



Safe Passage Board of Directors
August 08, 2023



Jessica Britt, President – Boston, MA

Jess started her career at Safe Passage as a long-term volunteer more than a decade ago after graduating from Bowdoin College. While at Safe Passage, she managed the Guatemala-based development team stewarding support teams, international visitors, and local donors. For three subsequent years, Jess worked as a project manager for USAID-funded Democracy and Governance programs throughout Latin America. From 2015-2023 Jess was a leader on the National Research & Evaluation team at Year Up (www.yearup.org) a workforce development organization in 30+ locations in 15+ US states. In her work at Year Up she conducted internal research studies and externally-funded program evaluations, oversaw Year Up's survey system, developed a framework for the organization to learn as its program model evolved, and led training efforts to equip 800+ staff to be more data-driven in their work. She also holds a graduate certificate in Program Monitoring and Evaluation from American University.



**Kolia John O'Connor, Vice President and Interim Secretary
– New York, NY**

Kolia is currently the Head of School at the American School Foundation (ASF) in Mexico City, having most recently served as an advisor and mentor to educational leaders in the United States and around the world. He was formerly the Head of School at Sewickley Academy from 2003 until 2021. With a B.A. in English from Boston University, and an M.A. in English from the University of Avignon (France), Kolia began his career at a boarding school—teaching English, working in a dormitory, and coaching soccer. He spent the subsequent six years as an English teacher and Dean of Students at the all girls' Chapin School in New York City. He then moved to The Browning School, an all boys' school, where he served as Head of Upper School and was later appointed Associate Head of School. While in New York, Kolia earned an M.A. in Educational Leadership from Teachers College at Columbia University, served as secretary of the Assistant Heads Association, and was a founding member of the New York State Association of Independent Schools Diversity Committee. Kolia currently serves on the boards of The 1911 Group as the treasurer, and Safe Passage/Camino Seguro in Guatemala City as vice-chair and Interim secretary. He is a former member of the Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools; Robert Morris University, where he was the chair of the Academic Affairs & Enrollment Management Committee; and the Assistant Heads Association, for which he served as

secretary. Kolia and his wife, Susan, are the proud parents of two sons, Gus and Alex. They are kept company by their Golden Retriever, Atlas.



Alyson Welch, Treasurer – Plainfield, VT

Alyson is an international development professional with more than 10 years of experience in the industry. Since 2011, she has worked in increasingly complex roles for large government contractors, managing projects in Latin America that are financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), including two years in Mexico as the director of operations for a project focused on preventing crime and violence and providing opportunities for at-risk youth. Alyson served as a project director at DAI, overseeing the implementation of Latin American projects that focus on a variety of governance and environmental issues. She has both a bachelor's and master's degree in psychology and is fluent in Spanish. She is currently the Executive Director of Food 4 Farmers and resides with her family in Plainfield, Vermont.



Carolyn Johnson – Yarmouth, ME

Carolyn is a member of the Rotary Club of Yarmouth, Maine, and has been a Rotarian since 2001. She served as Governor for D7780 (Western Maine/Coastal New Hampshire) in 2013-14.

Professionally, Carolyn is an educator with more than 30 years of experience. She taught and was a principal at the elementary school level. She was selected as Distinguished Educator by the Maine Department of Education to assist schools in developing student support teams and anti-bullying programs. In 2006, she volunteered with the Guatemala Literacy Project, an effort that quickly evolved into her developing a program to improve the quality of literacy instruction for indigenous children in Guatemala. Carolyn is the founder of the Culture of Reading Program (CORP), providing training and support in effective literacy instruction for rural schools in Guatemala. Beginning in one school in 2008, CORP now serves more than 15,000 children in 80 primary schools.

