



Board Biographical Information

June 2023

Thomas Beckett

Executive Director, Carolina Common Enterprise, Durham, North Carolina

Thomas Beckett has, for most of his career, worked as an attorney serving the needs of small and startup businesses. He has been professionally focused on cooperatives for the past seven years. He has completed and is certified by the CooperationWorks! Cooperative Business Development Training Program. Beckett speaks regularly on small business legal issues at regional and national conferences. He also provides business & legal education and guidance to cooperatives throughout North Carolina and the South. He has taught Business Law at Warren Wilson College and is certified to present the FastTrac TechVenture program, the Kauffman Foundation's entrepreneurial training curriculum. Beckett has significant experience working with agriculture enterprises in the region, including cooperatives, quasi-cooperatives, and nonprofits as well as working farmers. He is currently on the Board of CooperationWorks, and previously served on the Boards of the Center for Participatory Change and the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP). Beckett received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Duke University and earned his law degree and an MBA at the University of North Carolina. Beckett was elected to the Shared Capital Board of Directors in 2015 and currently is Chair of the Loan Committee. He was nominated by Durham Co-op Market.

Enrique Blanco

Director of Operations, Latino Economic Development Center

Originally from the Texas/Mexico Borderland, Enrique Blanco has called Minnesota home since 2012, when he moved from his hometowns of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas. Enrique joined the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC), a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) loan fund in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in 2020 as the Director of Operations. During his tenure at LEDC, Enrique has led a comprehensive strategy and operations transformation project while concurrently providing technical assistance, business training services, and loans to the Latinx entrepreneurs of Minnesota. Enrique actively works on the advocacy efforts of LEDC at the state of Minnesota's legislature, which has secured \$8 million in funding for the Plaza del Sol revitalization project on the East side of Saint Paul. Enrique represented LEDC at the Catalyst Coalition and contributed to designing and launching the Minnesota Inclusive Growth Fund (MIGF), which focuses on the long-term recovery and growth of BIPOC businesses by increasing access to flexible and affordable capital and support services across the State of Minnesota. Enrique is a We Love Lake Street Acquisition & Predevelopment Fund committee member, a \$3 million grant program to support the community-led recovery and rebuilding of businesses and nonprofit organizations in the Lake Street corridor. Enrique holds an MSc in Security Technologies with a Minor in Cybersecurity from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife and three sons.

Anna Boyer

Bookkeeper C4 Tech & Design, New Orleans, Louisiana

Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, Anna Boyer moved to New Orleans, Louisiana in 2008 to join C4 Tech & Design, a worker-owned IT Services cooperative, as their bookkeeper and a cooperative member. It was here where she developed her love for cooperative ownership, small business strategy, and numbers. Anna has served on the board of the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives since 2012 as the Southern Regional Representative, and served as Treasurer for five years.

Anna has a B.S. in Biology from Arizona State University and recently received a B.S. in Accounting from the University of New Orleans. She is currently pursuing CPA candidacy in Louisiana, where she plans to grow her work with cooperatives and individuals to improve financial literacy and lessen their burden of financial bureaucracy.

Terence Courtney, President

Director, Co-op Development & Strategic Partnership, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Epes, Alabama

Terence Courtney has been involved in Cooperative Development for the last 6 years. In that time, he has worked in the South to create food buying, fisherman, health/wellness, childcare, housing, farm/rancher and worker owned cooperatives. Since 2018, Courtney has served as the Director of Cooperative Development & Strategic Initiatives for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. In this role, he coordinates with State Directors on Regional Cooperative Development Strategy. At the grassroots level, support local development in States where the Federation does not have regular staff. Internationally, Courtney led the Federation's effort to create multi-lateral partnerships based in Cooperative Economics. Courtney was elected to the Shared Capital Board of Directors in 2020 and serves on the Loan Committee. He was nominated by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

