



2023 Conference Presenters

Keynote Speaker : Steve Gilliland



A member of the Speaker Hall of Fame, Steve Gilliland is one of the most in-demand and top-rated speakers in the world. Recognized as a master storyteller and brilliant comedian, he can be heard daily on SiriusXM Radio's Laugh USA and Jeff & Larry's Comedy Roundup. With an appeal that transcends barriers of age, culture and occupation—plus an interactive and entertaining style—Steve shows audiences how to open doors to success in their careers, their relationships and their lives. Presenting to over 250,000 people a year, more than two million have now heard him speak, with audiences encompassing 51 industries. Steve has the distinction of speaking in all 50 states and in 15 countries. As one newspaper stated, "Steve is what happens when the humor of a stand-up comic collides with the inspiration of a motivational speaker."

In addition to his brilliant speaking career, Steve is a prolific, accomplished author, evidenced by six of his books—Detour, Enjoy The Ride, Hide Your Goat, Making a Difference, The Cherry on Top and Turn the Page—perennially making the publisher's bestseller list and his being named Author of the Year. His thought-provoking writing style makes his articles a favorite with prominent national magazines. He influences the lives of millions through his presentations, books, audio products and videos. An extensive array of these resources has been utilized by small businesses, Fortune 500 companies, U.S. and Canadian government agencies, trade associations, churches, school districts and nonprofit organizations. Speaking the language of active business leaders, his books and other resources identify practical lessons that grow people and their businesses.

Steve built a multimillion-dollar company from the ground up on the same philosophy he expounds to his audiences. If you continually learn more about your company, your industry, your customer and yourself, you will always be a leader. You will be purpose-driven rather than process-driven, and you will make a difference. His motto is straightforward: "If you take care of people, the business will follow." He has been recognized by Who's Who for Speakers and Business Professionals, and The Pittsburgh Business Times named his company one of the fastest-growing privately held companies in the region. Steve also serves on the board of directors for a financial institution, and he and his wife Diane

launched the Gilliland Foundation in 2017 to provide funding that creates lasting solutions for causes they are passionate about.

Steve was born and raised in the Pittsburgh area, resides in North Carolina and travels throughout the world. He received his bachelor's degree from Grove City College. He is a proud grandpa, devoted father of four boys and a loving husband to Diane. He learned great compassion for people and a commitment

to a hard work and balanced life ethic at the knee of his highly principled Christian mother. Whether Steve is speaking at an event, writing about current issues that impact others or leading his own employees, he is not just a person who challenges people to change, he motivates them to do so. Steve's personal vision is to wake up every morning and, through humor and inspiration, help others to discover and develop their potential and live life to fullness.

Dr. Ronald Bates



Dr. Ronald Bates is a Professor of Animal Science and serves as Director of the Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute within Michigan State University Extension and is the Assistant Dean for Agriculture Outreach and Extension within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Dr. Bates provides leadership and support for approximately 70 Extension Specialists, Educators and Program Instructors housed across Michigan who deliver agriculture and agriculture related educational programming for state residents. Dr. Bates has been honored to receive the Outstanding Extension

Specialist Award from two different organizations at MSU; the Michigan Extension Specialist and State Staff Association and the Michigan Association of Extension Agents. Also, Epsilon Sigma Phi recognized his Administrative Leadership with their North Central Region Administrative Leadership Award.

Dr. Molly Sears



Dr. Sears is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. Dr. Sears's research integrates agricultural and environmental policy, focusing on improving agricultural productivity while preserving soil health and water quality. Her work is stakeholder focused and takes an interdisciplinary approach, including agricultural producers, agronomists, and hydrologists (among others) to provide valuable context and rigorous science behind her economic analysis. Dr. Sears's research agenda is currently comprised of three main components: (1) nutrient management, application, and behavior; (2) innovations and adaptation in agricultural water quality; and (3) agricultural resilience to climate shocks.

Dr. Sears also has an Extension appointment, working with Michigan agricultural communities on topics related to specialty crops, irrigation, water quality and tiling, and Farm Bill and conservation programs.

Bob Rhea



Bob Rhea, EA has been associated with the Tax School since 2005 as an instructor and as a reviewer for the *University of Illinois Federal Tax Workbook*. Since 1984, he has assisted farmers with accounting, tax, and consulting services in west-central Illinois through the University of Illinois FBFM program, and was named CEO in June 2020. Bob completed 18 years as the national executive director for his professional organization, NAFBAS. He serves as trustee for John Wood Community College, was selected as the inaugural Distinguished Alumnus, and is a board member for United Community

Bank. Bob received his bachelor's degree from Western IL University and Master's degree from the University of Illinois. Bob resides in Camp Point; family includes his wife, Debbie, 3 children, Tracy, Casey, and Ashley, their spouses, and 7 grandsons.