Carolyn is a member of the Rotary Club of Yarmouth and served as District Governor of clubs in western ME and coastal NH. She is active as a facilitator with Rotary International, working with local clubs and districts. She is a frequent motivational speaker at regional and international events. Carolyn is Vice-chair of the Literacy Rotary Action Group, an advisor to the Rotary Foundation's Water, Sanitation & Hygiene in Schools programs, and serves as a consultant and project reviewer for major Rotary Foundation education & literacy grants. Carolyn was awarded the Service Above Self Award, Rotary's highest award recognizing Rotarians who demonstrate their commitment to others through volunteering their time and talents.

Carolyn has been involved with a number of community organizations, including Yarmouth Senior Housing, which provides safe, affordable housing options for older citizens. She is on the

board of Learning Works, which offers education opportunities for at-risk youth, immigrants, and low-income families. Carolyn and her husband, PDG Peter Johnson, live in Yarmouth, Maine. Their son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren live in Michigan—much too far away from Maine!



Esther Brol – Guatemala

Esther is a founding partner of Communication Consulting Group, where she has been a consultant in strategic communication, as well as in the conceptualization and organization of corporate events for more than 25 years.

She has been an advisor to private companies; (Banco Industrial, Copa Airlines, EPA, Guatemalan Association of Insurance Institutions, Guatemalan Chamber of Construction, etc.); public entities (Guatemalan Tourism Institute); diplomatic corps in Guatemala (Embassies of Canada, Spain and the Foreign Commercial Service of the United States Embassy); different programs of cooperation agencies and international financial institutions (USAID, European Union, Counterpart International, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, Inter-American Development Bank, Central American Bank for Economic Integration) and different agencies of the United States government (Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce), among others.

She has a bachelor's degree in political science from Francisco Marroquín University and a master's degree in reengineering, information and social communication technologies from Galileo University. She also has a diploma of National Strategic Studies. She is currently studying for a master's degree in leadership and senior management at the Miguel Cornejo School of Leaders in Mexico.

She is a Service Best trainer. She has several certifications in the meetings Industry. She is a professional speaker and interpretive announcer. She participated in several emergency procedure courses taught by Corporate Communications of Continental Airlines (now United Airlines) in Houston and Copa Airlines in Panama. She has been a professor at Galileo and Istmo Universities and has offered training through Panamerican Business School and the Guatemalan Management Association.

Currently, she is the president of the Guatemala Convention and Visitors Bureau, a member of the board of directors of the Guatemalan Management Association, as well as a member of the board of directors of Safe Passage. She is a correspondent for the magazine Rotary in the Heart of the Americas and was an editorial counselor for the magazine Gerencia of the Guatemalan Management Association. She is a founder and an active member of Guatemala La Reforma Rotary Club. She has been the chair of the Public Image Committee of Rotary District 4250 for Guatemala for the last five years. She is the founder and president of the Guatemalan Rotary Academy of Arts and Letters. She lived in Switzerland from 1988 to 1989 (AFS International Intercultural Programs). She speaks Spanish and English and lives in Guatemala City.



Jeff Katz – Cambridge, MA

Jeff is a nonprofit consultant specializing in organizational development, fundraising, and transitional leadership. He has served as an executive director to two organizations and interim executive director to 13 different organizations including homeless shelters, community development corporations, a Vietnamese community center, and a school in rural Nicaragua. In addition to serving as an interim executive director, Jeff also helps nonprofits in searches for executive directors and other key positions. Jeff helped Safe Passage with an executive transition in 2013—an experience he describes as life changing.

In addition to his work as a nonprofit consultant, Jeff has been very active as a child welfare advocate. He was a member of the Obama for President Child Policy team, testified before Congress, and played a role in passing the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. His op-ed pieces have been published in the *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and he has been interviewed on CNN and National Public Radio. He also served as a child welfare expert at the Neiman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University.

Jeff attended the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where he was a Public Service Fellow and received a master's in public administration. Jeff later served as a Fellow at the Kennedy School, where he developed the *Listening to Parents Project*, an influential national study of how prospective adoptive parents are treated by public child welfare agencies. He also holds a master's degree in social work from Boston University.



