

DECEMBER 7, 2025  
Downtown Hartford Marriott

authenticity

**TED<sup>x</sup>** Hartford

x = independently organized TED event

EVENT SPONSORS

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# 2025 SPEAKERS



Massachusetts



Connecticut



Connecticut



West Virginia



Colorado



Massachusetts



Connecticut

**Plus guest performances by**  
*Remy Adir*  
*L'Shir*  
*Kody Hilderand*  
*Shreyal Bhagwat*



Connecticut

# Get to know them!

**Carolyn Sharp**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Carolyn celebrates "cake season" from July through October, making custom birthday cakes for each of her family members!



**Christos Provitalis**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Christos has been collecting LEGO sets for over 20 years and plans to keep collecting until he retires, at which point he'll finally sell them and dedicate an entire room to building a sprawling LEGO city.



**Emily Zeran**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Emily has sung the National Anthem at the Hartford Mansion.



**Joelle Moray**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Joelle plays the guitar and drums and was the lead singer in a rock band for years.



**Kendall Berg**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Kendall has moved over 30 times in her lifetime!



**Laura Huang**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Laura has a spreadsheet ranking every restaurant soup dumpling she's ever had.



**Pete Sena**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

When Pete was a little kid, his neighbors called him Petrie dictionary because he used to read the dictionary for fun and write the definition of almost any word.



**Rich Brown**

Meet the Speakers  
**TED<sup>x</sup> Hartford**

**fun fact:**

Rich used to be an emcee for a hip hop group called 514.



# How To Enjoy The Show



Take pictures and post on social media  
Write down the moments that stand out to you  
Start a conversation with someone  
Tell your friends about TEDxHartford  
Share using #TEDXHARTFORD

**VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDING STRICTLY PROHIBITED**



Did **You** Know?



# TEDxHartford Talks Have Been Viewed Over

6.5 Million Times





# TEDxHartford Team

## ORGANIZERS

Lee Simmons  
Laura Dinan Haber

## MARKETING

Laura Dinan Haber  
Kristen Cusato

## SPEAKER COACHES

Ryan Mazurkivich  
Jeremy Brewer  
Kristen Cusato  
Laura Hennings  
Nithin Eapen  
Stelios Stavrianos

## REGISTRATION

Nikki Simmons  
Liz Reynolds

## PHOTO BOOTH

Jeanette Brewer

## WEBSITE

Hannah Lafontaine

## SPONSORSHIP

Carolyn Montrose  
Misty Amarena

## REHEARSALS

Ryan Mazurkivich  
Jeremy Brewer  
Stelios Stavrianos

## GREETERS/USHERS

|                |                   |                    |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Nithin Eapen   | Jeremy Brewer     |                    |
| Nick Desrocher | Hannah Lafontaine | Stelios Stavrianos |
|                | Carolyn Montrose  | Erin Colby         |

*TEDxHartford is 100% **volunteer** based. We **love** what we do.  
We **love** giving back to the **Hartford** community.*



## How it Began: TEDxHartford

### IT STARTED WITH A PHONE CALL

Lee Simmons applied to be a speaker at a local TEDx organization, but when he didn't get a reply, he decided to **create** his own. He knew he needed a **strong** partner to achieve this goal. So he called his friend **Laura Dinan Haber**.

Since the application to organize **TEDxHartford** was yet to be approved, he couldn't tell Laura anything about it. All he could share was that he had a **great** idea and that it would be **awesome**. With slight hesitation, Laura said yes, and the rest is **history**.

With each year that passes, the **TEDxHartford** event and its respective **team** continue to grow.

**LEE SIMMONS & LAURA DINAN HABER**  
**TEDXHARTFORD CO-ORGANIZERS**



Lee



Laura

# Speaker Coaches

## RYAN - JEREMY - KRISTEN - LAURA - NITHIN - STELIOS

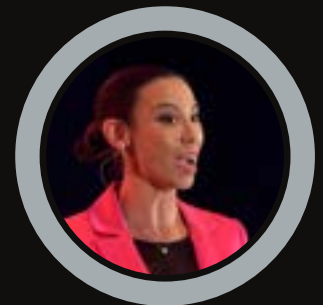
After taking the TEDxHartford stage in 2018, **Ryan Mazurkivich** couldn't wait to help new speakers, so he became a speaker coach in 2019. Ryan also runs rehearsals and is the speaker's handler on show day.