Chelsea Plummer



Chelsea Plummer received her Bachelor's in accounting and business economics from Ottawa University in Ottawa, KS. She then moved on to complete her M.S. in Agricultural Economics at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN. While at Purdue, she worked with Dr. Scott Downey and completed her thesis on "Decision Making on Multi-Generational Farms." Chelsea started in 2017 as an Agricultural Economist for Kansas Farm Management Association, NE in Council Grove, KS. In 2021, she started working half-time at the state level as one of KFMA's professional development officers, while continuing as a half-time agricultural economist within the

northeast association. Her current duties include assisting in new economist training, planning and leading statewide professional development meetings alongside the KFMA executive and associate director, recording episodes for the KMFA podcast, and working directly with members in the northeast KFMA association.

Craig Macklin



Craig Macklin serves farm operators and their families from the Decatur, Illinois FBFM office, where he assists with tax planning and preparation, completing financial packets, and doing general business consulting. He has over 10 years of experience with Illinois FBFM, including stints in the Illinois State Office, Olney, and Tuscola.

Craig also helps lead a Local 4H club and is enjoying being a new grandparent. Craig and his wife Lara live in the country and have a small sheep flock. They are also adjusting to being first time empty nesters as the youngest of their two children recently graduated college.

Dan Sleaford



Dan Sleaford was raised on 800-acre farm raising corn-soybeans-cattle & hogs located in Manlius, IL in Bureau County. He graduated from Black Hawk East Jr. College in 1983 with an associate degree in Agri-Business and from Southern Illinois University in 1985 with a bachelor's degree in Agri-Business Economics.

Dan worked as a Field Production Manager for Libby's in Morton, IL from 1987 to 1989, in charge of Illinois pumpkin production.

Dan has been a Field Production Manager and Plant Manager for Weaver Popcorn Bulk, located in Forest City, IL in Mason County from 1989 to present, 34 years in the popcorn world! He is In charge of Illinois popcorn for the company. He has also done popcorn work in Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas, and Nebraska for Weaver Popcorn Bulk. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Popcorn Institute in Chicago, IL

Dan's hobbies include spending time with his family, farming his 22 acres, and fishing at his family's cabin.

Dr. Gary Schnitkey



Dr. Gary Schnitkey is the Soybean Industry Endowed Chair in Agricultural Strategy within the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois. His activities focus on farm and risk management on Corn Belt grain farms. He analyzes factors causing differences in profitability across farms, and develops ways of mitigating risk on farms. He writes the Weekly Farm Economics article that appears each Tuesday on the farmdocDaily website.

Dr. Schnitkey grew up on a grain and hog farm in northwest Ohio. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from The Ohio State University and a Masters and Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. From 1987 through 1998, he was on faculty at The Ohio State University where he held a dairy farm management position. Since 1998, he has been employed at the University of Illinois.

Anthony Barrett



I grew up on a cow/calf and dryland grain farm near Harrisburg, NE. My parents are retired but share crop wheat, proso millet, barley, and forage crops for haying and grazing. I graduated from UNL in 2000 with a BS in Diversified Agriculture. I started with Nebraska Farm Business, Inc. on a part-time basis after I graduated and became a Farm Financial Consultant in November 2002.

My wife, Tina, and I are part owners of NFBI. We have four daughters and a son-in-law! In our spare time (however much there may be) we love taking road trips and have driven to all 48 lower states with our kids. We also enjoy attending Nebraska volleyball games. Harvest is my favorite time of year and I feel very

blessed to have the opportunity to help family, friends, or clients at harvest time. One of my favorite places to be is in the seat of a combine or tractor!

Ann Marie Lau



Ann Marie Lau, Sales Development Specialist with Compeer Financial, grew up on a small dairy farming NE Wisconsin. She has been serving the agricultural industry for almost 30 years (a lot longer if you count all the rock picking and hay baling). She has held a variety of roles including customer service, lending, credit and Crop Insurance Sales Manager. In her current role, Ann Marie uses all of her experiences to lead the sales development training for Compeer Financial. As a lifelong learning practitioner, she looks for opportunities to serve others through active citizenship, adopting Robert Baden-Powell's "Leave it better than you found it" as a personal motto. Ann Marie and her husband, Gary, reside in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Sarah Campbell



Sarah Campbell is the National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator at USDA. Her work focuses on leading and coordinating beginning farmer efforts across the Department, increasing access to USDA resources, and improving programs beginning farmers use to start and grow their operations.