Alexandra Devendra

Founder, Aligned Law, Portland, Oregon

Alexandra (Alix) Devendra is the founder of Aligned Law, a Portland, Oregon-based law firm serving purpose-driven businesses. She was inspired to start the firm when she realized that innovative and heart-centered entrepreneurs need lawyers who understand the paradigm shift happening in our economy. Alix has served clients in many different capacities including advising start-ups on business formation, negotiating the purchase or sale of businesses, and counseling clients in conflict. Through her work at Aligned Law, Alix has developed a niche serving cooperative businesses, and especially worker cooperatives. She is a legal fellow with the Sustainable Economies Law Center, which is an invaluable resource for co-op lawyers. She often serves cooperative clients in collaboration with technical assistance providers such as the Northwest Cooperative Development Center and the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives. She is also a member of CooperationWorks! Alix volunteers with many professional organizations including the Cooperative Professionals Guild, the Oregon New Economy Project, as well as the Public Service Committee of the Multnomah County Bar Association. Prior to starting Aligned Law, Alix practiced corporate employment law and complex commercial litigation at Nixon Peabody, a Global 100 law firm. She graduated first in her class from Case Western Reserve University School of Law and holds a degree in French from Pomona College.

Gail Patrice Lockert Anthony

Owner, Black Label Consulting, Ithaca, New York

In the past 20 years, Patrice Lockert Anthony has sat on several boards, both nonprofit, and for profit. Lockert-Anthony is the past president of GreenStar Cooperative Market's Board of Directors (three years in regular service and three years as its President). Her membership in co-ops goes back thirty-four years. Her relationship with cooperative principles goes back even further; her mother raised her and her sibs with an understanding of them through the Kwanzaa principles, one of which is "Ujamaa" which translates as "Cooperative Economics". Lockert-Anthony owns Black Label Consulting and Coaching and does the work of undoing racial inequities. Her clients are mostly white-led organizations (primarily nonprofit), who are in the agriculture industry and who are embracing the work of food justice in values. These clients are shifting their organizational paradigm to a kaleidoscopic-lens which embraces all cultures and perspectives, and considers all voices at the table as being central to increasing value, committing to purpose, and uplifting whole communities. She is a community advocate, an educator, and trainer/mediator/facilitator. Lockert-Anthony was nominated by CoLab Cooperative and was elected to the Board in 2021. She serves as Vice President of the Board and serves on the Executive Committee and Marketing and Outreach Committee.

Camille Kerr, Vice President**Founder/Principal Upside Down Consulting, Chicago Illinois**

Camille Kerr is a workplace democracy consultant, advocate, and developer. For 10 years, she has worked to promote worker cooperatives, including in leadership roles at both the Democracy at Work Institute and the ICA Group. Kerr has also served on the board of the Staffing Cooperative, Start.coop, Prospera, the Council of Cooperative Economists at the National Cooperative Business Association, and more. Kerr started her own consulting firm, Upside Down Consulting, that focuses exclusively on workplace democracy. Through Upside Down, she is helping develop ChiFresh Kitchen Cooperative, whose members are formerly incarcerated Chicagoans. Kerr was nominated by the Association of Arizmeni Cooperatives. She was elected to the Shared Capital Board in 2020 and serves on the Racial Justice Committee.

Repa Mekha**President & CEO, Nexus Community Partners, St. Paul, Minnesota**

Repa Mekha serves as President and CEO of Nexus Community Partners, a Community Building Intermediary that works at the intersection of community building and community development, engaging communities of color to achieve equitable, sustainable neighborhood revitalization in the Twin Cities region. Mekha has more than 30 years of experience in community-based leadership, community capacity building, asset and wealth building strategies, organizational leadership and development, and systems change work. He is recognized locally and nationally as an innovative and visionary leader and heads up Nexus' work with national partners. Mekha is also a founding member of the Northside Funders Group and is currently on the Advisory Committee, and the working committee leading the funder group's racial equity work. He is co-founder of the Twin Cities African American Leadership Forum, and he sits on the Board of the Minnesota Council of Foundations, where he is also a member of its Government Relations & Public Policy Committee. Mekha is a 2005 Bush Leadership Fellow, a 2004 James P. Shannon Leadership Institute Alumni, and holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government with a focus on community development; a pending Master's in Counseling and Psychological Services from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and; a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Urban Studies from the University of Wisconsin. Repa was elected to the Shared Capital Board in 2017. He is Secretary of the Board and serves on the Executive Committee. He serves as the individual member representative.

