



2023 Farm Stress Summit Speaker Biographies – for 3.20.23 Event in Macon, GA

Keynote Speaker:

Marshal Sewell was raised on his family's fifth generation fruit and vegetable farm in Plant City, FL. After graduating from the University of Florida, he began a career in the vegetable seed industry. He currently works with Bayer Vegetable Seeds as a member of their Global Strategic Accounts team. His personal farm experience and his professional work across the produce business have given him a close look at stress and challenges in agriculture. Outside of work, he and his family are active advocates for mental health and stress management in and outside of agriculture. Through their Mind Your Melon platform, they seek to inspire healthier minds through proactive lifestyles.

Kevin Tanner currently serves as the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. He formerly served as the County Manager of Forsyth County; he served four terms as a State Representative for District 9, including Lumpkin and parts of Dawson and Forsyth counties and has spent thirty-three years in public service.

Tyler Harper is a 7th generation farmer, small business owner, former State Senator, and the 17th Agriculture Commissioner of the State of Georgia. Tyler lives in Ocilla and is a lifelong resident of South Georgia. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering and has an associate degree in agriculture from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. He is an active member in his local community and has helped lead organizations across the state – from his local rotary club, to the Georgia Young Farmers Association, among numerous others, including serving as the past Chair of the Southern Legislative Conference's Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. When he isn't serving the state as Agriculture Commissioner or working on his farm, you can find Tyler enjoying the outdoors, cheering on the Georgia Bulldogs, or at Satilla Baptist Church, where he plays in the band every Sunday.

Panelists:

April Bassett is a Quality Improvement Specialist with Community Service Board of Middle Georgia (CSBMG). Her credentials include being a Certified Peer Specialist

as well as a Whole Health and Wellness Coach. April has worked with CSBMG for 5 years and was previously the program director for the Adult Mental Health Peer Support Program. She supports others in their own unique paths to identify their personal interests, goals, strengths and weaknesses, using her lived experience to teach and role model the value of every individual's recovery experience.

Matt Berry is a farmer and owner of two farm businesses located in Americus, Georgia, Sumter County. Matt also serves as the Sumter County Farm Bureau president and president of the South West Georgia Cattlemen's chapter. He is a graduate of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College with several Associate Degrees in Agriculture and an associate degree in mathematics from Darton College. Matt is currently the owner of two farm businesses and has been operating a diversified farming operation most of his adult life. In the beginning, Matt operated CB Farms, a custom harvesting, row cropping and commercial cow calf operation but he also worked a full-time job as a lineman in town. In 2018, he purchased Dixie Lix Industries, INC, a liquid cattle feed, fertilizer distributor and cattle management operation and now works full time on the farm.

Mason Dean is a Program Coordinator with the Institute for Human Development and Disability and serves as the AgrAbility service coordinator for the Farm Again program at UGA. Mason is based in Southwest Georgia on the UGA Tifton Campus.

Erin Fitzpatrick Lepp, MMSc, PA-C, is a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies at the Mercer College of Health Professions and serves as the Coordinator for Service-Learning and Community Engagement for the PA Program. Professor Lepp earned her Master of Medical Science degree from the Emory University School of Medicine Physician Assistant (PA) Program and has over 17 years of experience as a health professions educator. She is a certified Mental Health First Aid™ instructor and practices at a free clinic in Clarkston, Georgia, providing primary care and chronic disease management to resettled refugees. She has authored numerous private foundation grants to enhance care for the working poor and has been twice honored as the “Humanitarian of the Year” by the Georgia Association of Physician Assistants (GAPA). In 2020, she was selected as an inaugural “Nutrition Health Outreach Fellow,” by the Physician Assistant Foundation and teaches about nutrition and food insecurity as part of her clinical practice. In 2021, she was awarded the William H. Marquardt Community Health Fellowship Award for her efforts to mentor PA students and advocate for accessible primary and preventive healthcare among underserved communities. Professor Lepp volunteers on behalf of the State Office of Rural Health as the Chair of the Georgia Farmworker Health Program’s Advisory Board, where she contributes her clinical expertise as a PA and diabetes educator in an effort to improve the health of agricultural workers and their families throughout rural Georgia.

Research Presentations:

Stephanie Basey is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Rural Health Sciences program at Mercer University School of Medicine. Her research interests include the experiences of the Georgia farmer, mental well-being, and identifying the food environment of rural households. She is a research assistant at the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, where she contributes to the work that helps address rural Georgia's health challenges.

Dr. Christina Proctor is a Clinical Assistant Professor at UGA's College of Public Health. Dr. Proctor is a triple dawg and is passionate about improving the health of rural Georgians. She has a background in health promotion and public health, with specific training and expertise in research methodology, community engagement, and rural substance use. Her research is focused on rural health, in particular mental health and substance use disorders.

Anna Scheyett is Professor and former dean at the University of Georgia School of Social Work. She received her PhD from Memorial University, MSW from the University of North Carolina, and Master's in Science and Philosophy from Yale University Department of Human Genetics. Prior to working in Georgia, she was dean of the University of South Carolina College of Social Work, and prior to that, associate dean at the University of North Carolina School of Social Work. Dr. Scheyett's research examines issues related to the community well-being of vulnerable populations, including individuals with mental illness and rural populations at risk of stress and suicide. Her recent work has examined farmer suicide rates in Georgia, and she is collaborating with the Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and Family and Consumer Sciences on community outreach for suicide and stress prevention and intervention.