She has led a variety of agricultural finance focused projects including an FSA working group to improve guaranteed lending to new farmers and USDA's new Taxpayer Education and Asset Protection initiative. Prior to her role as the National Beginning Farmer Coordinator, she led the Customer Experience Division within the Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area and worked on issues related to organics, women in agriculture, and local and regional foods.

She has a BA in International Development from Guilford College and an MS in Community Development from UC Davis. She resides on her family's farm in Maryland where she runs a pasture-based meat and livestock operation.

James Larsen



James Larsen is the Senior Employment Counsel at the Austin office of Farm Law PC, where he provides innovative solutions to complex immigration and employment challenges for domestic and multinational corporations.

Prior to joining Farmer Law PC, James was Of Counsel at Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, an Am Law 100 law firm and one of the largest labor and employment practices in the United States, where he represented multiple Big Five tech giants, the largest bank in the United States, and other companies in the healthcare, construction, and hospitality industries, among other areas.

James joined Farmer Law PC to partner with corporations not traditionally served by Big Law for the opportunity to design, introduce, and implement domestic and global immigration programs as viable solutions to their historic labor shortages.

Over the course of his fifteen-year legal career, James has practiced on the frontier of immigration law. While in law school in Iowa, in 2008 he authored, "Clearing the Immigration Hurdles: Challenges in Reforming the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program" and went to work for the in-house legal department of the Iowa-based company that successfully secured federal government classification of construction on a farm as agriculture for immigration

purposes. This helped cement the H-2A visa program as an essential immigration tool for securing thousands of visas for much-needed workers the construction industry.

Upon moving to Texas in 2014, James pioneered efficient methodologies for large-scale immigration compliance audits and guided employers in the conversion from paper-based records to electronic Forms I-9 and E-Verify. While working in Austin, he introduced the concept of BATCH processing to a client on the East Coast with one of the largest green card programs in the country, streamlining the PERM labor certification process and expediting permanent residency for foreign nationals by several months.

James presents frequently at conferences and seminars to human resources professionals on immigration and compliance matters. His unique litigation portfolio includes representing multiple employers before the Department of Justice's Immigrant and Employee Rights Section (formerly the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices), responding to investigations by the Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate, resolving Wage and Hour audits, developing strategies to address worksite enforcement by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and navigating compliance with state and federal law relating to immigration and employment.

A graduate of Brigham Young University and Drake Law, he is licensed in both Iowa and Texas and advises clients on federal immigration and employment related matters in all 50 states.

James lives with his wife, four children, and German Short-haired Pointer in Leander, Texas, the fastest growing city in the United States. A political strategist and former lobbyist, James was the founder of Keep Leander Connected, the grassroots community group that was successful in passing a ballot measure to preserve Leander's sixty-four-mile round trip light rail to downtown Austin. He remains actively engaged in promoting the responsible growth of central Texas communities and currently serves on the Leander Independent School District's Facility Advisory Committee, where he developed a plan for over \$763 million in school upgrades and improvements. James enjoys taking care of the longhorns and horses at the Pioneer Living History Farms, where he and his family are volunteer animal feeders.

Krista Robertson



Krista Robertson is a graduate of the University of Illinois, with a bachelor's degree of Agriculture Economics and Consumer Sciences. She has been an Illinois FBFM Farm Business Consultant for the last 6 years, serving farm families in East Central Illinois and West Central Indiana out of the Watseka office. Krista is an Enrolled Agent, passionate about strategic farm business planning and mentoring new staff. She and her husband are active in their respective family farm operations. In their free time, they enjoy snuggling with their dogs, Cooper and Charlie, spending time outdoors, and relaxing on Lake Shafer.

Paul Anderson



As a 40-year veteran of the Farm Credit System, Paul Anderson uses his vast experiences in rural and farm financing to lead the credit team at GreenStone Farm Credit Services. In his role as the Chief Credit Officer, Paul oversees a team of over 100 credit professionals responsible for all aspects of loan underwriting to final repayment ensuring the cooperative operates a sound and successful lending operation. He has served in this capacity for the past 14 years. Paul is also a member of the GreenStone executive team providing leadership and direction to lending staff that serve the 28,000 members of the association with over \$13 billion in total assets.

Paul is a native of northeast Wisconsin and the managing member of the family farm homesteaded in 1853. He started his career as a loan officer with Farm Credit Services of Appleton in 1983 in its Clintonville, Wisconsin branch following his graduation from the University of Wisconsin River Falls. His tenure in the System includes director of internal audit and review for Farm Credit Services of Northeast Wisconsin and Director of Risk Assets for AgriBank, FCB overseeing their high-risk loan portfolio in Wisconsin from 1992 – 2004.

In addition to his role at GreenStone, he has served as a member of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) board of directors appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder and a past member of the Chicago Federal Reserve Economic Advisory Committee.