**Kristen Cusato** was a part of TEDxSanDiego for a number of years before moving back to CT and attended TEDxHartford in 2019 she immediately went up to Lee and asked to be a part of our team and has been an amazing part of our speaker coaching team.

2020 was a busy year for **Jeremy Brewer**. He did both a TED and TEDxHartford talk. After nerding out endlessly with Ryan about TED talks, Jeremy joined the team as a speaker coach in 2022. You met Jeremy as you arrived tonight.

In between trips flying around the world, **Laura Hennings** was a 2022 speaker with a love and a passion for taking an idea to the stage. That led to her joining the team as a speaker coach in 2023. Laura is also an integral part of our social media team.

The next wave a great coaches came in 2024 as two more of our former speakers have joined the coaching team **Nithin Eapen** and **Stelios Stavrianos**.



**YOU CAN WATCH PREVIOUS TEDXHARTFORD TALKS  
RIGHT FROM THIS PROGRAM! ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES  
CLICK THE SPEAKERS FULL NAME TO BRING YOU TO  
THEIR TEDXHARTFORD TALK AND SHARE!**

# LEGACY

*This page is dedicated to those who are a part of the **TEDxHartford FAMILY** who are no longer with us. You are missed and your contributions and memories will live on forever in all of our hearts.*



## **Dr David Greenfield**

David was a speaker from 2021 and the first speaker that's no longer with us.

David passed away from Pancreatic Cancer in December 2023. David was a well known expert in technology addiction, appearing in Time Magazine and the TV show Intervention. He Also wrote the Internet Addiction for Dummies book. "We should put our phones down, and plug back into life"



## **Officer Greg Swiantek**

Greg is the father of Remy Adir, the multiple time TEDxHartford performer and fan favorite. Greg tragically died unexpectedly in 2025. Greg was an absolute asset in assisting the TEDxHartford team with getting Remy set up and broken down off stage in just a matter of seconds. A career law-enforcement officer, husband and father whose contributions will be greatly missed by all

# YEAR # 8

*"Technology has been accelerating at an exponential pace and we have been adopting technology at an exponential pace"*

*-Kartik*

*"There's a scientific reason you can't eat just one"*

*-Zane*

*"There's a global shift happening in the way grief and bereavement are connected"*

*-Kate*

*"Tension often leads to a blow up or a give up"*

*-Cash*

*"Your digital footprint is bigger than any one post, any one site or any one app"*

*-Jose*

*"That's the vibe of vitality"*

*-Shelley*

*"We need new rules for retirement and we need a new script"*

*-Ashley*



# EMBRACING COMPLEXITY



Michael

Michael Bungay Stanier

How to improve your workplace relationships



Ashley

Ashley Rigby

A fresh perspective on retirement

# DECEMBER 1



Zane

Zane Tickoo

The Power of  
The Plate



Kate

Kate Mollison

Preparing for the  
Unthinkable



Kartik

Kartik Sakhivel

Winning the AI  
Battle



Shelley

Shelley Best

How Creative Disruption Can  
Grow a Community

# 2024



Cash

## Cash Nickerson

The Seven Tensions of Negotiation



Jose

## Jose Monkey

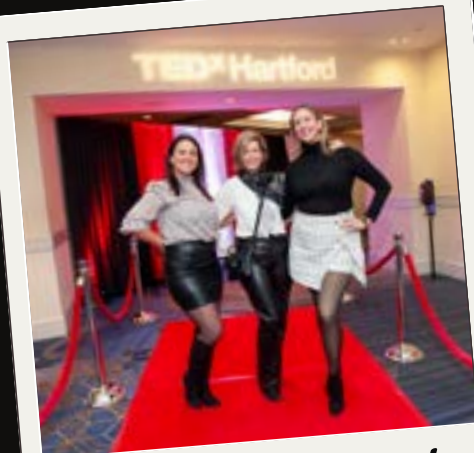
How micro-online posting can be a macro privacy risk



Ushers

## The Best Volunteers

Our team helps with all aspects of the event



Red Carpet

## Walk the walk

Your chance to walk the red carpet. Is the red circle next?