Douglas McAdams – Pittsburgh, PA

Douglas is one of the original founders of Transport Investments, Inc. and American Transport, Inc. He has over 40 years of experience in the transportation industry. After a successful 10-year career in banking and finance, he entered the trucking industry in 1974 when he joined Jenna Corporation, a company that managed the Special Commodities Division of Carolina Freight Carriers Corporation.

In pursuit of opportunities resulting from deregulation of the transportation industry, Douglas and co-founder Burton S. Singer formed ATI. ATI went on to become the platform and flagship carrier of TII. Douglas holds a B.S. from the University of Pittsburgh, advanced studies in accounting and finance at the University of Wisconsin, Duquesne University and the University of Pennsylvania.



Christian von Oppen – Berlin, Germany

Christian holds a degree in economics from Humboldt University in Berlin (2001) and is a certified foundation manager. After completing his studies, he worked for the Munich Re Group in the area of private equity for 7 years. Christian has been an independent entrepreneur in the creative industry since 2007 and founded various photo art and

design labels as managing partner of designers group GmbH. As part of a sabbatical, he came to Guatemala for three months in 2006 and volunteered for Safe Passage. Back in Germany, he joined the German support organization Camino Seguro e.V., which he now heads as a board member for more than 10 years.

Juan Francisco Roldan – Guatemala & Vienna, Austria



Juan Francisco has held various volunteer positions at Safe Passage for over a decade, as well as worked within the organization in the public relations department. In Guatemala he has developed spaces for youth participation and civil society and is a member of the founding group of the Asociación Jóvenes por Guatemala. He has promoted community development and youth leadership projects within different sectors of the country and has participated in the development of campaigns to eradicate violence in Guatemala such as Subida por la Vida, Rompe el Ciclo, and No Más Violencia, among others. In addition, he has developed his sports career as a professional soccer player and coach, a technical analyst, and scouting, in both Guatemala and Europe. He currently works on projects for La Asociación Futbolista Españoles AFE and in the international area of RC Deportivo La Coruña, in Spain.

He has a B.S. in communication and information media, from the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala and La Universidad Galileo. He also has a master's in soccer management from La Escuela Universitaria Real Madrid in Spain and completed studies in big data. He is also UEFA licensed as a soccer coach.

Santiago Bolaños Torrebiarte – Guatemala & México City



Santiago is Guatemalan—based in Mexico City—he is the co-founder and CEO of [Kolibrie Energy](#), a renewable energy feedstock trading company that sources used cooking oil and other waste oils to transform them into renewable energy. Kolibrie Energy operates in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, and Ecuador. Santiago graduated with a degree in Economics and Latin American Studies from Emory University.

Santiago first got to know Safe Passage when he was young through a school field trip, the experience was so impactful that years later he sought to re-engage. He currently serves on the board of Grupo Coban, a 100-year-old Guatemalan footwear company and of the Fundación Miguel Torrebiarte, a foundation focused on combating malnutrition and promoting education in Guatemala.

Matthew Bucher – Hamel, Minnesota



Matt is a Partner in BDO's Assurance practice with over 15 years of experience in public accounting. He has served a number of Fortune 500 multinational audit clients, as well as many smaller audit clients, within various industries including retail & consumer products,

agricultural Co-ops, industrial products, automotive and manufacturing, and technology. Through this experience, Matt has been responsible for the coordination of audit work across a number of different geographies and is actively involved in addressing complex accounting, reporting and audit matters. Matt has led teams of various sizes, some as large as over 40 team members.

Matt also serves clients in a non-audit capacity related to identifying different ways BDO can help and provide insight into the client's business for it to grow, adapt and stay efficient. Matt also has significant experience with Board and executive level communications and also has extensive SEC reporting and internal controls experience.

In recent years (2017 - 2020), Matt performed an international tour in Bratislava, Slovakia, serving several Fortune 500 multinational clients in their respective shared service centers. In this role, Matt performed significant coordination with local teams located across Europe and Asia. In 2020, Matt and his family moved back to the US and now reside in the western suburbs of Minneapolis.

