

# 2026 Human-Animal Interaction Conference

## People, Animals and Nature: The Restorative Power of Relationship

April 24 & 25, 2026  
Brewster, NY

Hosted by  
**Sam and Myra Ross Institute  
at Green Chimneys**



Co-Hosted by  
**University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work  
Institute for Human-Animal Connection**



### FRIDAY

*(program subject to change)*

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
7:25	Hilton Garden Inn	<b>Bus pick-up at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel</b> in Danbury, CT. Drop-off at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY.	
8:00-8:45	Gym	<b>Registration Open</b> Posters displayed in gym on an ongoing basis.	
	Dining Hall	<b>Continental Breakfast</b>	
8:45-9:00	Gym	<b>Welcome</b> Introduce conference intent, program, and sponsors.	
9:00-9:45	Gym	<b>Opening Keynote — Understanding the Power of Relationship: Innovations in Human-Animal-Nature Interactions</b> A robust discussion of current innovations and progress in how we think about, evaluate, and support mutually-beneficial human-animal-nature interactions. What does the future look like for the field and how we can work together to build a sustainable system of interconnected researchers and practitioners?	Megan Mueller

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
10:00-11:00	<i>Begins at Gym</i>	<b>Guided Tour of Green Chimneys</b> Tour the campus, including our farm, equine program, wildlife rehabilitation center, school, and gardens to see our model of experiential education in action.	Green Chimneys
11:15-12:15		<b>First Session (Pick One)</b>	
	<i>Gym</i>	<b>Canine Consent Training for Social Working Dogs and Their Handlers</b> A dog that feels in control over his life also experiences a greater feeling of safety and has a higher quality of life. To have freedom of choice in everyday life, and perhaps even more importantly as a social working dog, can prohibit stressful situations as the dog has a greater feeling of control. This breakout session will teach you how to train and listen to your dog to show you what he wants when he is ready, and when he is done. You will get all the tips you need to understand how to implement freedom of choice and ask your dog the right questions.	Sara Karlberg
	<i>Teaching Barn</i>	<b>Working with Guinea Pigs: A New Approach</b> This session will demonstrate a new way of approaching human-animal interaction work with guinea pigs in education and therapy programs. Discover a fresh take on husbandry, training and interaction strategies that allow these animals to choose to engage or not.	Skyler Opromola Danielle Zaleski
	<i>Indoor Arena</i>	<b>How Animals Can Strengthen Resilience</b> Join this interactive session that introduces an impactful resilience training program involving animals for children and young people who have experienced adverse life events. Following a brief theoretical introduction and scientific evidence base for the model, attendees will work with various animals to observe and explore the concept for most of the hour. The session will end with a debrief and suggestions on how this approach can be transferred to other client groups and can involve different animal species.	Karin Hediger
		<b>Fatigue CPR: Recognize • Release • Recharge</b> Working in human-animal interaction and animal-assisted services is deeply meaningful, but can also be draining. Whether you're a seasoned professional or a passionate student, burnout is a real challenge that can impact your well-being and effectiveness. Learn how to spot the early warning signs of burnout, build healthier boundaries, and apply practical strategies. Through interactive exercises and open conversations, you will depart with tools to keep your energy high in making a difference in the lives of both humans and animals.	Daphne Mobley
12:15-1:00	<i>Dining Hall /Outside</i>	<b>Networking Lunch</b> Pick up a lunch, chose a designated interest area and meet new friends.	