# GUEST PERFORMANCES



Remy Adir



Austin Scelzo



L'Shir



Kody Hildebrand



Nadia Sims

# YEAR # 7

*"See the world as WE ARE. Not how IT IS"*

*-Daniel*



*"The avoidance of risk is risky"*

*-Allison*

*"Sometimes the words you don't say are more important"*

*-Stelios*

*"Money is the language of transactions"*

*-Nithin*

*"Seeing the value of ourselves before we allow money to define the worth of us"*

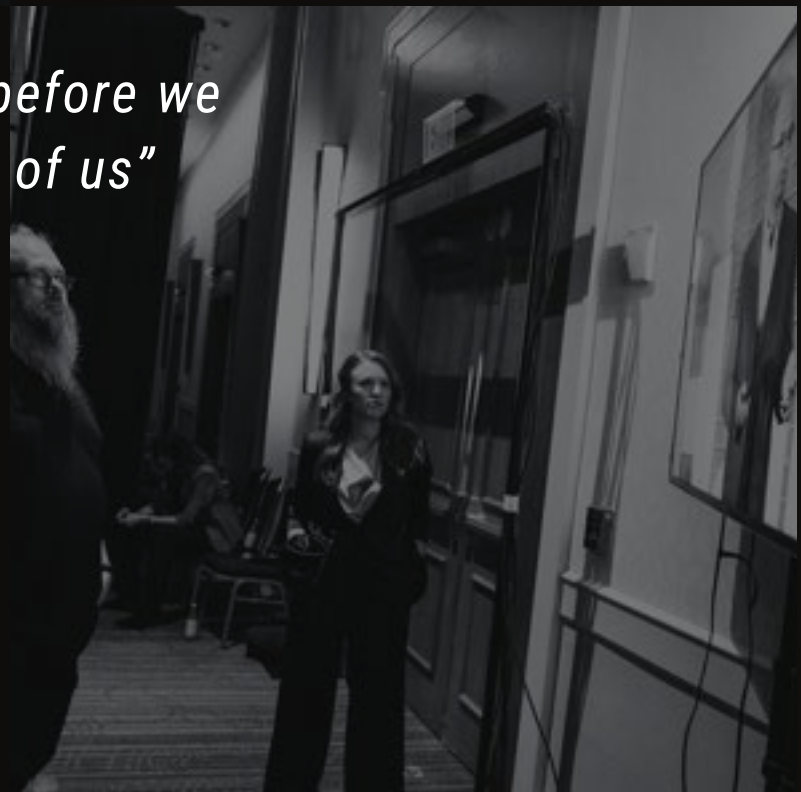
*-Forrest*

*"When we die, are we truly dead"*

*-Ben*

*"I (x41)"*

*-Nicole*



# DISRUPTING FOUNDATIONS



*Ben*

**Ben Peerri**

The Illusion of Memory: Can we Truly Digitize Existence?



*Allison*

**Allison Peck**

Beyond Quiet Quitting: Motivating the New Workforce

# DECEMBER 3



Stelios

Stelios Stavrianos

Why Silence is the Mastery of  
Modern Communication



Nithin

Nithin Eapen

Demystifying DeFi: Why You Need  
New Paradigms for Financial Services



Forrest

Forrest Iandola

How AI Will  
Eat Hollywood



Nicole

Nicole Semeraro

How to Save Money With  
Your Healthcare Choices

# 2023



Daniel

Daniel Bracken

The Perception  
of Limitations



Remy

Remy Adair

Musician  
Guest Performer



Brian

Brian Jarvis

Musician  
Guest Performer



L'Shir

University of Hartford

Acapella Group  
Guest Performer

# YEAR # 6

*"The future is going to turn out whether you like or not. Question is, do you want to have a say in it?"*

*-Brent*

*"The avoidance of risk is risky"*

*-Cindy*

*"I felt a sense of fear and trepidation in a place I lived for more than thirty years"*

*-Jay*

*"As a society, we're involuntarily playing an unfair game"*

*-Nicole*

*"Seeing the value of ourselves before we allow money to define the worth of us"*

*-Laura*

*"Am I safe, or am I uncomfortable?"*

*-Jordan*

*"Quantifying value is hard to track"*

*-George*

*"We need to move from guilt to gift"*

*-Allison*

# FREQUENCY



Brent

**Brent Robertson**

Listening our future  
into existence



Cindy

**Cindy Deekitwong**

Intraprenuer with  
an "I" not an "E"

# DECEMBER 4



Jay

Jay Williams

Door to door  
diversity



Nicole

Nicole Suissa

Working moms: America's 1.6  
trillion dollar investment



Jordan

Jordan Polon

Is perception  
reality?



