



The Monthly Newsletter of  
BCBSM Leadership Development Association

## FROM THE DESK OF OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings BCBSM LDA members.

Some of us can look outside and see your grass peeking through the snow. Some of us can look at our thermostat and see the temperature set a little lower. Some of us can look around and see the orange cones on the roads. These are all signs of spring, which is symbolic of change.



Personally, I can feel change. I see brighter days ahead after a very long two years of restrictions, including the inability to see people's smiles behind the masks. I won't go too far on that topic because that CDC update could have changed by the time this issue is published. What is certain is that spring is on the horizon and so is more flexibility to connect with family and friends, which always brings a smile to my face and joy to my life. Another reason for me to smile is the celebration of women, as we have entered National Women's History Month. This is a time to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions women have made to the United States. So, take time to recognize the amazing work of the strong and brilliant women in your lives.

We are also preparing for the end of the 2021-2022 BCBSM LDA term year (in June with our keynote speaker, Daniel J. Loepf) and I want to recognize my team for their hard work. Thank you, Kaitlyn Sibai (VP of Professional Development), Terrance Puryear (VP of Public Relations), Carla Harris (VP of Awards and Recognition, also manages the BCBSM LDA website),



**Sharese Hogan**  
BCBSM LDA President  
2021-2022

**Charles Schultz** (VP of Finance) and **Sarah Cheaito** (VP of Program Administration). You and your teams are doing an amazing job creating relevant events, partnering with Blue Cross organization, collaborating with the enterprise teams and managing the daily operations of BCBSM LDA. Without your volunteerism and passion, we couldn't have survived the tough times our organization encountered this past year. BCBSM LDA members, please give them a shout out!

In closing, I hope you enjoyed the sessions with Kristie Stocker, the Monthly Member Meeting with Dr. Aaron Friedkin and the BlueNights Mixer<sup>SM</sup> with Scott Suever. This month we'll have some great tips on managing your time and our Annual Student Speech Contest. Please register, see the [Events page on the BCBSM LDA website](#) or the [Calendar of Events on page 6](#).

**Thanks for your support and let's continue to step up!**

Sharese Hogan, 2021-2022 President,  
BCBSM Leadership Development  
Association, Chapter #141



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# 2022 BCBSM LDA MEMBERSHIP AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP SPEECH CONTEST

Mark your calendars for one of the most exciting events of the year! Join us for the virtual [2022 BCBSM LDA Membership and Youth Leadership Speech Contest](#), March 30 at 4:00 p.m.

Ten contestants will compete for scholarship prizes, and a chance to advance to the national stage and compete for the \$4,000 scholarship grand prize.

We're looking for volunteers! The ongoing success of this event is due largely to the support of enthusiastic volunteers. Email Contest Chair, Lydia Officer [lofficer@bcbsm.com](mailto:lofficer@bcbsm.com) for more information.



*2021 first place winner*

# NEW MEMBER CORNER



OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS  
**Welcome**

Lynn Garrison  
Rachel Landoski  
Lillian Metry  
Tamika Powell  
Teresa Robertson  
Venkatesh Shivashankarappa  
Tabitha Thomas  
Mai Yang

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As a member of BCBSM LDA you are now a part of a great group of leaders, striving to live out our theme, "Step Up." We encourage you to connect with our members and learn something new about the organization.

## Member Benefits

- Networking through monthly meeting and mixers
- Professional development through workshops and "lunch and learn" sessions
- Community involvement through events like Bowl for Kids' Sake, walks for cures and causes, Adopt-a-Highway and more!

We have many upcoming events to begin networking and meeting other BCBSM LDA members. Check them out on the [Calendar of Events page](#).

We also perform various community involvement services throughout the year. We'd love for you to take part.

For more information about all other upcoming events, please visit [BCBSM LDA's site](#).

We look forward to seeing you at the next event!

Get  
Acquainted

# NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

by Jennifer Pakkala, health care analyst

As a fresh graduate out of college, Katie Sweeney was looking to find mentoring, discuss her goals, pursue leadership development and expand her professional network.

And then the reinsurance analyst for Accident Fund Group found the BCBSM LDA.

“This is almost essential for growth, and that’s why I joined,” Katie said. “I joined because I wanted to get to know people and develop leadership skills. There’s a lot of people in our organization we can learn from.”

