEO of The Sensory Store, where he champions innovative solutions that create opportunity, inclusion, and belonging for people with disabilities. Through advocacy, social enterprise, and community partnerships, he is redefining how communities support individuals and families. In his presentation, *The Weight We Carry*, Lincoln shares powerful stories of grief, resilience, and hope, challenging audiences to recognize the invisible burdens others carry and inspiring them to become people who help lighten the load. Whether speaking to nonprofit leaders, educators, healthcare professionals, faith communities, or corporate audiences, Lincoln leaves people with a renewed sense of hope and a practical challenge: no one was ever meant to carry life's weight alone.