

# Beyond Toxicity: Building A Sustainable Tomorrow For Children

October 13, 2021 | 10:00am to 11:00 am CT

Speaker bio's



**Julie Morris, Director of Media Activism, [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)**

Julie Morris leads Children at Risk's communication & digital advocacy efforts to improve the lives of Texas children as the Director of Media Activism. Prior to her current role, she managed the organization's education and parent engagement research and advocacy efforts in the Dallas-Fort Worth region as Associate Director of North Texas Programs.

Prior to joining C@R, Julie served as a 9th & 10th grade English teacher and 2012 Teach for America Corps Member in Charlotte, North Carolina. In the classroom, Julie acquired expertise in data-driven instruction, curriculum design, and character education. Julie holds a Master of Public Administration from the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University where she led research projects spanning state Medicaid policy, early education financing, and human trafficking. In 2016, she was selected as an Urban Leaders Fellow to support cradle-to-career education initiatives in the Office of Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. Julie continues to be a passionate advocate for educational equity, social justice, and systems change.



**Rachel Powers, Executive Director, [Citizens' Environmental Coalition](#)**

Rachel Powers became the executive director of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC - [cechouston.org](http://cechouston.org)) in 2013, after volunteering for the organization for nine years (and benefitting from CEC programs and services for several years before that).

CEC, an alliance of almost 150 organizations that work on environmental initiatives in the Houston/Gulf Coast region, has been working to improve the environment since before its incorporation in 1971. By connecting individuals and organizations, CEC works to ensure that our environmental community is recognized as a vital part of the fabric of our society.

Rachel oversees all aspects of the organization, including events (Earth Day Houston, Houston Green Films & Festivals, the Greater Houston Environmental Summit, Environmental Educators Exchange); publications (websites, weekly newsletter, social media, and a printed environmental directory); finance and development; policy; and staff, volunteers, and a robust internship program. She has served on various boards and committees, including the City of Houston's Climate Action Plan, Resilience Plan, Integrated Resource Recovery Management Plan Mayor's Council, and Plan Houston (general plan); Harris County's Flood Control Task Force and Environmental Justice "Do Tank"; H-GAC's Bacteria Implementation Group; Port Houston's

Community Advisory Council; the committee that founded the Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience; and on numerous boards and committees for a variety of nonprofit organizations.

Rachel has extensive experience working for both nonprofit organizations and local governments. Prior to working at CEC, Rachel was a senior environmental planner for the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), managing projects relating to water quality (fecal contamination, dioxin, and PCBs), the Regional Flood Management Council, the Natural Resources Advisory Committee, and the Parks & Natural Areas subcommittee. Before that, she served as the Community Services Coordinator at the Harris County Flood Control District, coordinating communications, parks and trail partnerships, wildflower and tree planting projects, and departmental budget preparation. Rachel also has experience managing environmental education programs, summer camps, and volunteer programs at Hermann Park, Mercer Botanic Gardens, the City of Austin's Natural Resources Division, and the YMCA.

Rachel graduated from Rice University (B.A.) and University of Phoenix (M.B.A.). A native of Boston, Mass., Rachel enjoys family history, volunteering, civic engagement, and embarrassing her two teenage sons.



**Emily Foxhall, Environment Reporter, [Houston Chronicle](#)**

Emily Foxhall covers the environment for the Houston Chronicle. She joined the paper in 2015 as a suburban reporter. She has documented the city's sprawl while playing a key role in the paper's breaking news and enterprise coverage. Her reconstruction of the Santa Fe High School shooting, along with two other colleagues, won first place for feature writing from the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors. She was part of the Chronicle team that was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news in 2017 for coverage of Hurricane Harvey. Soon after, she began roaming the

state as the Texas Storyteller.



**Luke Metzger, Executive Director, [Environment Texas](#)**

As the executive director of Environment Texas, Luke is a leading voice in the state for clean air, clean water, clean energy and open space. Luke has led successful campaigns to win permanent protection for the Christmas Mountains of Big Bend; to compel Exxon, Shell and Chevron Phillips to cut air pollution at four Texas refineries and chemical plants; and to boost funding for water conservation and state parks. The San Antonio Current has called Luke "long one of the most energetic and dedicated defenders of environmental issues in the state." He has been named one of the "Top Lobbyists for Causes" by Capitol Inside, received the President's Award from the Texas Recreation and Parks Society for his work to protect Texas parks, and was chosen for the inaugural class of "Next

Generation Fellows" by the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at UT Austin. Luke, his wife, son and daughters are working to visit every state park in Texas.



**Leticia Ablaza, Government Relations and Community Outreach Director, [Air Alliance Houston](#)**

As the Director of Government Relations and Community Outreach, Leticia keeps abreast of policy developments and oversees engagement with elected officials and stakeholders to advance AAH's goals. She was born in Mexico and came to Houston as a child, eventually graduating from Milby High School and the University of St. Thomas.

Prior to joining AAH, she served as the Chief of Staff at the Houston City Council. When Leticia isn't working, she is likely out volunteering in the community or spending time with her family.



**Alexandra Whittington, Futurist, [Partners in Foresight](#)**

Alexandra Whittington is an educator, writer, consultant, and researcher who has earned recognition as one of the world's top women futurists.

Alexandra is a lecturer at the University of Houston, where her students describe her as "passionate" about the future. Her research explores the impact of technology on society and the future of human ecosystems. She has published dozens of articles exploring diverse aspects of the future, often from a feminist perspective. Alex has coauthored/coedited several books, including *A Very Human Future* (2018) and *Aftershocks and Opportunities: Scenarios for a Post-Pandemic Future* (2020). She runs a futurist consultancy called Partners in Foresight offering customized future-oriented services and events.

Alex gives diverse audiences a relatable overview of the futurist perspective through speeches, education sessions, and workshops about the future. Recent speaking engagements include: Ivy Tech Community College, the Falling Walls Foundation, TEDxWallingford, the World Futures Studies Federation, Boston Consulting Group, the Games-Based Learning Virtual Conference, Children at Risk, the Global Foresight Summit, dxFutures Fireside Chat, the Finland Futures Research Conference, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, Underwater Technology-Subsea Engineering Society, National Sign Research Education Foundation Conference, the World Future Society Conference, and ASAE Foundation Women Executives' Forum. Some of her popular speaking topics are the future of women, women and A.I., the future of education, emerging trends and technologies, and an engaging experience called "Invitation to Futurology," a highly user-friendly approach to thinking about the future.