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
1:00-2:00	Farm	<b>Social Hour</b> You are free to visit areas around the Green Chimneys farm and wider campus. Meet, mingle, ask questions and engage in dialogue, including:	
		<b>IHAC Spotlight</b> Learn about the Institute for Human-Animal Interactions (IHAC) at University of Denver and gain some HAI practice tips in our spotlight session.	University of Denver
		<b>Open Farm and Meet the Students</b> Green Chimneys Staff (animal caretakers, teachers, program facilitators, therapists and interns), with student assistance, explain and demonstrate different nature-based program areas in greater detail in an informal and informative fashion.	Green Chimneys
2:15-3:00	Gym	<b>Keynote — Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Animal-Assisted Services</b> <b>Obviously, I'm Not from Here: Embodying a Sense of Belonging with the Help of Horses</b> Dr. Veronica Lac will lead participants through a self-reflective journey to identify what it means to feel a sense of belonging. This interactive presentation will highlight the importance of acknowledging and accepting differences as a way to create more inclusive communities, and provide strategies on how to promote diversity and equity within animal-assisted services.	Veronica Lac
3:15-4:15	Gym	<b>First Session <i>Continued</i> (Pick One)</b> <b>Canine Consent Training for Social Working Dogs and Their Handlers</b> A dog that feels in control over his life also experiences a greater feeling of safety and has a higher quality of life. To have freedom of choice in everyday life, and perhaps even more importantly as a social working dog, can prohibit stressful situations as the dog has a greater feeling of control. This breakout session will teach you how to train and listen to your dog to show you what he wants when he is ready, and when he is done. You will get all the tips you need to understand how to implement freedom of choice and ask your dog the right questions.	Sara Karlberg
	Teaching Barn	<b>Working with Guinea Pigs: A New Approach</b> This session will demonstrate a new way of approaching human-animal interaction work with guinea pigs in education and therapy programs. Discover a fresh take on husbandry, training and interaction strategies that allow these animals to choose to engage or not.	S. Opromola D. Zaleski

*(Additional options on next page)*

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
3:15-4:15 (Continued)	Indoor Arena	<p><b>How Animals Can Strengthen Resilience</b></p> <p>Join this interactive session that introduces an impactful resilience training program involving animals for children and young people who have experienced adverse life events. Following a brief theoretical introduction and scientific evidence base for the model, attendees will work with various animals to observe and explore the concept for most of the hour. The session will end with a debrief and suggestions on how this approach can be transferred to other client groups and can involve different animal species.</p> <p><b>Fatigue CPR: Recognize • Release • Recharge</b></p> <p>Working in human-animal interaction and animal-assisted services is deeply meaningful, but can also be draining. Whether you're a seasoned professional or a passionate student, burnout is a real challenge that can impact your well-being and effectiveness. Learn how to spot the early warning signs of burnout, build healthier boundaries, and apply practical strategies. Through interactive exercises and open conversations, you will depart with tools to keep your energy high in making a difference in the lives of both humans and animals.</p>	Karin Hediger
4:30-6:00	Gym	<p><b>Poster Session with Social Hour and Refreshments</b></p> <p>Visit with poster presenters, socialize with participants and enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres.</p>	Daphne Mobley
6:00	Outside the Gym	<p><b>Bus pick-up at Green Chimneys</b> in Brewster, NY. Drop-off at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT.</p>	

