

## Speaker Biographies – Spring Quarter 2018

All class meetings are 4-5:50 p.m. on Mondays in the Indian Wells Theater  
on the Palm Desert Campus, 37-500 Cook Street, Palm Desert

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### Mike Chedester, Director of Education, The Living Desert April 2, 2018



**Mike Chedester** graduated from California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo and was a classroom science teacher for 13 years before joining The Living Desert as Curator of Education in 2002. He was promoted to Director of Education in 2014. As Director, Mike directs the volunteer program that includes 500 active members and leads all efforts to create natural science-based community and school programs. In 2010, Mike received the Voluntary Public-School Choice Award from Desert Sands Unified School District. In March 2012, he received the Golden Apple Award from Palm Springs Unified School District for his leadership in bringing quality educational programs to the students of the Coachella Valley. In 2015 he was awarded the Above and Beyond award from Angel

Light Leadership Academy, for his community leadership.

Mike is a professional member of AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and The NAI (National Association for Interpretation), where he is certified as an Interpretive Trainer, Host and Guide. In 2016 Mike became coordinator of the AZA Cheetah SAFE (Saving Animal from Extinction) Public Engagement Program. He also belongs to and holds a leadership role in many state, regional and local organizations such as: IZE International Zoo Educators Association; EEC Environmental Education Collaborative of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties; Museum Educators of Southern California; California Science Teachers Association; Western Museum Association; California Association of Museums; Leadership Coachella Valley 2010 Graduate; Desert Horticulture Society of Coachella Valley. Mike is an interpretive volunteer at The Cabot's Pueblo Museum, and serves as past president of its Board of Directors. He is currently president of the Desert Sands Unified School Districts, Indio High School Vocational Agriculture Advisory Board.

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### Vince Battaglia, CEO and Founder, Renova Energy April 9, 2018



**Vincent Battaglia**, MBA, founded Renova Energy Corporation in 2006 as envisioned in his Master's Thesis at UCR. Now the largest local solar and battery storage company in the Coachella Valley, Renova boasts 160 employee owners, three buildings, a fleet of more than 60 vehicles and gross annual revenues in excess of \$40M. Renova is a SunPower Elite Dealer and a Certified Installer for Tesla Powerwall. Also, much awarded Renova is a four time Best of the Valley winner, a past SunPower National Residential Dealer of the Year and current National Customer Excellence Dealer of the Year (out of 450 dealers nationwide), as well as among the Top 50 Solar Contractors in the nation as named by Solar World Magazine, as well as a Workplace Wellness Award winner by HARC, among other honors. In addition, Vincent is

a past Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce Businessman of the Year honoree and is the author of a book, "Cut the Cord:

**Dr. Felice Loverso, CEO and President, Casa Colina, Inc.**  
**April 16, 2018**



With a first professional career as a practicing speech pathologist for 20 years, **Dr. Felice Loverso** transitioned to health care administration and was brought to Pomona, California in 1998 to serve as the CEO and President at Casa Colina Centers for Rehabilitation. Successfully refocusing Casa Colina back to its core business of acute-hospital-based rehabilitation, Dr. Loverso spearheaded rebuilding of the entire 20-acre campus of Casa Colina that is anchored by a state-of-the-art 68-bed hospital opened in 2005, and includes a diagnostic imaging center, an ambulatory surgery center, physician specialty clinics, and a medical office building. A 31 bed medical-surgical addition with three operating rooms and ICU was opened in April 2016. While this concludes the implementation of the strategic plan for expansion of primary service lines at Casa Colina, the organization continues to expand and evolve to accommodate the growing needs of the patient population.

Before coming to Casa Colina, Dr. Loverso worked at Braintree Hospital, outside Boston, Massachusetts for 10 years, serving as COO and CEO. He earned his MA in Speech Pathology and his PhD in Speech Pathology from the University of Colorado in Boulder, has published 33 articles in professional journals, and has served on the editorial boards of five journals. He has made more than 60 national and international presentations, and has been awarded five major grants as principal or co-investigator.

