

Drop the Potatoes



Christine Sintay is an author, keynote speaker, and sales leader in the insurance and employee benefits industry. She is the author of *Drop the Potatoes*, a powerful message-centered framework that helps high-achievers identify the invisible burdens they carry...grief, fear, burnout, rejection, perfectionism—and replace them with resilience, clarity, and forward momentum. Christine’s work is rooted in lived experience, including her personal journey through adversity and her perspective as a cancer survivor, which shaped her belief that strength isn’t just what you carry, it’s what you choose to put down.

With nearly two decades of experience in the insurance and benefits space, Christine brings a rare blend of heart and high performance to the stage. Her speaking style is known for storytelling that hits home, audience interaction that creates real-time connection, and practical takeaways professionals can apply immediately in leadership, relationships, and results. Christine’s mission is simple: help people lead lighter, live freer, and show up fully for the work and the life they’re building,

Direct Primary Care Plan Integration Leading to Better Outcomes



Thomas Wagner is Founder and CEO of Zenith Risk Strategies, a firm specializing in medical stop-loss, captive insurance, and alternative risk solutions. With 20 years of experience in the insurance industry, he has built, scaled, and exited multiple agencies, including Wagner Benefits Group and Echelon Advisors, and developed captive programs such as Prestige International Insurance in Bermuda.

Following his agency success, Thomas helped launch a captive medical stop-loss division at a Managing General Underwriter, working across actuarial, TPA, and broker channels to design and manage programs. He founded Zenith to apply this end-to-end expertise—spanning distribution, program design, and portfolio management—into durable, transparent risk solutions for brokers and employers.

Sponsored by Zenith Risk Strategies

Different Shapes Make Great Teams



With more than 31 years of experience leading the Walton County Chamber of Commerce, Teri Smiley knows what it takes for businesses to not just survive but truly thrive. Under her leadership, the chamber more than tripled its membership, grew its budget, and launched programs that strengthened the business community.

Today, through Starfish Partnerships, Teri works with business teams and leaders to improve communication, strengthen culture, and create practical strategies that drive real results. She is known for helping teams turn strong relationships and clear direction into meaningful growth.

"Teri recently worked with our small team of five, and the impact was immediate. We communicate better, understand each other more, and are working together more effectively than ever before."— Ginny Givens, Owner, Ginny's Custom Embroidery

A certified Gallup CliftonStrengths Coach and member of the John Maxwell Team, Teri brings a down-to-earth, engaging approach that helps teams move forward with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

Value Based Care



Dr. David W. Jones serves as Chief Medical Officer and Plan Performance Medical Director for Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Georgia and Virginia, where he is accountable for commercial medical management strategy and performance. His leadership spans medical cost trend management, growth strategy support, value-based care acceleration, and enhancing provider partnerships.

Dr. Jones brings more than 25 years of healthcare experience spanning clinical practice and cross-functional executive business leadership. A board-certified Pediatrician and Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, he has led large-scale system transformation efforts and served in senior clinical operations roles focused on improving quality, efficiency, and outcomes.

Dr. Jones holds a Bachelor of Science from Duke University and a Doctor of Medicine from the Medical College of Virginia. He is Lean Six Sigma Black Belt certified and brings a disciplined, data-driven approach to advancing performance and innovation in healthcare delivery.

A native of Richmond, Virginia, Dr. Jones is recognized for his ability to align clinical strategy, operational execution, and stakeholder collaboration to deliver meaningful and sustainable impact.

Reimagining Health Coverage: Kaiser Permanente's Unique Value Story



Victor Houston is Manager, Sales and Account Management, for Kaiser Permanente’s Individual and Small Group lines of business. In June, he will be celebrating 33 years with the organization. He believes in the Kaiser Permanente model of care and is excited to share that “Kaiser Permanente is different.....and that difference makes all the difference”.