# SATURDAY

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
8:00	Hilton Garden Inn	<b>Bus pick-up at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel</b> in Danbury, CT. Drop-off at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY.	
8:00-8:45		<b>Continental Breakfast</b>	
8:45-9:30	Gym	<b>Keynote — Ecopsychological Praxis Towards an Informed EcoJustice Framework</b> As global stakeholders continue to try and make headway with climate policy, there is a need for the development of sustainable community models using relational frameworks. With the layering of systemic inequities and their impact on diverse communities such as Black Americans, the fields of climate and ecopsychology must address the intersection of systemic inequities, such as discrimination and racism, to better understand the role these pervasive forces play in the proliferation of environmental degradation and climate breakdown.	Derrick Sebree
9:45-10:45		<b>Second Session (Pick One)</b>	
	Indoor Arena	<b>"Freedom," Choice and Agency</b> This breakout session will explore ways to incorporate horses into human services settings while considering the horses' "freedom", choice, and agency.	Veronica Lac Nina Ekholm Fry
	Horse Barn Classroom	<b>Case Review and Discussion</b> This session is for credentialed mental health professionals who include animal interactions in psychotherapy and counseling. Bring your questions, share you experience and join colleagues in exploring actual cases, reviewing practice-based approaches, and considering outcomes.	Shauna McWilliams Lindsay Vallovera
	Building 20/ Farm	<b>Introduction to Forest Bathing with Practice</b> Forest bathing and forest therapy (or shinrin-yoku) broadly mean taking in all of one's senses in the forest atmosphere. Not simply a walk in the woods, it is the conscious and contemplative practice of immersing oneself in the sights, sounds and smells of the forest.	Miyako Kinoshita
	Teaching Barn	<b>Benefits and Considerations of Farm-Based Therapy Services</b> This presentation delves into the cognitive world of farm animals, shedding light on how they perceive their environment and react to new stimuli, including the introduction of novel objects. By unpacking the potential for anthropomorphism to distort our understanding of farm animal behavior, attendees are provided with a nuanced comprehension of animal welfare principles.	Suzanne Kapral
10:45-11:00		<b>Break</b>	

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
11:00-11:45	Gym	<b>Keynote — Training and Professionalizing for the Future</b> Human-animal interactions (HAI) in human services are gaining mainstream recognition. Continued professionalization and research is necessary for competent, effective, and ethical practice. Education, organization, and regulation of HAIs is discussed in the context of preparing the next generation of practitioners and researchers.	Nina Ekholm Fry Kevin Morris
12:00-1:30	Gym/ Outside	<b>Networking Lunch</b> Pick up a lunch, chose a designated interest area and meet new friends or poster presenters.	
1:30-2:15	Gym	<b>Keynote — Adopting a Restorative Mindset in Human-Animal Interaction Work: Connecting to Our Best Selves and to One Another</b> Human-animal interaction services regularly confront us with challenging human behavior and high emotions. The term “restorative practices” generally brings to mind a positive approach to conflict resolution or an alternative to punishment. Though true, restorative practices are rooted in the healing power of connections and includes proactive strategies to foster a sense of community, build healthy relationships, and develop a sense of belonging and agency. In this workshop, we will honor the indigenous roots of restorative practices, learn some restorative strategies, and how to foster a restorative mindset in order to connect us to our best selves and to one another.	Kristin Licardi
2:30-3:30		<b>Second Session <i>Continued</i> (Pick One)</b>	
	Indoor Arena	<b>“Freedom,” Choice and Agency</b> This breakout session will explore ways to incorporate horses into human services settings while considering the horses' "freedom", choice, and agency.	Veronica Lac Nina Ekholm Fry
	Horse Barn Classroom	<b>Case Review and Discussion</b> This session is for credentialed mental health professionals who include animal interactions in psychotherapy and counseling. Bring your questions, share you experience and join colleagues in exploring actual cases, reviewing practice-based approaches, and considering outcomes.	Shauna McWilliams Lindsay Vallovera
	Building 20/ Farm	<b>Introduction to Forest Bathing with Practice</b> Forest bathing and forest therapy (or shinrin-yoku) broadly mean taking in all of one's senses in the forest atmosphere. Not simply a walk in the woods, it is the conscious and contemplative practice of immersing oneself in the sights, sounds and smells of the forest.	Miyako Kinoshita

*(Additional options on next page)*

Time	Location	Activity	Speaker
	<i>Teaching Barn</i>	<p><b>Benefits and Considerations of Farm-Based Therapy Services</b></p> <p>This presentation delves into the cognitive world of farm animals, shedding light on how they perceive their environment and react to new stimuli, including the introduction of novel objects. By unpacking the potential for anthropomorphism to distort our understanding of farm animal behavior, attendees are provided with a nuanced comprehension of animal welfare principles.</p>	Suzanne Kapral
3:45-4:30	<i>Gym</i>	<p><b>Closing Session with Speaker Panel — The Restorative Power of Relationship</b></p> <p>We will review impressions of the two days with all speakers and participants, exploring the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the highlights?</li> <li>• What specific ideas were presented for future action?</li> <li>• What are closing thoughts from each speaker on the conference theme?</li> <li>• What were the moments of learning for presenters, organizers and—most importantly—participants?</li> </ul>	Michael Kaufmann Kevin Morris
4:45	<i>Outside the Gym</i>	<p><b>Bus pick-up at Green Chimneys</b> in Brewster, NY. Drop-off at Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Danbury, CT.</p>	