While serving on the Board of the American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association (AMRPA), the national association of acute rehabilitation facilities, he was instrumental in developing a national web-based data system to monitor costs and outcomes of rehabilitation services and has been a leader in representing the interests of people with need for rehabilitation services before Congress and other governmental agencies. Through active participation in AMRPA Dr. Loverso continues to champion the need for acute rehabilitation while responding to ongoing governmental challenges that threaten the future of access to this level of care for Medicare recipients and others.

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**Cynthia H. Breunig, CEO, Girl Scouts Council of San Gorgonio**  
**April 23, 2018**



**Cynthia H. Breunig** has led Girl Scouts of San Gorgonio as President and CEO since August 2011. A Lifetime Member of Girl Scouts, she was a 10-year Mariner Scout and earned the First-Class Award (today’s Gold Award)—the highest award in Girl Scouts. Cynthia is a committed advocate for girls and women, and a proponent of single-gender girl spaces for experiencing and learning life skills.

Under her leadership, Girl Scouts of San Gorgonio has experienced a 21 percent increase in girl membership to 12,100, a 6 percent increase in adult membership to 4,541 and a 35 percent increase in Lifetime members to 866; established a Girl Scout Alumni Association that currently numbers nearly 6,000 women; led a local Cookie Program that has broken national records several years in a row for sale of boxes per girl; initiated a robust outreach effort to recruit underserved girls; championed diversity, working to match the girl, staff and Board composition of Girl Scouts of San Gorgonio to the ethnic, racial and economic composition of the communities it serves; and created unique and innovative girl programs including award winning GenCyber camps and Classroom to Career. In late 2015, Cynthia obtained Board support for the purchase of Camp Skyland Ranch, a 192-acre property at the 5000-foot level of the San Jacinto Mountains below Idyllwild. A lifelong lover of nature and outdoor activities, stemming from her early Girl Scout experiences camping and hiking, Cynthia sees Camp Skyland Ranch and outdoor programs as one of her most cherished legacies.

Cynthia served for 13 years as President and CEO of Inner-City Arts, a nonprofit center in the heart of Los Angeles' Skid Row, employing visual and performing arts to unlock untapped potential in tens of thousands of children. Prior to that, Cynthia enjoyed a 25-year career in museum management, and as Vice President opened what is today the Autry National Center in 1988. She is Past President of Museum Educators of Southern California. She has been an Annenberg Alchemy Community Champion for the past five years and was instrumental in bringing this program to Inland Empire nonprofit executives. Cynthia was chosen to be an Academy Fellow for the City Scholars® Leadership Academy in 2014 and this past year was designated as a City Scholars® Mentor Fellow. She was recognized as the Nonprofit Executive Director of the Year in 2015 by the Academy for Grassroots Organizations and is a member of their Ambassador's Advisory Council. She will be featured in a Spring edition of *Palm Springs Life* as one of six Women Who Lead. Cynthia earned a Bachelor's degree in Art History, holds advanced degrees in Museum Studies and Education Administration, and attended Stanford University's Graduate School of Business Executive Education Program.

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**Tricia Gehrlein, Director of Population Health, Morongo Basin Healthcare District  
April 30, 2018**



**Tricia Gehrlein** is the Director of Population Health for the Morongo Basin Health Care District. In this role, she is responsible for collaboratively implementing programs that further the District's mission of improving the health of its residents. The District owns and operates 2 community health clinics and Tricia works with clinic leadership to integrate what happens inside the clinic walls with expanded outreach into the community to foster better outcomes and improve overall health and wellness. Prior to her current position, she was the Director of Community Health Transformation for the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation. Working with national and regional thought leaders, she was responsible for implementing systems change within seven targeted communities across the United States, including the Coachella Valley, to improve health outcomes. She has also served as the Governing Board Secretary for JFK Memorial Hospital and as the Grants Administration and Program Manager for the Desert Health Care District.

An alumni of College of the Desert, Tricia received her BS in Business and Management from the University of Redlands and her Masters in Business Administration from Western Governors University. In 2014 she was recognized by the College of the Desert as a Rising Angel. She currently serves on the Board for The Regional Access Project (RAP) Foundation Board.

