**Featured Speakers**

**Dr. Leyla Acaroglu**

Dr. Leyla Acaroglu is a sustainability expert, award-winning designer, United Nations Environment Programme Champion of the Earth, sociologist, social entrepreneur, and founder of Disrupt Design, the UnSchool and the CO Project Farm in Portugal.

Internationally recognized as a leader in the use of disruptive design across sustainability and education initiatives, Acaroglu designs cerebral experiences that help make the status quo obsolete. She is an inspiring communicator and educator, leading presentations around the world on activating positive social and environmental change.

**Alice Hill**

Alice Hill is the David M. Rubenstein Senior Fellow for Energy and the Environment at the Council on Foreign Relations, focusing on the risks, consequences, and responses associated with climate change, and co-author of “Building a Resilient Tomorrow: How to Prepare for the Coming Climate Disruption.”

Hill served as special assistant to President Barack Obama and senior counselor to the Secretary of the U.S. Homeland Security Dept., where she led development of national policy to build resilience to catastrophes like climate change and biological threats, including pandemics.

**Dr. Cheryl Holder**

Dr. Cheryl Holder is the interim associate dean of Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Community Initiatives for the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine at Florida International University, and has dedicated her medical career to serving underserved and vulnerable populations.

A leader in sounding the alarm about the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on the African American community, Holder advocated for more testing sites and better messaging in black neighborhoods. Among her honors, she currently serves as the Florida State Medical Association president and earned the 2019 Tow Humanism in Medicine Award.

**Leonardo Martinez-Diaz**

Leonardo Martinez-Diaz is global director of the Sustainable Finance Center at the World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C., leading a research team working to promote the flow of financing to environmentally sustainable activities like climate adaptation and mitigation.

Martinez-Diaz served as deputy assistant secretary for energy and environment with the U.S. Treasury Department, where he directed Treasury’s domestic and international work on climate finance, and led climate change elements of international negotiations. He is co-author of “Building a Resilient Tomorrow: How to Prepare for the Coming Climate Disruption.”

**William McDonough**

William McDonough, an architect with William McDonough + Partners, is a globally recognized leader in sustainable design and development who created the Cradle to Cradle™ products program and authored a seminal book about this circular economy design movement.

Recipient of three U.S. Presidential awards, McDonough counsels corporate and government leaders through McDonough Innovation, and designed landmark buildings in the sustainability movement, including Ford’s River Rouge plant in Michigan and Nike’s European headquarters in The Netherlands.
Invited Speakers

Laura Aguirre is an Audubon Florida conservation organizer, working to strengthen political consensus around climate solutions. She previously worked as a Rethink Energy Florida organizer, a political action coordinator for 350 South Florida, and an educator. A lifelong Floridian, Laura earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Florida International University, and is deeply invested in protecting Florida for people and wildlife.

Jen Ahearn-Koch has been the City of Sarasota mayor since November 2019, after her initial election to the city commission in May 2017. She earned a bachelor’s in international affairs from the American University in Paris, and a master’s degree in international political economy from Columbia University in New York. A mother of two and a second-degree karate black belt, Jen is a long-time Sarasota resident who created her own marketing consulting business.

Bob Bunting is CEO of The Climate Adaptation Center (CAC) in Sarasota. A scientist, serial entrepreneur, and educator, Bob has served as director of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, lead forecaster for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a TV meteorologist, and an educator at six colleges/universities. He also founded Digital Globe, rebranded as MAXAR, which provides satellite data to the U.S. government, NATO, and others.

Mary Butler is the president of Amaryllis Park Neighborhood Association, elected in October 2019. Mary joined the association in 2009, serving as secretary for three years and vice president for two. She is a Sarasota native—born and raised in Newtown—and has always had a passion for community engagement, using her gifts and talents to be of service.

Garrett Cadou is a zero-waste consultant and Florida director of Precious Plastic, a worldwide recycling community that educates people about the ubiquitous nature of plastics. A Sarasota native who graduated from Florida State University, Garrett left the Los Angeles marketing and video world to live “off-grid” in Costa Rican jungles. There, he discovered permaculture, and returned to his hometown to teach this approach as a solution to humanity’s waste addiction.

Jean Carroon is a principal at Goody Clancy, a Boston-based design firm committed to building social value through a practice embracing architecture, planning and preservation. Jean earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Oregon, and is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and the U. S. Green Building Council’s LEED program. She is a frequent speaker, teacher and advocate for holistic design, as well as a published author.

