

## About the Working Group for the GME Council

This collection of biographical sketches highlights the members of the Working Group for the GME Council—a collective of leaders who have contributed their time, insight, and energy over the past 10 months to lay the foundation for Alaska’s GME Council. Their expertise spans clinical care, academic leadership, health policy, workforce development, and rural health.

## Today’s Speakers

The individuals listed below are featured speakers at the Founders’ Forum. Given our tight schedule, brief introductions will be offered—not out of lack of appreciation, but to ensure each speaker has time to share their prepared remarks.

Full bios follow below, beginning with our **Guest Speakers**, then the **Working Group for the GME Council**, with speakers from the Working Group noted by an asterisk (\*).

### Guest Speakers (in order of appearance)

Dr. Kimberly Thomas

Dr. Murray Buttner

Dr. Rob Stenger

### Working Group Members Speaking (in order of appearance)

Dr. Barb Doty

Dr. Tonya Caylor

Dr. Harold Johnston

Dr. Alexander von Hafften

Ms. Nancy Merriman

Ms. Suzanne Tryck

## **Full Bios for Guest Speakers**



### **Kimberly Thomas, MD**

Dr. Kim Thomas joined the Alaska Family Medicine Residency (AKFMR) as a core faculty member in 2011 and became the Program Director in June 2023. From 2019–2024, she served as DIO (Designated Institutional Official) for Providence Alaska Medical Center as the only DIO in the state. She is a member of the ACGME’s Medically Underserved Areas and Populations workgroup.

Kim’s interests in medicine are obstetrics and reproductive health care, full scope family medicine, substance use treatment, LGBTQIA+ care, DEI, social justice, and rural health. She’s lived in Alaska longer than anywhere else. She grew up in Tennessee; attended college and worked in Washington, DC; completed graduate school in public health and medical school in Colorado; and attended residency and worked in Pennsylvania.

She enjoys time inside cooking and time outside with her husband (an orthopedic trauma surgeon) and her two children (both in college), especially backpacking, hiking, running, and generally exploring.



### **Murray Buttner, MD**

With over 30 years of experience in the medical field and having dedicated much of his career to serving rural and remote communities in Alaska, Dr. William (Murray) Buttner currently serves as the Medical Director for Primary Care at SEARHC. Murray earned his BA in History from Yale University and his MD from Columbia University. His notable positions include serving as the Medical Director at SEARHC's Alicia Roberts Medical Center in Klawock, AK, and the Assistant Medical Director at SEARHC's Ethel Lund Medical Center in Juneau, AK. In addition, Murray has served as the Medical Director at Ilanka Community Health Center and Cordova Community Medical Center in Cordova, AK, as well as Faculty at the Alaska Family Medicine Residency Program in Anchorage, AK, and Co-medical Director at Iliuliuk Family and Health Services in Unalaska, AK.

Murray appreciates practicing medicine in rural communities, feeling a deep connection to the people he serves and recognizing the reciprocal care they provide to him and his family. Murray's expertise lies in Rural Family Medicine, and he was honored as the 2021 Community Star by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH), representing Alaska.



**Robert Stenger, MD**

Dr. Rob Stenger helps lead the Montana Graduate Medical Education Council and has served as FMRWM Program Director since 2019 and faculty at the program since 2015. Prior to joining FMRWM he worked for Providence Medical Group in Missoula. Rob completed his residency in Family Medicine and Preventive Medicine at Oregon Health and Sciences University and his MD and MPH degrees at Johns Hopkins University.

In addition to being a proud Family Physician and primary care advocate, Rob's professional interests include public health, team-based health care, quality improvement and models for transformation of the health care delivery system, such as the patient-centered medical home and value-based payment. Rob is a member of the Missoula City-County Board of Health and in this role has been actively involved in the county response to the COVID pandemic. Rob is a native of Missoula, MT and is privileged to contribute to training the next generation of physicians in Montana.

## **Full Bios for the Working Group of the GME Council**



### **Gloria Burnett, MS**

Ms. Gloria Burnett currently serves as an Associate Professor in the UAA College of Health Department of Human Services. She is Director of the Alaska Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce as well as Director of the Alaska Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program. Prior to her ten years in this position, she served as Dean of Students, Allied Health Program Coordinator and NW Alaska AHEC Director at Ilisagvik College, Alaska's only tribal college located in Utqiagvik, AK. Gloria has a wealth of experience in rural and frontier workforce development, with special attention to indigenous populations. She has spearheaded a variety of projects focused on health career pathways and exploration for youth and adults. She also has experience with health professions training student exposure to rural and frontier communities and continuing education for rural healthcare providers.