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**Bianca Rae, Television News Reporter, KESQ  
May 7, 2018**



**Bianca Rae** is the morning anchor for KESQ News Channel 3. She's covered everything from breaking news, to features, to red carpets. Her live coverage of the September 2014 flood that devastated parts of Coachella Valley garnered her an Emmy nomination. Bianca covers stories that matter and make a difference. A strong animal advocate, she also highlights animal rights in her reports, urging people to create a "No-Kill Coachella Valley." Bianca is the CEO and Founder of the Bianca Rae Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit serving disadvantaged children and all animals.

A 2011 graduate from the University of Missouri, Bianca received a dual degree in broadcast journalism and Spanish, as well as a minor in sociology. She is a bilingual journalist who anchored and reported at KOMU-8, the NBC affiliate in Columbia, Missouri for three years. She interned at KTLA-5 in 2009 and 2010, and E! Entertainment and Fox Sports in LA in 2010.

You can follow Bianca on Instagram at [@OfficialBiancaRae](#)

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## Superintendents' Panel

**Scott Bailey, Desert Sands Unified School District • Dr. Edwin Gomez, Coachella Valley Unified School District • Dr. Sandra Lyon, Palm Springs Unified School District**  
**May 14, 2018**



**Scott Bailey** is the proud Superintendent of Schools for the Desert Sands Unified School District, which serves 29,000 students in the Coachella Valley of Southern California. Prior to his superintendency, Scott served in various teaching and administrative roles, including chief academic officer, school performance director, and school principal for Northern Nevada's Washoe County School District. With approximately 65,000 students, the Washoe County School District, located in Reno, is Nevada's second largest school district. Prior to his employment with Washoe County, Scott served as a reading specialist, classroom teacher, assistant principal, and principal in the Clark County School District. With approximately 314,000 students, the Clark County School District, located in Las Vegas, is Nevada's largest school district. Throughout his distinguished career, Scott has been honored as Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Year, and has received numerous senatorial, gubernatorial, and congressional recognitions. In 2010, Scott was appointed to the Baldrige Board of Examiners by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. A life-long learner, Scott has taught graduate-level courses for Nova Southeastern University, and spent several years learning corporate structures as a part-time cast member at the MGM Grand Las Vegas. Scott is certified as a Six Sigma Green Belt by the Institute of Industrial Engineers, and holds four FEMA certificates in emergency response. Scott has a proven track record of successfully embedding these "outside the box" experiences into various school improvement initiatives. He is passionate about continuous improvement, enjoys engaging in global professional learning networks, and serves on numerous local, state and national boards and committees. His quotable quote, "*We need to teach students the way they want to learn, not necessarily how we were taught*". You can follow him on Twitter @scaughtsb.



career pathway, and in life.

**Dr. Edwin Gomez**, Superintendent of School for the Coachella Valley Unified School District, earned his Doctorate and M.A. from Cal State San Bernardino and his B.A. from Pitzer College. Dr. Gomez was awarded the ACSA Region 12 Administrator of the Year Award in 2014. He has taught in grades K-8, and served as a principal in a high poverty community. He has a track record of working tirelessly to meet the needs of students in the areas of equity and diversity. As a school principal, Dr. Gomez led a school out of program improvement that was subsequently nominated for a National Blue Ribbon Award. Dr. Gomez has a strong belief that building relationships founded on trust and transparency is the key to developing healthy organizations. Dr. Gomez is emphatic that a quality education gives students the opportunity to be successful in college, their





**Dr. Sandra Lyon**, became Palm Springs Unified School District's Superintendent of Schools on July 1, 2016. PSUSD is a Pre-K through 12 District with more than 23,000 students served at 25 schools and early childhood education sites. Now in her 30<sup>th</sup> year in education, Sandra previously served as superintendent of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, chief leadership officer for the Palmdale School District and superintendent / principal at Hughes-Elizabeth Lakes School District in the Antelope Valley.

In her 30 years in education, Sandra has been in a variety of roles: English teacher, Title 1 coordinator/at-risk teacher, assistant principal, principal at both the elementary and middle school levels, and director of curriculum, instruction and assessment. She also spent two years as a consultant for Thinking Maps, Inc., training teachers and administrators throughout the state of California.