Sponsored by Kaiser Permanente

ICHRA in Georgia, Market Momentum, Employer Fit, and How Brokers Can Get Started



Stephanie LaDuke is a Senior Enterprise Sales Manager at eHealth with nearly two decades of experience across individual plans, employer-sponsored benefits, and B2B sales. Licensed in all 50 states, she is a trusted expert in broker partnerships, large-group benefit strategies, and ICHRA solutions. Stephanie works closely with brokers to help employers confidently design and navigate the complex world of ICHRA in order to provide health benefits that meet today’s evolving workforce needs.

Sponsored by eHealth

ICHRA 201: Beyond the Basics—Expanding the Broker Toolkit, without Disruption.



Jenessa McKinney is a dedicated professional at Ambetter Health, currently serving the ICHRA- GA Market. With a career in the insurance industry dating back to 2016, Jenessa brings a decade of expertise in group employee benefits, and benefits counseling. Her deep understanding of the industry and commitment to client success make her a trusted resource for organizations navigating the complexities of health coverage options.

Jenessa holds the role of Business Development Manager at Ambetter Health, building the ICHRA footprint for the GA market. This entails fostering relationships with brokers and employers, that facilitate education and market growth partnership opportunities regarding ICHRA.



ICHRA is changing the way employers think about benefits — and Sylvia Angarita is helping brokers lead that charge. A Solutions Engineer at Benefitbay, Sylvia specializes in helping brokers identify when ICHRA is the smartest play for their employers. Don't miss her session with Ambetter, where she'll break down what you need to know to bring this powerful solution to your clients with confidence.

Sponsored by Ambetter

Why Partner with a PEO?



As a founding partner and CEO at PrestigePEO, Andrew is fundamental in promoting the PrestigePEO brand, negotiating employee benefit plan renewals, providing guidance on Workers' Compensation and EPLI renewals, and managing the PrestigePEO 401(k) plan.

Andrew enjoys the client and industry relationships he's built over the years. Those relationships are what bring him to work every day. Andrew is especially proud that even as PrestigePEO grows, the business continues to maintain the small company, family atmosphere.

Beyond his executive leadership role with PrestigePEO, Andrew also serves on the board of directors at the National Association of Professional Employer Organization (NAPEO). In prior roles, Andy served as NAPEO's Chairman, Vice-Chair, Secretary-Treasurer, and as Chair of NAPEO's State Government Affairs Committee. He has been a speaker for organizations such as the Institute for Financial Planning, The Nassau County Dental Society, The National Association of Health Underwriters, and the American Society for Certified Public Accountants.

Andrew holds a bachelor's degree in Business Economics and Finance from SUNY Oneonta. He currently lives in Woodbury, NY, and prides himself on being a wealth of all-things trivia, from movie quotes to unusual sports statistics.

Sponsored by PrestigePEO

Beyond the Spreadsheet: The True Value of a Health Plan



Ember Ford is a group benefits professional with 20 years of experience. She worked in sales and account management with small to mid-size groups at an independent agency for 16 years. The past 4 years she has focused on small group sales with Georgia brokers through her Account Executive role at UnitedHealthcare. She earned the Registered Health Underwriter (RHU) designation in 2010 and the Certified Employee Benefit Specialist (CEBS) designation in 2022. She is passionate about helping brokers bring valuable and sustainable solutions to their small business customers.

Sponsored by UnitedHealthcare

Washington Update and Focus on the Future



Mychal has been in the insurance industry for 15 years. The Walker Agency, LLC area of focus is employee benefits, Medicare, long-term care, life insurance and financial instruments. In addition to servicing the under 65 market and the over 65 market, he has been involved in the leadership of the National Association of Benefits and Insurance Professionals (NABIP). Which includes serving in the capacity of president of the Atlanta Chapter, two terms as president of the Georgia Chapter and four years as the regional chair of the NABIP Political Action Committee (NABIP PAC). Mychal has received numerous awards, including the Presidential Citation awards and the Legislative award.

Managing It All: Keeping the Glass Balls in the Air (Without Losing Your Mind)



With more than 31 years of experience leading the Walton County Chamber of Commerce, Teri Smiley knows what it takes for businesses to not just survive but truly thrive. Under her leadership, the chamber more than tripled its membership, grew its budget, and launched programs that strengthened the business community.