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### **Nina Ekholm Fry**

*Director of Equine Programs, Institute for Human-Animal Connection*

Nina Ekholm Fry is the Director of Equine Programs at University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Connection and is a faculty member in the Graduate School of Social Work and the Graduate School of Professional Psychology. She is the coordinator of the Human-Animal-Environment Interactions in Social Work specialization within the Master of Social Work program and leads the Post-Master's Equine-Assisted Mental Health Practitioner Certificate program. For the past 15 years, her work has included animals in human services with a focus on equine interactions in psychotherapy and counseling. Nina is a board member of the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA Inc.), past chair of the Certification Board for Equine Interaction Professionals (CBEIP) and previously served as the Chief Editor of the HETI Journal: International Research and Practice, published by the International Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy (HETI). Nina currently serves as an advisor to the State of Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services on matters related to mental health services in green environments. Nina has a background as a mental health professional specializing in trauma treatment and neurodivergence, as a riding instructor (CHA), adaptive riding instructor (PATH Intl.), and equine behavior consultant. She has a particular interest in applied ethics and social justice perspectives within human-animal interactions and is actively engaged in national and international organizations for both human and equine wellbeing.

### **Veronica Lac, PhD, LPC**

*Founder and Executive Director, The HERD Institute®*

Dr. Veronica Lac, LPC, Founder & Executive Director of The HERD Institute®, has 25 years of experience as a corporate trainer and mental health professional, and is also a certified therapeutic riding instructor and equine specialist in mental health and learning. Building a sense of community and belonging is at the core of Dr. Lac's philosophy of working with people. The HERD Institute® offers training and certifications in Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy & Learning that incorporate a cultural competence framework. Dr. Lac is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and has worked on a range of racial and social justice initiatives, including being a Board member of The Humanitarian Alliance, and part of the American Psychological Association, Division 32 Diversity Committee and the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee for PATH International. Dr. Lac offers DEI consultations and training to organizations both in the corporate sector and within the non-profit environment. She is passionate about research in the field of equine facilitated psychotherapy and has multiple publications internationally in peer-reviewed journals. Dr. Lac is the author of three best-selling books in the field of equine facilitated work and co-editor for an upcoming book, *Evidence-Based Foundations of Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy*, published by APA.

### **Kristin Licardi, LCSW**

*Chief Clinical Officer, Green Chimneys*

Kristin Licardi is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and Hunter College School of Social Work graduate, with over 30 years of experience in behavioral health services for children and families. Mrs. Licardi began her early career in direct care in several mental health settings before settling in at Green Chimneys Children's Services in Brewster, NY, where she has worked for the past 25 years. She held the Director of Social Services position for 17 years, where she directly impacted the programs and services provided to children and families, and trained clinicians, direct care staff, educators and parents, and for the past two years has overseen all clinical services at the agency as Chief Clinical Officer. Mrs. Licardi has adapted and facilitated various training curriculum for the agency, including trauma, trauma-informed care, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), suicide and non-suicidal self-injury, and threat assessment, and has presented at professional conferences, including the Association of Children's Residential and Community Services (ACRC), the Leir Foundation Trauma Conference, and keynote for the University of Binghamton's Let Us Dream Conference.