Sandra earned her bachelor of arts in journalism from San Francisco State University and began her career in journalism and public affairs with a position with Time Magazine, then Mount Zion Medical Center. Her career aspirations then turned toward teaching and she earned her master's degree in education – curriculum and instruction from Cal State Bakersfield, and her credential in English / language arts. She earned her Tier 1 and 2 education administration credential from Cal State Bakersfield. She recently earned her Doctorate from the University of Southern California Organizational Change and Leadership Doctoral program.

Sandra has been a member of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) since 1998 and was honored with the prestigious ACSA Region XIV Administrator of the Year award in 2014. She was recently chosen as president-elect for ACSA Region XIX. She is also a member of the Southern California Superintendents, Phi Beta Kappa, Regional Executive Leadership Center Series and the Palm Springs Leadership Association as well as other professional organizations.

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**Kelly Steward, General Manager, The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage  
May 21, 2018**



Ms. Steward has 23 years in the hospitality industry, 17 years of which are with The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company. Ms. Steward joined The Ritz-Carlton Family in 2001 as Guest Services Manager for The Ritz-Carlton, Naples Resort, and then became the Front of House Manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples Golf Resort nearby. She then moved to The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis as the Rooms Executive and subsequently held the same position at The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas. She was then promoted to Director of Operations at The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte, served as Hotel Manager for The Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles, and later was promoted to the position of General Manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland in early 2013. Ms. Steward joined The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage in early March of 2016 as the General Manager.

Ms. Steward's passion is the attention to detail with the guest experience as well as the growth, development and mentoring of our Ladies & Gentlemen. Ms. Steward is also certified as a Speaking Ambassador for The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center and has served as an opening trainer for 19 Ritz-Carlton hotels/resorts. Ms. Steward holds a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management from The Ohio State University and enjoys being a very active member of the community. She is a board member of the Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau and is the Chairperson for the Palm Springs Area Marriott International Business Council.

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**May 28 – MEMORIAL DAY – No Class Meeting**

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## Susan Stein, Executive Director, Fashion Week El Paseo

June 4, 2018



As Creative Producer/Director of Fashion Week El Paseo in Palm Desert, CA, and Fashion and Scene Editor of Palm Springs Life Magazine, Susan Stein proves herself a very busy professional. In those various capacities she manifests a dynamic blend of well-honed style savvy and wide-reaching vision to ensure that each project she takes on is a certified success. With over thirty years of experience in the fashion and retail industries, Susan has not only gained an invaluable insider knowledge and cachet within these fields but has established much deserved recognition for dependable expertise, creative strategies and delivering laudable results.

Susan attended Temple University and East Stroudsburg University to acquire her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and Liberal Arts. She spent a considerable time at the start of her professional career as the Fashion/ Public Relations Director for Saks Fifth Avenue in New York and Connecticut. After relocating to the west coast, Susan was commissioned as acting Director of the Fifth Avenue Club in Beverly Hills, CA before moving on to assume the position of Director of the Personal Shopping Department for Bloomingdale's LA. Among her many other endeavors, Susan has been a professor at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles with a specialty in the History of Costume, Merchandise Trend Analysis, Promotions and Marketing, and Consumer Behavior.

In 2005, Susan served as Regional Director of Fashion Group International® of Palm Springs and Desert Communities, paving the way to wider involvement in the region's fashion events. Under her stewardship as Fashion Editor of *Palm Springs Life Magazine*, Fashion Week El Paseo has grown consistently, with its 12th year of production drawing a record-breaking attendance of over 13,500 fashion, entertainment and media personalities in 2017. As the "biggest fashion event on the west coast," Fashion Week El Paseo showcases numerous acclaimed designers from all over the world, including California, NY, LA, Milan, and other fashion capitols as well as collaborations with designers from the hit television show Project Runway and FIDM/Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. Her synergistic approach is equally effective at her consultancy firm SUSANSTEINSTYLE! where she styles for The Oscars, Grammys and other Award shows. She also services personal clients, charities, and businesses, works closely with designers and retailers to create outstanding marketing opportunities and fashion events, and is well known for her entertaining and informative presentations related to many aspects of the fashion industry.