Laura

Laura Hennings

How to achieve wealth  
on your own terms

# 2022



George

George Howard

The song that  
owns itself



Allison

Allison Holzer

The gift and power of  
unstructured time



Byron

Byron Bigelow

Artist  
Guest Performer



L'Shir

University of Hartford

Acapella Group  
Guest Performer

# MINI-TALKS

In 2022, TEDxHartford launched its first-ever **High School Mini Talk Challenge**, giving young voices a platform to share bold ideas. Speaker coach Jeremy Brewer collaborated closely with the students and school administration to help them shape and refine their messages. Three students, **Giovanni Odozi, Luca Ferrucci** and **Genevieve Dichiarà** were selected to deliver two-minute mini talks. The talks were recorded in an old television studio located inside the high school, then edited by fellow high school students, creating a truly student-driven project. The completed talks were then showcased live at the TEDxHartford event, where the students were honored on the iconic red circle.



Luca – Genevieve – Giovanni



Brian

Brian Verderosa

Singer/Songwriter  
Pre-Show Performer



Nikki & Liz

Registration Table

The first people you meet  
when you arrive

# YEAR # 5

*We are 96% less creative than our childhood selves"*

*-Nashita*

*"I think after staying alive and reproducing, the most important thing we do is ask questions"*

*-Mark*

*"Sometimes a person's pronouns are the only power they have"*

*-Mala*

*"They never washed the blood off the wall"*

*-Daryl*

*"Employers are realizing they can become geographically agnostic as to where they hire talent"*

*-Harry*

*"Unplug your screen, and plug back into life"*

*-David*

*"Every time we eat we go through a 32-step process"*

*-Katie*

*"We can all continue to blame each other, which is something we've all got very good at doing"*