Gloria is recipient of the 2018-19 Alaska Association of Career & Technical Educators Community Contribution Award, 2022 Barbara Berger Excellence in Public Health Education and Promotion Award and 2022 Alaska Primary Care Association Sockeye Award for Workforce Development. She is also a 2022 HERS Institute graduate. Gloria holds a Master of Science in the Science of Instruction and Instructional Technology Specialist certification from Drexel University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a Minor in Human Development and Family Studies from Pennsylvania State University. She is also a certified Adult and Teen Mental Health First Aid Instructor.



### **Tonya Caylor, MD\***

Dr. Tonya Caylor is a family physician and physician coach based in Anchorage with over 25 years of clinical and academic experience. She serves as Clinical Associate Professor for the University of Washington's WWAMI Network of Family Medicine Residencies and remains active in faculty development through WWAMI/Madigan and Society of Teachers in Family Medicine (STFM) initiatives. She is the founder of Joy in Family Medicine Coaching and co-directs the AMWA Evolve Trainee Leadership Coaching Program. A certified professional coach (ICF-PCC) with a certification in the CHARM Well-being Leadership program, Tonya supports physician well-being and leadership development across the country. She coaches within family medicine residency programs—from resident groups to GME leadership teams—to foster connection, growth, and sustainability in medical education.

Motivated by her commitment to sustainable GME in Alaska, Tonya accepted an invitation to lead the Working Group to form the GME Council, drawing on experience from founding and growing a volunteer-run community health center serving underserved populations, residency learning networks, and inter-institutional collaborations.



### **Barb Doty, MD\***

Dr. Barb Doty is a WWAMI Medical Graduate and 35-year Family Physician in Wasilla, who is currently the Asst. Clinical Dean of the Alaska WWAMI Medical Program, U. of Washington School of Medicine. Barb co-championed the original design and development of the Alaska Family Medicine Residency Program and is actively engaged in starting a second Family Medicine Residency and Teaching Health Center in the Palmer-Wasilla area. Barb has been a medical educator throughout her career, from her days as a Chief Resident in Denver, Colorado to her many years as clinical faculty for the Dept. of Family Medicine at UW. Her area of special expertise is the design of medical education programs for rural and remote practice that allow physicians to thrive, not just survive, in challenging rural and remote settings



### **Harold Johnston, MD\***

Dr. Harold Johnston MD is a family physician and lifelong Alaskan, whose career has been in Graduate Medical Education and the advancement of primary care in Alaska. Harold graduated from the Alaska WAMI (only one W in those days!) program in 1986 and completed residency in family medicine at Swedish Hospital in Seattle in 1989. His first job as a physician was at the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center (ANHC), where he served as a staff physician and then Medical Director. While there, he joined a workgroup planning a new FM residency for Alaska, and became its program director(PD) when it started in 1997, where he served for 18 years. While PD, Harold was involved in the planning of three additional GME programs in AK: the Hospice and Palliative Medicine fellowship, the Alaska Pediatric Track, and the Internal Medicine Rural Training Track. After leaving the PD position, Harold became CEO of the Providence Medical Group in Alaska, from which he retired in 2018.

In retirement Harold has continued to teach residents and mentor young FM leaders and serves on the Boards of Directors for ANHC and the Alaska Primary Care Association. He enjoys boating, learning to play Jazz piano, philosophy, and fuming about the state of the world.



**Nancy Merriman, MPH\***

Ms. Nancy has dedicated her career to community health. She believes community well-being is rooted in social, physical, and environmental health, and that people's aspirations are supported by the network of these elements. Nancy joined the Alaska Primary Care Association in 2013. Before coming to the Association she led the work to build community clinics at the Denali Commission, did community health planning & promotion with the Municipality of Anchorage, and delivered community nutrition programs in Kodiak. Her education includes an undergraduate degree in Community Nutrition, a Masters in Public Health, and a Masters in Business Administration. She enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, cooking, reading, and relaxing at their cabin on Flat Lake.





### **Ursula McVeigh, MD**

Dr. Ursula McVeigh joined the Providence Alaska Medical Group in 2014. She is currently the Designated Institutional Official of the Providence Alaska Graduate Medical Educational Programs and program director of the Providence Alaska Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship. She is a clinical professor of Medicine with the University of Washington School of Medicine and in her past work at Providence served as executive medical director of Providence Hospice and medical director of the Providence Alaska Medical Group Palliative Care Department.