Since joining AF Group two and a half years ago, the Lansing resident saw value in networking with others. “When I started, I struggled to meet people, even though we were still in the office. It’s so easy to go to your job, show up and then go home. Then I began telling my manager I wanted to meet people. I wanted to know the big picture, so I asked a lot of questions to as many people as I could.”

Katie began her current role in the Actuarial and Data Science department at the beginning of this year, in part by earning a Master’s certificate in data science. Her department is responsible for lowering the company’s risk to an untoward event or disaster by insuring its policies.

She is also the marketing and communications chair for AF Group’s WONDER ERN, which stands for Women Optimizing Networks Diversity and Enterprise Relations. As she develops her leadership skills, Katie aspires to be an empathetic leader. “I think if you don’t have empathy, you can’t see where other people are at. Good leaders are able to put themselves in other people’s shoes and meet them where they’re at.”

## Katie Sweeney



### GET TO KNOW KATIE:

- Favorite musical artist: Dierks Bentley, who she has seen four times in concert.
- Places she’d like to travel: Paris and Glacier National Park in Canada.
- Favorite snack: popcorn, especially Chicago style.
- If she could have dinner with any famous person: “Adele. I just think she’s really cool. I love her accent and she seems super nice.”



Dierks Bentley



Katie has two cats and fostered others during the pandemic

# FEBRUARY VIRTUAL MIXER LEADING WITH EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

By Terrance Puryear, team leader II

Our February virtual mixer host was Scott Suever, director with Sales Learning and Development. Scott kicked off the mixer by telling us about his family and the major role that empathy and compassion played in his personal life to remain an engaged employee and leader. He shared a few of the differences between empathy and compassion and how they are equally valuable in our workplace. Scott stated that empathy and compassion are “critical to efforts in inclusion and retention.”

- Drives job satisfaction
- Boosts innovation and engagement
- Reduces burnout



*Scott Suever*



The information that Scott shared fostered new ideas and reinforced current strategies for what effective leadership and influence looks like. Empathetic leaders promote and respect a healthy work-life balance and take into consideration the uniqueness of life circumstances. According to the research shared by Scott, as we suspend judgment and show empathy and compassion for others, workers are empowered to make better decisions to manage their workloads more efficiently and proactively, resulting in more engagement and productivity.

Participants were encouraged to take the following actions:

- Be an active listener
- Suspend assumptions
- Be intentional about connecting with others and make it a priority

Be on the lookout for communications regarding how you can join our next Mixer Event! Interested in supporting our BlueNights Mixer<sup>SM</sup>? Please contact Tiffany Darby, Mitchell Pike, or Nicole Greenhoe.

[Meeting recording](#)

# CALENDAR of EVENTS

March  
15

## BCBSM LDA Book Club Meeting

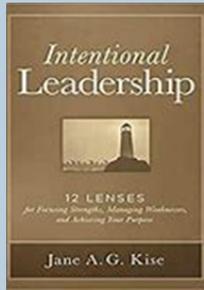
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

We'll be starting our discussion of Chapters 13 and 14.

### Facilitator:

**Veronica Beasley-Robinson**, Executive Assistant to VP

[Link to register](#)



March  
24

## Managing Your Crazy Life: Tips for Time Management

12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Work-life balance is important. Learn to how to manage your time at any point in your career.

### Speaker:

**Kaitlyn Sibai**, Senior Health Care Analyst - Provider Engagement & Transformation

[Link to register](#)



March  
30

## 2021 BCBSM LDA Membership and Youth Leadership Speech Contest

4:00 p.m.

### Host:

**Jennifer Pakkala**, Health Care Analyst

[Link to register](#)



# MONTHLY MEMBER MEETING

## PURSUING HAPPINESS: MY JOURNEY FROM PRACTICING PHYSICIAN TO HEALTH PLAN EXECUTIVE

By Ebony Benson, team lead I group customer membership & billing



Dr. Aaron Friedkin

As children, we have many hopes and dreams of what our future would be like. Most of us just want to be successful. Life experiences along the way may change our perspectives on the choices we make. Our monthly meeting speaker, Dr. Aaron Friedkin, SVP Care Delivery, states there is no right path to take. He has shared his experiences and lessons in hopes of preventing others from making mistakes and to assist with challenges that may arise throughout our career journeys. Dr. Friedman brought up several questions he's faced personally along his career journey, such as: Why take this path? What led you to change the path? What motivates you to make certain decisions? These are all questions that we may ask ourselves from time to time as we seek to apply for a job or if we are close to reaching tenure. There was a time where status and money meant the most to Dr. Friedkin.