*-Leticia*

# AWAKENING



Nashita

Nashita Roy-Pope

Channeling your  
kid courage



Mark

Mark Sheridan

The secret to creating  
conversations

# DECEMBER 5



Mala

Mala Matacin

Why gender pronouns matter



Daryl

Daryl McGraw

Urban trauma unchecked is urban trauma untreated



Harry

Harry Moseley

Working and living in a virtual world



David

David Greenfield

If you don't manage your screens they will manage you

# 2021



Katie

## Katie Kimball

Picky eating isn't  
about the food



Leticia

## Leticia Colon De Mejias

Creating a culture of  
sustainable thinkers



Brian

## Brian Verderosa

Singer/Songwriter  
Pre-Show Performer



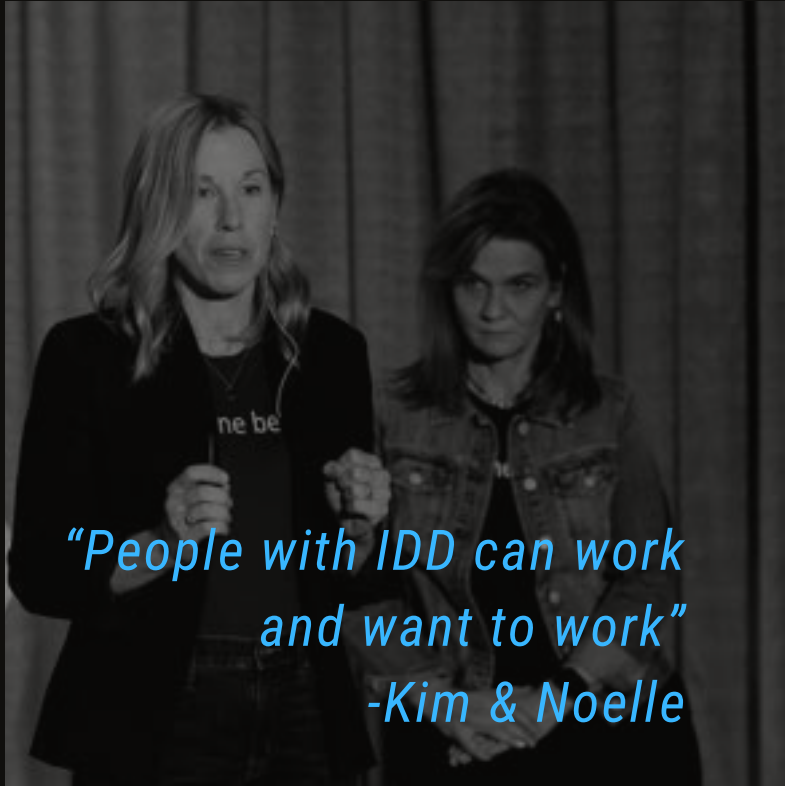
L'Shir

## University of Hartford

Acapella Group  
Guest Performer

# YEAR # 4

*"Emotions drive our behaviors" -Jeremy*



*"People with IDD can work and want to work"*  
-Kim & Noelle

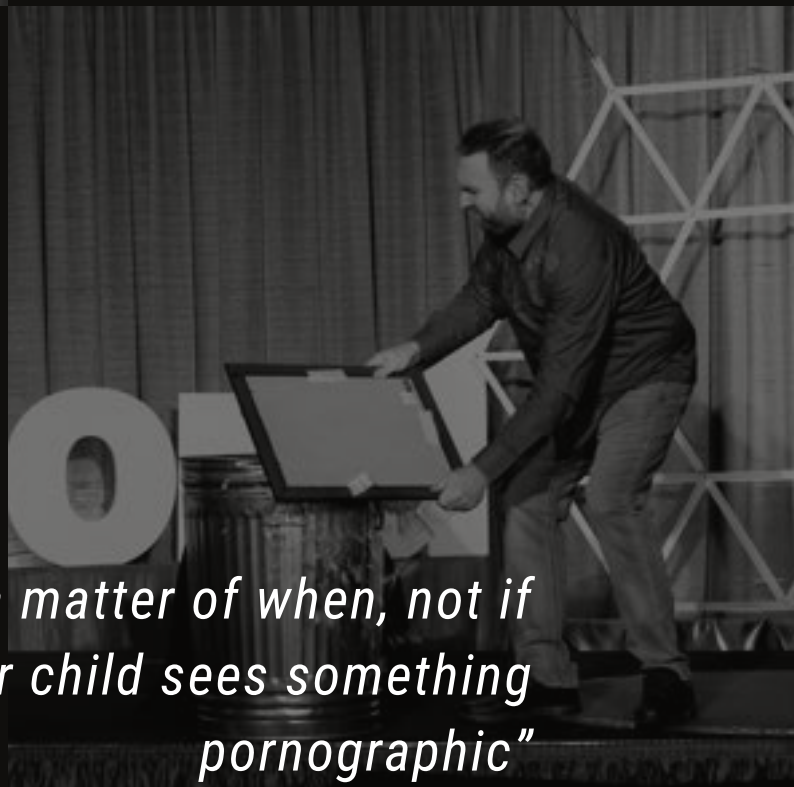
*"They threatened my livelihood over a lie"*  
-Sacha

*"The average person spends 8 minutes with their primary care doctor"*  
-Vasanth