Today, through Starfish Partnerships, Teri works with business teams and leaders to improve communication, strengthen culture, and create practical strategies that drive real results. She is known for helping teams turn strong relationships and clear direction into meaningful growth.

"Teri recently worked with our small team of five, and the impact was immediate. We communicate better, understand each other more, and are working together more effectively than ever before."— Ginny Givens, Owner, Ginny's Custom Embroidery

A certified Gallup CliftonStrengths Coach and member of the John Maxwell Team, Teri brings a down-to-earth, engaging approach that helps teams move forward with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

Defining Your Purpose



With an accomplished career spanning more than three decades, John retired in 2020 from Humana after 31 years of dedicated service, most recently serving as Vice President of Sales. Throughout his tenure, he built a strong reputation for leadership, strategic growth, and a deep commitment to developing high-performing sales teams. His career was rooted in sales and sales management, where he consistently drove results while mentoring others to succeed.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in finance, John brings both Midwestern values and a strong work ethic to everything he does. Since retirement, he has embraced a fulfilling lifestyle centered around his passions for golf, fishing, and travel, while continuing to make a meaningful impact in his community.

He is an active member of the Woodstock Rotary and a dedicated supporter of the Never Alone Food Pantry. In addition, he has served as Executive Director of the Mountain Wisdom Charity Golf Tournament for the past four years, helping to raise funds and awareness for important causes.

John also continues to pursue his passion for mentoring and coaching youth, as well as supporting individuals and families who are facing challenges and in need of guidance and encouragement.

Region 5 Update: Membership & Engagement

Angela Mlynarski, NABIP Region 5 VP



Angela Mlynarski is a dynamic leader in the health insurance and employee benefits space, serving as Regional Vice President for Region 5 of NABIP and Regional Sales Manager for Sidecar Health. With over two decades of industry experience, Angela is known for helping brokers and employers break free from the status quo by embracing innovative healthcare solutions that drive transparency, savings, and member empowerment.

In her leadership roles, Angela has been a catalyst for membership growth, impactful advocacy, and strategic professional development. She is passionate about simplifying complex benefits strategies, mentoring future leaders, and creating opportunities for meaningful industry engagement.

Angela’s energetic and practical approach makes her a sought-after speaker on topics ranging from healthcare innovation to leadership growth. Outside of work, she’s a proud mom of four, balancing career success with family life and a commitment to making healthcare better for everyone.

Legislative Update on Georgia Priorities



Don Bolia is the founder and principal at Peachtree Government Relations. He provides industry leaders with strategic advice on legislative trends and assists them in shaping policy debates at the state, federal, and local levels in Georgia.

Don manages clients' relationships before the Georgia General Assembly, as well as numerous city and county governments and agencies. His background and experience give clients an edge in conducting business with local governments. Because of his key relationships at the municipal level, his clients are able to clearly communicate their message to key players.

Independent Pharmacies in Georgia & Pharmacy Benefit Managers: Transparency, Impact, and Emerging Solutions



Renie Cochran is a seasoned health benefits strategist with a marketing degree from Clayton State and nearly two decades of experience empowering small businesses. After launching her solo practice in 2008, she expanded her reach in 2024, merging with Capstone Benefits Consulting and now serves as **Vice President of Sales**, expanding her reach to support a wide range of employer groups. While she maintains a strong focus on businesses with fewer than 200 enrolled—organizations she believes are the true backbone of America—her expertise and strategic insight extend to clients of all sizes. Renie's passion lies in helping employers of every scale navigate the challenges of healthcare expenses with clarity, creativity, and care.

Renie has held several executive board positions with NABIP, including serving as Georgia State President, and is known for introducing fresh perspectives and delivering results with integrity and enthusiasm. Beyond her professional life, she finds joy in her family—especially as she prepares to welcome her first grandchild—and stays active in her hometown of Senoia through her church and volunteer work. Her blend of industry expertise, personal dedication, and community spirit makes her a trusted advisor to the clients she serves.