She completed medical school training at Yale in 1999, internal medicine residency training at the University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMHC) in 2002 where she stayed on as teaching faculty in primary care and hospitalist program. She attended the Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital in 2008 and returned to UVMHC to work as the director of palliative care educational programs and medical director of the UVM department and hospice medical director of Hospice of the Chaplain Valley.

Ursula was born in New York and has previously lived in Baltimore, MD, New Haven, CT and Burlington, VT. She was drawn to Alaska for its cultural diversity and to care for both urban and rural populations and the creativity involved in helping people in such different environments. She greatly enjoys the outdoors and spends her time hiking, cross country skiing and exploring Alaska with her family.



### **Tari O'Connor, MSW**

Ms Tari O'Connor is the Chief Program Officer at the Alaska Primary Care Association. She has more than 20 years of leadership experience in state, local, and nonprofit public health and health in Alaska in a wide variety of focus areas that include chronic disease and injury prevention, reproductive health, infectious disease prevention and control, childcare licensing, WIC, school-based health centers, and workforce development. Tari is interested in policy as well as community and organizational systems, and how all of them affect health.

Tari's first career was as a US Naval Officer and defense policy analyst, which included a focus on public health within the military. Tari received her Master's in Social Welfare Management and Planning from the University of California, Berkeley, and her Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and History from the University of Pennsylvania.



### **Gina Senko**

Ms. Gina Senko has enjoyed her supporting roles within the Anchorage medical community for nearly 40 years. Her assistance has spanned from Alaska Regional Hospital to Providence Alaska Medical Center, aiding physicians, executives, family medicine residents, students, and staff at all levels. She found the most satisfying role as Executive Assistant to the Program Director and faculty at Alaska Family Medicine Residency for 19 years.

Beyond these responsibilities, she is a committed wife, mother, grandmother, a community volunteer, and supporter of elderly in need. She enjoys hiking, historical novels, live theater, and watching movies.



### **Suzanne Tryck\***

Ms. Suzanne Tryck has been a steady and influential voice in Alaska's efforts to grow and sustain its physician workforce. With decades of service bridging the University of Alaska and state policymakers, she played a vital role as Director of Alaska Regional Programs, University of Washington-side of the Alaska-WWAMI Partnership Program. Her work has focused on building the pipeline of in-state medical education and postgraduate training opportunities for Alaskans. Suzanne was instrumental in helping establish the Alaska Family Medicine Residency (AKFMR), the state's first in-state residency program, which launched in 1997, and continues to anchor physician retention in Alaska.

In addition to her early GME work, Suzanne was involved in early planning discussions nearly 30 years ago that envisioned a statewide structure for supporting graduate medical education. She also played a key role in shaping the University of Washington's Pediatric Alaska Track, designed to train pediatricians with deep experience in Alaska's rural and urban communities, and the University of Washington Alaska Internal Medicine Rural Residency Program. Alongside her academic and legislative work, she led a healthcare consulting group based in Anchorage, advancing health workforce initiatives across the state. Her contributions across sectors have helped build a more sustainable, locally grounded physician workforce for Alaska.



**Alexander von Hafften Jr., MD\***

Dr. Alexander (“Lex”) von Hafften is a board-certified adult psychiatrist and Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association who has served the Alaska community for over three decades. His diverse clinical work has included leading roles in community mental health, academic medicine, telepsychiatry, and public service. Lex has been a guiding voice in shaping psychiatric education and policy in the state, including through his long-time teaching role with the Alaska WWAMI School of Medicine and his foundational work with the Alaska Psychiatry Residency Steering Committee.

Beyond clinical care and teaching, he has been a dedicated contributor to statewide systems improvement, serving on numerous committees and advisory bodies including the Alaska State Medical Association Physician Health Committee and the Controlled Substances Advisory Committee. He currently serves on the Alaska Graduate Medical Education Council Workgroup and holds leadership roles with Omni Med’s mental health initiatives in Uganda.

Lex holds a Master of Legal Studies from Washington University in St. Louis and graduate degrees in medicine and biological sciences. He brings deep expertise and a collaborative spirit to advancing physician well-being, equitable access to mental health care, and the expansion of Alaska’s healthcare workforce.

**\*Speakers from the Working Group**