**Kevin Morris, PhD**

*Chair and Research Professor, University of Denver, and Executive Director, Institute for Human-Animal Connection*

Dr. Kevin Morris is the American Humane endowed chair and a research professor within the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver. He earned his undergraduate degree in molecular biology from the University of California, Berkeley and his PhD in molecular biology and biochemistry from The University of Chicago. Dr. Morris spent 20 years conducting preclinical and clinical cancer research before adapting the focus of his work to improving human and animal health and welfare through scientific understanding of the human-animal bond. As executive director of the University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Connection, he oversees its research and education programs. Dr. Morris' research portfolio focuses on understanding how human-animal interactions affect individual and community health and welfare within a framework of equity for both humans and other species. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs and on the Core Scientific Advisory Board for Michelson Found Animals Foundation's Michelson Prize and Grants. The overall goal of his efforts is to raise the health and welfare of both people and other animals within the One Health framework through innovative, in-depth research and education.

**Megan Mueller, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Human-Animal Interaction, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University*

Dr. Megan Mueller is an Associate Professor of Human-Animal Interaction at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. She also directs the Pets and Well-Being Lab, and teaches in the M.S. in Animals and Public Policy program at the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts. Dr. Mueller is a developmental scientist, and her research program focuses on exploring the complex interactions between companion animals and their families, with a particular interest in adolescent development and well-being. Dr. Mueller currently serves on the Board of Directors for the International Society for Anthrozoology, as well as on the Pet Partners Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board.

**Derrick Sebree, PhD**

*Masters Program Director, Michigan School of Psychology*

Dr. Derrick Sebree is an American Descendant of Slavery (ADOS) and program director/core faculty member of the MA program at the Michigan School of Psychology. He graduated with his doctorate in clinical psychology from the Michigan School of Psychology in 2016. He has since conducted his clinical work in the Ann Arbor area, working with a variety of populations, with a focus on young college students and adults within the University of Michigan system. Dr. Sebree received his MECCA Certificate in Multicultural Counseling from MSU. He specializes in multicultural identity theory and counseling alongside ecopsychology/ecotherapy and climate psychology. Dr. Sebree has worked extensively with various social justice organizations in Detroit around food security and other environmental justice issues. His teaching, clinical work, and mentorship emphasize Dr. Sebree's community-oriented social justice praxis. Dr. Sebree has been an active Society for Humanistic Psychology, APA Division 32 member. Serving as a member-at-large, membership chair, and co-chair of the organization's Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. Dr. Sebree also serves as a member-at-large and communications chair for APA Division 34, Society for Population, Environmental, and Conservation Psychology. Dr. Sebree serves on the Michigan Psychological Association Advocacy Task Force for mental health legislative advocacy and is a member of the APA Climate Advisory Group.

## GUEST SPEAKERS

### **Karin Hediger, PhD**

*Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychology, University of Lucerne and Professor of Anthrozoology, Open University Netherlands*

Dr. Karin Hediger is Full Professor for Child and Adolescent Psychology at the University of Lucerne, Switzerland, and Endowed Professor for Anthrozoology at the Open University in the Netherlands. She completed her PhD in Rostock, Germany, and her habilitation in Basel, Switzerland, in the field of human-animal interaction. Dr. Hediger's work focuses on clinical psychology and intervention research. Together with her team, she investigates the effects of animal-assisted interventions and mechanisms of human-animal interactions. She is a licensed psychotherapist and holds certification in animal-assisted therapy, a diploma in equine-assisted therapy and founded a centre for animal-assisted psychotherapy. Dr. Hediger is the president of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Human-Animal Relationship (IEMT Switzerland), founder and president of compas, the Institute for Nature- and Animal-Assisted Interventions, board member of the International Association of Human Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO) and teaches internationally.

