



Speaker Biographies

Michelle Singletary, Master of Ceremonies, Nationally Syndicated Columnist, Washington Post

Michelle Singletary writes the nationally-syndicated personal finance column, “The Color of Money,” which appears in The Washington Post on Wednesday and Sunday. Her award-winning column is syndicated by The Washington Post Writer’s Group and is carried in more than 100 newspapers nationwide. The column was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize only a year after its inception. Singletary has crafted a distinguished career from spreading financial knowledge, working not just in print media but also on television and radio, appearing on Oprah, The View, and Meet the Press, among others. Ms. Singletary was raised by her grandmother, “Big Mama,” and is always sure to credit her grandmother “with inspiring her acumen with financial planning.” She currently serves on Generations United’s National Center on Grandfamilies’ Council.

Brittney Barros, Young adult raised by her grandmother from Ypsilanti, Michigan

Brittney Barros, after living with neglect, entered foster care for the first time at the age of 11. After a long struggle, her mother finally regained custody of Brittney and her siblings, however, a year later her family became homeless and Brittney and her siblings re-entered the system and were placed in separate homes. The second time in foster care was much harder on Brittney who moved between different foster homes and was placed in a very restrictive group home for nearly a year. Being separated from her siblings was the hardest challenge, and after her mother’s rights were terminated, Brittney hoped that she and her siblings would be placed together with her grandmother. At age 16, Brittney was finally removed from the group home after a judge saw the negative impact the placement had on her well-being and placed her with her grandmother. It took almost a year for her grandmother to be granted guardianship over her two other siblings, but unfortunately her youngest brother still remains in foster care. Brittney is thankful for finally being placed with her grandmother and credits her grandmother for saving her and her two siblings from years of turmoil and trauma from foster care. She is still advocating for her youngest brother to be placed with her grandmother. Currently, Brittney passionately advocates in both the foster care and runaway/homeless youth community. Back at home, she works for Ozone House, a nonprofit organization for at risk and homeless youth as a Peer Outreach Worker. She is also an independent contractor through Speak Out -- a group that works to end homelessness in Washtenaw County. Brittney spends her free time being a foster youth voice through her group (Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative) and as a State Co-Director for the Parkwest Foundation, spreading awareness of resources available to those who have been in foster care.

Dr. Neil Gallagher, Grandparent caregiver from Hurst, Texas

Dr. Neil Gallagher, a former Peace Corp volunteer, holds a Ph.D from Brown University and is a former instructor at Texas Christian University. He is a motivational speaker and prolific author. Following a four-year custody battle, Dr. and Mrs. Gallagher raised and adopted their two

grandchildren, whose parents struggled with mental health issues. Their grandchildren are now 19 and 21. Dr. Gallagher presently hosts programs on two radio stations in Dallas and he and his wife speak in the Texas area on grandparents raising grandchildren. While in graduate school, he and his wife adopted a child from India and have two other grandsons, ages six and three.

SaulPaul, Musician, Songwriter from Austin, Texas

SaulPaul was raised by his grandmother. He credits his success to her, her faith in him and his faith. Though he started out with the odds against him, SaulPaul is now a world-renowned, award-winning artist. He's a "Musician with a Message" whose album *Dream in 3D* was considered for a Grammy Award. His book *Dream in 3D* has influenced youth and youth leaders across the U.S. SaulPaul is the founder of ReRoute, a non-profit organization that helps at-risk and underprivileged youth discover and develop their artistic and entrepreneurial skill sets.

Bette Hoxie, Grandparent caregiver from Orono, Maine

Bette Hoxie has over 46 years of experience as a foster and adoptive parent and is currently raising two of her grandchildren. In addition to her teenage grandson Joe-Joe, who she has raised since shortly after his birth, Bette recently stepped in to assist in the care of her adopted son's young nephew JJ, who knows Bette as grandma. Bette is the executive director of Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc. and The Kinship Program, which assists kinship caregivers in accessing services and resources and provides parental training programs and support groups. The program has seen a significant recent increase in the number of grandparents and other relatives caring for children because of the opioid crisis. Bette also serves on multiple advocacy committees for kinship care, including the Community Partners Project and the Maine Kinship Advocacy Network.

Christine Calpin, Managing Director of Public Policy for Casey Family Programs, Washington, D.C.

Christine Calpin supports Casey Family Program's efforts to inform and educate federal and state policymakers about the need for practice and funding strategies that support efforts to improve outcomes among children and families. She also supports the foundation's efforts to improve child welfare public policy in states across the country. Ms. Calpin brings more than 15 years of public policy experience to her job. Prior to joining Casey Family Programs, she worked as an independent consultant on child welfare, child care and family support programs for states and tribes. Prior to that, Ms. Calpin worked for two years at the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, first as associate director of the Child Care Bureau, and then as associate commissioner for the Children's Bureau, where she oversaw a \$7.2 billion budget and 130 employees responsible for all child abuse prevention, foster care and adoption programs delivered by state, local and tribal agencies. She also served as lead congressional staffer for the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means and prior to that worked as an Analyst in Social Legislation for the Congressional Research Service.

Shasta Dazen, Young adult raised by her grandparents from Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Whiteriver, Arizona

Shasta Dazen is 23 years old and from the Ft. Apache Indian Reservation of the White Mountain Apache Tribe located in Whiteriver, Arizona. Shasta was one of 12 children, and at the age of 5 her parents decided to move her and two of her brothers to live with her maternal grandparents in order to get a better education. Living with her grandparents, Shasta became immersed in the Apache Indian culture. Her grandmother was fluent in the Apache language and wore traditional Apache dress, and she credits her grandparents for teaching her to be humble, respectful, hardworking, independent, and most importantly, loving. Her grandparents now reside in the spirit world and she

doesn't forget their teachings and knows that who she is and everything she's accomplished is a reflection of them. Shasta currently serves as the President of the National Indian Health Tribal Youth Advisory Board and is currently working for the Johns Hopkins University Center for American Indian Health as a Program Research Assistant. Shasta is also a single mother to her 11 month old son Cree. Shasta enjoys the White Mountains and wishes someday you may all take an escape to the beautiful land of her people.

Rijenna Murray, Aunt caregiver from Indianapolis, Indiana

Rijenna Murray became the primary caregiver for her 12-year-old nephew when he was six years old. At that time, Rijenna's brother, her nephew's father, had recently been released from the military after serving in the frontline infantry. Suffering from PTSD, he experienced great difficulty in caring for his son and other children. The boy's mother was incarcerated. Rijenna's nephew has struggled with some behavioral and educational difficulties. She credits the information and training she received through Villages Network in Indianapolis for helping her learn effective parenting practices and teaching her how to better advocate for her nephew's educational needs. Rijenna serves as a juvenile probation officer in Indianapolis, Indiana.

A Second Chance, Inc. Choir

Special thanks to A Second Chance, Inc. Choir from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for performing at the GrandRally again this year. The choir members are staff and grandparents from A Second Chance, Inc., a private, not-for-profit, community-based agency committed to providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for children who are being cared for by relatives or close family friends in kinship care. For information, visit www.asecondchance-kinship.com.