Matt graduated from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University with a Bachelor of Science in Business and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and holds a CPA license in the state of Minnesota.



Camila Leal Witt – New York, NY & Guatemala

Camila Leal is a Vice President at BlackRock's Financial Markets Advisory (FMA) group. FMA supports clients across a range of advisory services focusing primarily on balance sheet management, capital markets and transaction support, data analytics, and risk and regulatory matters. Camila serves as engagement manager to projects that focus on providing tailored advisory services to financial

institutions and official sector clients on their most critical and complex financial issues — from unwinding a portfolio of assets, helping overhaul risk management ecosystems in response to regulatory feedback, advising on portfolio acquisitions/dispositions, and developing a strategy around balance sheet optimization. In her work on these projects, Camila's role as engagement manager spans spearheading the entirety of the project's lifecycle including organizational capabilities, project plan definition, client strategy, and content execution. Additionally, Camila founded the Women in FMA Book Club, was a national quarter-finalist on the CEDA Policy Debate Team, launched a photography collection that donated 1/3 of profits to cleaning Guatemalan lake's pollution, and is currently pursuing a certificate in Interior Design from the Parsons School of Design. Camila holds a graduate certificate in Business and Political Economy and a double minor in Psychology and Studio Art from New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business.



Ana Cristina Rozas-Botrán – Guatemala

Cristina has a bachelor's degree in interior design with M.A in environmental design from the Miami Art Institute. She focused on project management, business administration, art history, design, and contemporary art.

Cristina has been working as an art advisor at the Rozas-Botrán Foundation since 2020. She is an art consultant and part of the curating committee of Arte en Mayo, Rozas-Botrán Foundation. From 2012 to 2017, she was the director of communication at this institution, where she created and directed the “Pop Up” gallery, the FRB Magazine, and was in charge of the first expo Arte Urbano and Zines in Guatemala, Central America, and Panama, that collects the history of visual art of recent production in these countries. She has specialized in the areas of communication and promotion of the foundation's artists. Recently, she has ventured into the promotion of conceptual art by artists from the region.



Matthew Verghese - San Francisco, CA

Matthew Verghese is a Product Management Leader with over a decade of experience building products at leading tech companies like Twitch (an Amazon subsidiary), LinkedIn (a Microsoft subsidiary), and venture-backed startups. He has helped build consumer products loved by hundreds of millions of people around the world. Prior to his tech career, Matthew worked in Private Equity at Warburg Pincus, and Investment Banking at Evercore Partners. Matthew visited Guatemala and Safe Passage in college and fell in love with the organization's mission, and how education can help families achieve a better future for themselves. Matthew holds an MBA from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and dual degrees in Finance and Electrical Engineering from the Jerome Fisher Program in Management & Technology program at the University of Pennsylvania.



Carla Campbell - Philadelphia, PA

Carla lives outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. She is a retired pediatrician from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and public health professor, and currently teaches environmental health at Drexel University's Dornsife School of Public Health (Philadelphia) as an affiliate professor. Her passion is preventing childhood lead poisoning and ensuring children's environmental health. She is married to Dr. Ron Ross and the mother of two daughters, and two grandkids. She trained in medicine and then

did a two-year fellowship in occupational and environmental medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.

Carla first volunteered at Safe Passage in 2008 when she traveled to Guatemala City with members of her church's youth group as a Support Team member. There, she met Jenny Hartsell, executive director of Shared Beat, a medical group affiliated with Safe Passage. She has come down to Guatemala almost every summer starting in 2009 with the Shared Beat medical team. The group creates mobile clinics for school physical exams in certain rural schools around Antigua and visits Safe Passage to examine the students there. Carla also has served as "madrina" to 3-4 Safe Passage students throughout the years and had the pleasure of visiting with them during Shared Beat trips to Guatemala City.

Other interests include working with several groups around racial justice work, being on the Covid Task Force, and other committees and groups from her Unitarian church. She enjoys reading, walking, biking, and traveling around Latin America in her spare time.