### **Suzanne M. Kapral**

*Care Farming Consultant/Director of Development, The Lands at Hillside Farms*

Suzanne is a TEDxScranton speaker, an accomplished author, and a devoted advocate for children and farm animals. Her multifaceted career incorporates roles such as a Court-Appointed Special Advocate for Children (CASA) and a Farm Animal Welfare Auditor, demonstrating her commitment to both human wellbeing and ethical animal treatment. As a respected advisor in farm-based interventions, Suzanne offers expert counsel across the United States on the creation, funding, and maintenance of farm-based therapy programs. Her vision is to empower service providers to launch responsible initiatives that meld the therapeutic benefits of agriculture with the need for compassionate human services. Suzanne's contributions were critical in establishing the nationally recognized Care Farming program at The Lands at Hillside Farms. This initiative has been providing farm-based trauma services tailored to children's needs, including those on the autism spectrum, since 2013. Currently, Suzanne serves on the Green Care Advisory Board for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Office of Youth and Young Adult Services Bureau of Substance Addiction. She's also an Animal Welfare Auditor for A Greener World and mentors at Food Animal Concerns Trust. Her TEDxScranton talk, "How Cows and a Cornfield Helped Heal Childhood Trauma", reveals her personal journey through childhood trauma, and how it fired her passion for initiating the Care Farming program at Hillside Farms. Suzanne equipped herself academically with a Master of Science in Animal Behavior/Animal Welfare from the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, paired with a Master of Science in Organizational Management from Misericordia University. This blend of animal behavioral knowledge and organizational savvy has shaped Suzanne into the compassionate subject matter expert she is today.

### **Sara Karlberg**

*Therapy Dog Trainer and Environmental Psychology Master's Student*

Sara Karlberg has a bachelor's degree in media and communications from Södertörns University in Stockholm. Soon after taking her degree and working as a tv-photographer she changed course and studied public science, rehabilitation science, ethology, and psychology at different universities. At the moment, she is in the final stages of writing her master's thesis in environmental psychology about school dogs preventing absence in schools. Sara is also a partner with the Swedish University of Agriculture and Uppsala University in a research project regarding the health/economic benefits of working with school dogs to prevent absences from school, which will be finished at the end of 2024. Sara is also educated as a dog instructor. In 2008, she trained her first therapy dog and as a dog instructor with a therapy dog, she started the Swedish School for Therapy Dogs. Her organization has expanded to the Nordic schools for therapy dogs and has courses in Sweden, Finland, and Norway. In 2008 she was one of the founders of the Scandinavian Therapy Dog Association, a non-profit organization for dog teams. From 2011 to 2013, Sara was a member of the committee that developed the Swedish standard for training and educating dog teams in healthcare. She is also a frequent lecturer at the Swedish University of Agriculture. 2018 Sara and her colleague Helena Eriksson published a book about animal-assisted interventions who now been translated into English (Animal-Assisted Interventions, Professionals Embrace the Power of the Dog, 2020).

**Michael Kaufmann**

*Vice President of Nature-Based Programs, and Sam and Myra Ross Institute, Green Chimneys*

Michael Kaufmann is the Vice President of Nature Based Programs & Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys. He directs all aspects of the nature-based therapeutic/educational programs and supervises The Institute dedicated to education and research on the human connection to animals and the natural world. He serves on the board of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, is an advisor to the International Center for Anthrozoology, Norway, is on the advisory council of TAT Center for Human Animal Interaction, Vienna, Austria, Advisor to The Canadian Institute of Animal-Assisted Interventions, serves on the editorial board of *People and Animals: The International Journal of Research and Practice*, and is on the editorial board of the magazine *GREEN CARE*, Switzerland.

**Miyako Kinoshita**

*Farm Education Program Manager, Green Chimneys*

Miyako Kinoshita is the Farm Education Program Manager of the Farm & Wildlife Center at Green Chimneys. She serves as the key facilitator for over 200 children with psychosocial disabilities currently in residential and day school, and facilitates and co-supervises a wide range of animal-assisted programs. She has a master's degree in educational studies, and specializes in animal-assisted activity and animal-assisted education. She looks back on over 20 years of working in direct service with children and animals as a PATH Intl. Certified Advanced Therapeutic Riding Instructor. Miyako is the former president of the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA) and a former board member of PATH Intl., serving as chair of the board governance committee and as board secretary. Miyako was instrumental in reintegrating equine-assisted mental health programs back into PATH Intl. She is an author of several chapters in textbooks, including *Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy* by Aubrey Fine.