*"Creativity = Problem Solving + Passion"*

-Astrid

*"Turn your gremlins into gurus"*  
-Brian



*"It's a matter of when, not if your child sees something pornographic"*

-Josh

# REDEFINE



Vasanth

Vasanth Kainkaryam

A health care choice you didn't know you could afford



Kim

Kim Morrison

The real barrier to inclusive employment

# DECEMBER 4



Noelle

Noelle Alix

The real barrier to  
inclusive employment



Jeremy

Jeremy Brewer

The power of  
the pause



Josh

Josh Shea

The hidden addiction no  
one wants to hear



Astrid

Astrid Baumgardner

Cracking the code on  
creativity

# 2020



*Brian*

Brian Gorman

Be the hero of your change



The most challenging year



*Sacha*

Sacha Armstrong-Crockett

Black healing in white spaces



# YEAR # 3

*"Human trafficking victims are children living right in our own communities"*

*-Yvette*

*"Between twelve and fifteen, I decided I wanted to be poor"*

*-Rahkim*

*"33% of us today are actually underemployed"*

*-Kelly*

*"The legal cart is way ahead of the scientific horse"*

*-Godfrey*

*"I love the way my heart feels when I leave"*

*-Sarah*

*"We add \$2,850 every second to the overall student loan debt total"*

*-Natalia*

*"If we talk about issues that make us uncomfortable we can create change"*

*-Olivia*

*"It might take me being alone to learn how to communicate"*

*-Shaun*



# ENERGIZE



Sarah Leathers

Fueling our hearts  
with food



Godfrey Pearlson

Driving stoned:  
Why it's complicated

# DECEMBER 3



Rahkim

Rahkim Sabree

Financial  
empowerment



Kelly

Kelly Monahan

Future of work: hiding in  
plain sight



Olivia

Olivia Richman

Let's talk about  
sex education



Natalia

Natalia Abrams

Student loan  
crisis

# 2019



yvette

Yvette Young

Human trafficking: More than what you think



Shaun

Shaun Osher

The art of learning how to Improvise



Notebooks

Unforgettable

Guest can write down their standout moments



Photo Booth

A Tradition is born

Natalia's husband & volunteer photographer

# YEAR # 2

*"90% of our time is spent indoors on average"*

*-Arthur*

*"Feeling safe to speak is human, it shouldn't be negotiable"*

*-Selena*

*"The more steps you take, the more confident you'll feel and the less afraid you'll be"*

*-Matt*

*"Personal branding is no longer a luxury, it is a requirement"*

*-Stacey*

*"You should never try to learn anything, without knowing how to learn, how to understand and how to remember that information first"*

*-Charles*

*"We have the tools, we have the skills, we have the daunting problems"*

*-Frank*

*"At the same time the feelings are 100% real and 100% there, they're also 100% not real and not there"*

*-Ryan*

*"You cannot be happy in hell, no matter what you do"*

*-Rachel*

# IMAGINE



Arthur

Arthur Haines

What's wrong with our conservation paradigm?



Selena

Selena Rezvani

Interrupting gender bias through meeting culture

# DECEMBER 4



Ryan

Ryan Mazurkivich

What to do when life is spinning out of control



Frank

Frank Maletz

Opioid crisis - The ugly, the bad, the good, and the amazing



Stacey

Stacey Cohen

Branding from birth: what's in a name?



Matt

Matt Kozloski

Caring about cyber security

# 2018



Charles

Charles Teale Sr.

The tools of learning



Rachel

Rachel DeAlto

Being authentic in a filtered world



Round 2

We're onto something

When speakers became family and a continuing part of the team



1 Million Views

1st TEDxHartford Talk

To reach 1 million views on YouTube. Congrats Stacey!

# YEAR # 1

*"We can't ignore the role of the brain, of culture and training, from taking us to one side or the other"*

*-Bob*

*"We shouldn't be waiting for a tragedy, we should be action oriented and already doing it"*

*-Betsy*

*"The strive for excellence, perfection can consume you and overtake you and take everything away from you"*

*-Kevin*

*"I'm still here, I'm alive and I care"*

*-Carolyn*

*"We are who we are, because of the people who came before us"*

*-Adam*

*"We pay a huge price, for creating work environments that don't allow for humanity"*

*-Andi*

*"We can look at fear, as false evidence appearing real, or we can look at fear, as the ability to face everything and rise"*

*-Malik*

*"Social proof, is the reason we pay attention to other people"*

*-Brian*



# STRETCH YOUR BRAIN



Bob

**Bob Duran**

Are you really right handed?



Betsy

**Betsy Nilan**

Why young women should learn how to do a breast self-exam

# SEPTEMBER 6



Kevin

Kevin Cottle

Pressure cooker: Can you handle the heat in life?



Carolyn

Carolyn DeRocco

Giving Alzheimer's a purpose



Adam

Adam Von

How my black uncle taught me how to entrepreneur responsibly



Andi

Andi Campbell

Bringing human(s) back to work

# 2017



Brian

Brian Brushwood

Social  
scamming



Malik

Malik Champlain

Live your dreams, not your  
fears



Lee

Lee Simmons

Co-Organizer  
Visionary



Laura

Laura Dinan-Haber

Co-Organizer  
Visionary