Jonathan is Interim CEO of the Georgia Pharmacy Association. He also serves as the Vice President of the Academy of Independent Pharmacy for GPhA. In this role, he promotes economic viability and security for Independent Pharmacies. In addition, Jonathan and his Pharmacist wife, Pam, own community pharmacies in Georgia. Before assuming his current position, Dr. Marquess was a Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Mercer University School of Pharmacy in Atlanta.

Throughout his career, Dr. Marquess has been actively involved in local, state, and national professional organizations. Currently, Marquess serves as a board member for the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA). He is a Past President of the Georgia Pharmacy Association. In 2016, Dr. Marquess was awarded the APhA Daniel B. Smith Practice Excellence Award. In 2012, Marquess was named Independent Pharmacist of the Year from GPhA. In 2008, Marquess was awarded the Innovative Pharmacist of the Year from GPhA.



Jim Lodge is Senior Vice President and Chief Transparency Officer for Prescription Network. He is responsible for driving visibility and growth for the organization from new and existing relationships. His presence on LinkedIn has been solidified over the last year with weekly video content under the moniker of *The PBM Insider*. He has also appeared in two podcasts with Mark Cuban discussing PBM transparency, as well as guest appearances discussing the PBM industry on CBS-affiliate KRCG in mid-Missouri and on the radio show *This is Kansas City* on ESPN-affiliate 94.5 FM. In addition, he has made a number of local and state-wide presentations for NABIP. When not pursuing his mission to drive honesty into the PBM industry, he fulfills his time as a very mediocre golfer, singing karaoke (again, mediocre) and hanging out with his kids, Maddie, a video game critic on YouTube and, Ben, an actor at the University of Evansville.

How to Use AI to Actually Grow Your Business



Will Johnson is the co-founder and CEO of Gyde, an AI-native insurance brokerage partnering through acquisition with leading employee benefits and medicare agencies. He previously spent a decade at Oscar Health, where he built national broker networks and led growth and platform teams serving millions of members. During that time, he worked closely with agencies navigating rapid growth, complex carrier relationships, and increasing administrative burden.

The Circle of Healthcare--Healthcare Systems, Government and Private Payors, Broker Support and Patient Impact



Jason Bearden is a distinguished healthcare executive and strategic advisor who brings three decades of leadership experience to the intersection of regulated healthcare, public policy, and human services. His career is defined by the successful convergence of four critical facets: Healthcare Delivery System Leadership, Public Policy Administration, Multi-Product Health Plan Management, and Executive-Level Community Engagement.

As a former Regional Market President for CareSource, Jason managed a \$1.5 billion budget and over 500,000 members, engineering a strategic financial turnaround and securing high-stakes contract renewals against fierce national competition. His deep technical expertise stems from a career that includes serving as HHS Director for the Georgia Governor's Office and as a CEO for major behavioral health and Health and Human Service organizations.

A visionary leader with an Industrial & Systems Engineering background and dual master's degrees (MBA/MHA), Jason brings clarity and structured stability to the complexities of modern human service systems. Through Confluence Health Strategies, he provides authoritative advisory to organizations seeking to bridge the gap between policy, payer, and provider.



Emily C. Yona is a Chief of Staff at the Georgia Department of Community Health. Yona has been instrumental in shaping health policy and legislative strategy across various organizations. Their expertise spans government relations, policy analysis, and stakeholder engagement within the healthcare sector. Yona's career highlights include significant contributions to legislative sessions, where they focused on tracking healthcare legislation and cultivating relationships with state agencies and legislators.

In their role as Director, Health Policy at the Georgia Dental Association, Yona managed key committees and task forces, including the Health Policy Sub-Committee and the Medicaid Task Force. They conducted research to support policy decisions and built relationships with crucial state entities like the Department of Community Health and the Department of Public Health. Prior to this, Yona served as a Government Affairs Liaison and Legislative Analyst, focusing on legislative bill tracking and creating essential connections with legislators and administrators.

Yona's background also includes experience as a Senior Advisor To the Commissioner at the Georgia Department of Community Health and a Clinical Research Associate at the Grady Trauma Project, where they screened patients to research connections between health issues and trauma. Their academic foundation includes a Bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia and a dual Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Health Administration (MHA) from Georgia State University.