**Daphne Mobley, DVM**

*Veterinarian, Motivational Speaker and Coach*

Dr. Daphne Mobley is a passionate veterinarian, motivational speaker, and coach dedicated to helping both people and animals to live healthier, more fulfilling lives. With extensive experience in veterinary medicine, she has devoted her career to providing compassionate care to animals while also guiding pet parents in fostering more meaningful bonds with their pets. As a motivational speaker, Dr. Daphne captivates audiences and shares powerful teachings on the impact that pets have on people's lives, personal transformation, and the importance of pursuing one's passion. Dr. Daphne is also a certified coach who specializes in helping professionals navigate career transitions, overcome self-doubt, and achieve their full potential. Her debut book, *The Pet Effect: Healing and Learning Life Lessons from the Pets We Love*, blends heartwarming stories of pets who helped their pet parents through challenging times with lessons that their pets taught them. Through her writing, coaching, and speaking engagements, Dr. Daphne continues to uplift and inspire.

**Shauna McWilliams, LCSW**

*School Social Worker, Orchard View Alternative High School*

Shauna McWilliams is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and graduate of Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. She has over 25 years of experience in behavioral health services working with children and families. Much of that time she spent working at Green Chimneys in Brewster, NY, facilitating change with students through a combination of various therapeutic models such as DBT and Trauma informed care and Animal Assisted interventions. While at Green Chimneys, Mrs. McWilliams co-chaired the Animal Interaction Assessment Team and coordinated the development of an AAT training manual for clinicians that aligns with student goals. While she is currently working with students at Orchard View Alternative High School in the Wappingers, NY Central School District, she remains close with Green Chimneys and continues to return to campus to facilitate training for social workers in AAT. While not at work, Mrs. McWilliams enjoys spending her time outside with family and friends exploring and enjoying nature.

**Skyler Opromolla**

*Farm Science Teacher, Green Chimneys*

Skyler Opromolla is the Farm Science Teacher at Green Chimneys. She has always had a passion for conservation and animal welfare. Her background includes working in small animal veterinary medicine. After graduating from Siena College with a Bachelor's of Science in Biology, Skyler began to work with livestock in a therapeutic educational setting. She enjoys helping students understand how to work with the animals and investigate how they interact with their environment and humans.

**Lindsay Vallovera, LMSW**

*Respite Specialist, Green Chimneys*

Lindsay Vallovera is a Licensed Master Social Worker and graduate of Hunter College's Silberman School of Social Work, where she concentrated on Community Organizing, Planning and Development. Lindsay has a background in nonprofit camping programming and environmental education. Lindsay now works in Green Chimneys' Respite Program, where she delivers tailored, short-term group and individual interventions to support students in achieving their specific goals. With a focus on nature-based therapeutic approaches, Lindsay frequently integrates resources from the organization's farm, garden and Boni-Bel Country Store into her practice to foster meaningful growth and connection for the students she serves. Outside of work, Lindsay loves to hike with her dog, garden, craft and play the flute in a community band.

**Danielle Zalewski**

*Animal Caretaker, Green Chimneys*

Danielle Zalewski is the Animal Caretaker for the Teaching Barn at Green Chimneys. As a graduate of the University of Connecticut with Bachelor's in Animal Science, she gravitated towards finding a way to combine a passion for livestock with a mission to help people. She has a background in livestock and equine husbandry at independent farms as well as environmental management with US Fish & Wildlife. While heavily involved in the direct care of the livestock at Green Chimneys, she is also focused on guiding others into the practice of Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) with livestock. Danielle currently is co-authoring an academic paper on the potential of sheep in human-service programs.