Julie Ristau**Director of Agrarian Partnerships, Sharing Our Roots, Northfield, Minnesota**

Julie Ristau, founder of Sharing Our Roots Farm, has led community-based organizations and businesses with pioneering missions that forge new paths. She has worked to build common ground and elevate new voices in the arenas of farming, publishing, civic and political engagement, with a focus on building collaborative process and cooperative structures in community and nonprofit organizations and businesses. Over the past six years, Ristau has worked to shift the paradigm for farming and livelihood in rural America through regenerative agriculture and building wealth and equity for those who lack access to land. She led the acquisition of a 100-acre demonstration farm outside of Northfield, MN. As Chief Operating Officer and later Chief Executive Officer, Ristau led a team to transform the land from intensive corn production to a mix of regenerative crop and livestock rotation, wetlands, and a community landshare. On a regional scale, she is co-creating a statewide chapter of the Agrarian Trust to help solve land access for small-scale farmers. Ristau was first elected to the Shared Capital Board in 2017 and was nominated by Lakewinds Co-op. She serves on the Marketing and Outreach Committee.

Charity Schmidt, Secretary

Staff, Madison Cooperative Development Coalition, Madison, Wisconsin

I take pride in creating spaces for co-op education and coordination, building relationships between entrepreneurs and community organizations, and contributing to community-driven economic development in Madison. As a cooperative development specialist at the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, I provide technical assistance to start-up co-ops and facilitate outreach efforts to cooperators and community-based organizations. I coordinate the work of the [Madison Cooperative Development Coalition](#) (MCDC), the City of Madison-funded initiative to form worker cooperatives that address income inequality and racial disparities by creating living-wage and sustainable jobs.

I have served in this role for over four years and am an active Board member of [MadWorC](#), the peer-to-peer network of Madison worker cooperatives. We work together to strengthen the local and regional cooperative ecosystem. I also serve on the Association of Cooperative Educators (ACE) Board of Directors to support co-op education initiatives. I served on the initial steering committee creating the vision for MCDC while working as Lead Organizer for the South Central Federation of Labor.

I earned master's degrees in Sociology and Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I've taught classes on social theory, sociology of race and ethnicity, and American contemporary society at Madison College and UW-Madison. I have published work in topics ranging from diversity in and access to service learning, sociology in action beyond the university, and the crisis facing bee colonies. I was in the leadership of my graduate student union and a community organizer around many issues including U.S.-Latin American solidarity, fair trade, and worker's rights.

For many years, I have served on the Board of [Worker Justice WI](#), which builds collective worker power through training, labor rights education, collective action, and community engagement with an emphasis on interfaith involvement.

Holly Jo Sparks, Treasurer

Executive Director, Spartan Housing Cooperative, East Lansing, Michigan and Director, Oryana Community Co-op, Traverse City, Michigan

Holly Jo Sparks is Executive Director of Spartan Housing Cooperative, in addition to being a cooperative, community, and housing development consultant. Through Collective Seeds Consulting Co-op, she has assisted clients nationally with shared-equity homeownership and financing, strategic research and nonprofit financial management. Since 2001, Sparks has held the position of Executive Director for three cooperative housing organizations, including the North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO), where she served from 2003–2009. She has volunteered for the boards of the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA), North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO), and National Association of Housing Cooperatives (NAHC) and Oryana Community Co-op. Prior to this, Sparks studied housing, community, and economic development at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and at MIT, from which she holds a Master in City Planning. Sparks was nominated by Oryana Community Co-op. She was elected to the Shared Capital Board in 2017 and serves on the Finance and Loan Committees.