He grew up in Ohio in a loving home and was oldest of three. He knew at an early age that he wanted to be a plastic surgeon due to a dog attack that he experienced. He worked hard and did what it took to become a successful surgeon. He worked long hours and steadily advanced to make more money. It wasn't long before he realized that the money wasn't enough to make him happy.

Along the way he also realized he didn't enjoy performing surgeries any longer. He wanted to find a job that fulfilled his purpose, a job that made him happy. There are different reasons that people choose a certain path, but does it lead to enjoyment and happiness? Dr. Friedkin went on to take a 70% pay cut by shifting his focus to the business aspect of the health care industry. It was no longer about the amount of money. He wanted to be excited to come to work and have a career that motivated and challenged him. He went on to work for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota where he was able to use his clinical knowledge, consulting and problem-solving skills.

He later joined Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. During his time here, he had led three different teams and is the SVP of Care Delivery Transformation. He truly enjoyed his time here. He continues to apply the pursuit of happiness as he navigates throughout his career. Unfortunately, Dr. Friedkin lost his mother-in-law who had challenges receiving resources to assist with her illness. Dr. Friedkin changed his focus to continue his career journey by finding the sense of purpose that connects him to his work. He is starting a company with a team of health care leaders that will focus on addressing the needs of underserved populations.



I challenge everyone to think about what brings them fulfillment and to find your own pursuit of happiness.

[Meeting recording](#)

# LEVEL UP LEADERSHIP SERIES

## LEVEL 4: REALIGN YOUR EXPECTATIONS

By Kaitlyn Sibai, LDA Vice President Professional Development

During the last four months, the BCBSM LDA professional development committee hosted the Level Up Leadership Series with Kristie Stocker. This cumulative 4-part interactive series was designed to help participants become the confident leader they've always dreamed of.

Level **UP**  
Leadership

*Level 4: Realign Your Expectations* was held on February 9. This session included a review of what participants learned in the previous three sessions, plus information on maintaining healthy expectations of yourself and your team. She gave participants the 5 Next Leadership Steps and ended with a leadership roundtable, answering participants' questions.



### 5 Next Leadership Steps:

1. **Create your vision.** Identify timelines to know where you want to be in 6 months all the way up to 5 years from now.
2. **Identify potential obstacles and fears.** List your fears and obstacles on one side of a page and write their solutions on the other side.
3. **Identify strengths and challenges.** Define your value in terms of outcomes; what do you bring to the table?
4. **Build your support system.** Expand connections. Tip: connect with someone you respect once per month.
5. **Set healthy self-expectations and external expectations.** Tip: list five ways you'll keep your self-expectations healthy every day.

If you missed any of the Level Up Leadership Series, you can watch the recordings by visiting our website ([www.nma1.org/141](http://www.nma1.org/141)) and navigating to the [Meeting Recordings](#) page or click on the links below:

### Recording Links

[Level 1: Reimagine Your Vision – meeting recording](#)

[Level 2: Release Your Limitations – meeting recording](#)

[Level 3: Realize Your Leadership Potential – meeting recording](#)

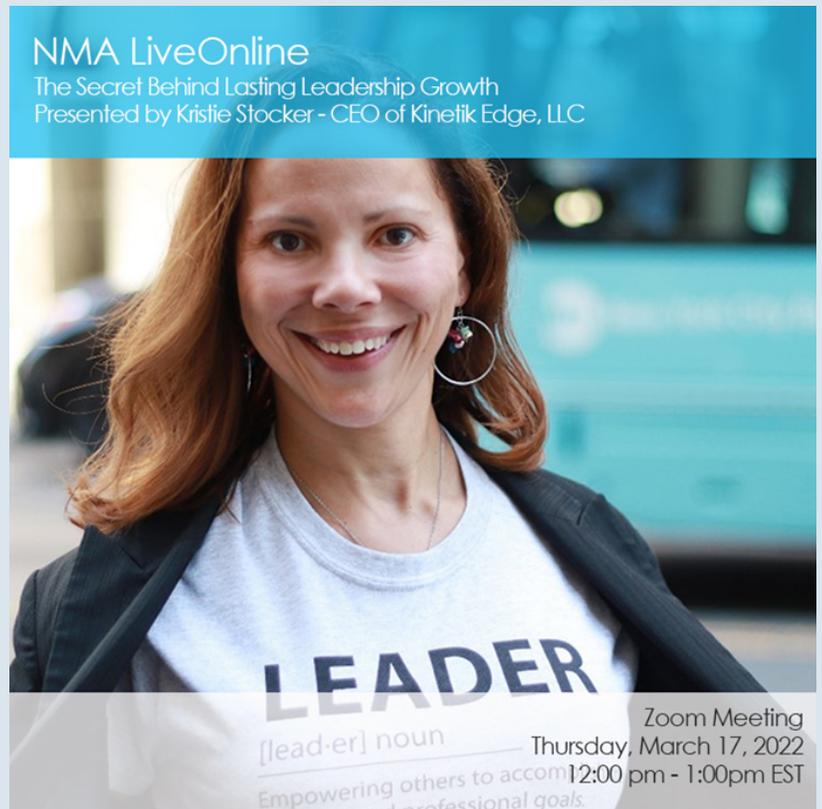
[Level 4: Realign Your Expectations – meeting recording](#)

Kristie Stocker—CEO of Kinetik Edge LLC and an award-winning keynote speaker, success coach and leadership consultant—facilitated the series and offered tangible action items after each session to help participants achieve their leadership goals.



Kristie Stocker

## NMA LIVEONLINE "THE SECRET BEHIND LASTING LEADERSHIP GROWTH"



Mark your calendars to join for a great NMA event! Join us for "The Secret Behind Lasting Leadership Growth," on March 17 at 12:00-1:00 p.m.

If you want to build a stronger direction in your leadership career and create an enthusiastic team that's motivated to act, you won't want to miss this event with Kristie Stocker.

You'll learn how to:

- Recreate or reconnect with your leadership journey in a big, meaningful way
- Use your potentially underutilized skills to make the difference you really want to
- Rejuvenate your leadership direction to the next level in a balanced and enjoyable way
- Harness the power of this secret to inspire your team into swift action



*Kristie Stoker is an award-winning keynote speaker, success coach and leadership consultant. She's also CEO of Kinetik Edge LLC, a leadership coaching and training company*

## BCBSM LDA Code of Ethics

- I will recognize that all individuals inherently desire to practice their occupations to the best of their ability.
- I will assume that all individuals want to do their best.
- I will maintain a broad and balanced outlook and will recognize value in the ideas and opinions of others.
- I will be guided in all my activities by truth, accuracy, fair dealing and good taste.
- I will keep informed on the latest developments in techniques, equipment and process.
- I will recommend or initiate methods to increase productivity and efficiency.
- I will support efforts to strengthen the management profession through training and education.
- I will help my associates reach personal and professional fulfillment.
- I will earn and carefully guard my reputation for good moral character and good citizenship.
- I will promote the principles of our American Enterprise System to others, by highlighting its accomplishments and displaying confidence in its future.
- I will recognize that leadership is a call to service.

## Statement of Principles

BCBSM LDA is dedicated to managerial excellence, personal and professional growth, and leadership development. The following principles identify BCBSM LDA's core beliefs and provide the basis for the Association's Mission Statement.

- We believe in the highest standards of personal and organizational integrity and respect for the individual.
- We believe in lifelong learning, continuous improvement, and the development of a workforce capable of sustaining a competitive posture in the global economy.
- We believe management is a creative, dynamic, and essential process enabling people to achieve personal and organizational objectives.
- We believe that managerial responsibility is shared among all individuals at all levels of the organization and that leadership is critical to management success.
- We believe that individuals and organizations have a community and civic responsibility.

## blueprint team

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## BCBSM LDA Board Officers

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VP of Awards and Recognition: Carla Harris

VP of Program Administration: Sarah Cheaito

VP of Professional Development: Kaitlyn Sibai

## NMA National Mission Statement

NMA offers leadership development products and opportunities that maximize the potential of our members, sponsoring organizations and communities.