Dickson Despommier is a Columbia University emeritus professor and adjunct professor at Fordham University, where he teaches ecology for designers. He holds bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees in parasitology and microbiology. Long interested in environmental encroachment by humans, he is engaged in a project involving vertical farming, using tall buildings in densely populated urban centers to produce vast amounts of food crops.

The Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley is pastor emeritus at Providence Missionary Baptist Church, retiring after serving 25 years. As pastor, he became intensely involved in climate change and environmental justice, combining the disciplines of faith and science with lessons learned as a civil/human rights advocate from the 1960s. Married for almost 50 years to his wife, Murriel, he holds bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees in psychology, along with a master’s of divinity.

Sandy Gilbert is chairman/CEO of Solutions To Avoid Red Tide (START). A Cornell University graduate, Sandy worked for 35 years in the publishing business, holding executive positions with TIME and Smithsonian magazines, before retiring in 2000 to Longboat Key with his wife, Emmy Lou. He has chaired multiple town committees, held a government affairs columnist post with the Longboat Observer, and is a founding member of Sarasota Bay Watch.
Invited Speakers (cnt’d)

Jennifer Hecker is executive director of the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP). One of 28 entities in the National Estuary Program, CHNEP unites 10 counties and 27 cities across south-central Florida in efforts to protect water, habitat, and wildlife. Jennifer previously served as natural resource policy director at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and currently chairs the Southwest Florida Water Management District’s Environmental Advisory Committee.

Joe Hobbs is a climate activist who currently attends college and high school, working on an associate degree in cybersecurity. Joe is part of multiple Fridays for Future chapters, and serves as operations director for the international Climate Cardinals organization. Joe, 17, has helped bring millions of people together worldwide to fight for climate change, and has worked with multiple organizations, corporations, and the media on that critical issue.

Christine P. Johnson is president of Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, which has preserved nearly 18,000 acres along Florida’s Gulf Coast. Christine stepped into the lead Foundation role in 2011 after a career in management and consulting. A Manatee County native and fifth-generation Floridian, Christine shares the Foundation’s vision that the human and natural worlds of Southwest Florida flourish together.

Mason Jordan is a founding member of Suncoast Waterkeeper’s youth-oriented Florida Kids for Clean Water Club, working tirelessly for the local environment. Mason, 12, participated in the yearlong, advanced Homeschool Science Program at Mote Marine Aquarium and Laboratory, and took part in the 2019 Youth Conservation Summit. Among a variety of conservation efforts, Mason is in the early stages of studying sewage leak issues, impacts and solutions.

John A. Lanier is executive director of the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, a Georgia-based foundation honoring the late industrialist and environmental pioneer Ray C. Anderson. John joined the organization in May 2013 to lead the foundation that bears his grandfather’s name. A published author, John also serves on the board of directors for the Southface Institute, a nonprofit working to advance green building and a regenerative economy.

Damon Moore is the division manager of Ecological and Marine Resources within the Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources Department. Damon has 15 years experience in habitat restoration in the public and private sectors, and is a certified ecological restoration practitioner through the Society for Ecological Restoration. Notable projects in which Damon has played a primary role include work at Robinson Preserve, Perico Preserve and Hidden Harbor Park.

Michael A. Moran is chairman of the Sarasota County Commission, earning election to the board in 2016, his first public office. Michael advocates conservative policies, with a goal to make government taxpayer-accountable and representative to all constituents. A certified insurance counselor, Michael is a tireless advocate for seniors, Sarasota County’s environment, and the business community.

Sean Patton is a biologist who runs Stocking Savvy LLC, a habitat restoration company. Sean has a long history working on habitat restoration, fighting invasive species, and improving water quality. Sean also works on the Sarasota-Manatee Ecoflora Project to catalog plants throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties, is a vice chair of the Sarasota Tree Advisory Council, and a respected water restoration scientist with numerous speaking engagements.

Mark Paul is an assistant professor of economics and environmental studies at New College of Florida, a fellow at the Roosevelt Institute, and a senior fellow at Data for Progress. As a political economist, Mark spends his time thinking about inequality and the climate crisis, researching the roots, impacts, connections and more of these intertwined topics. Currently authoring a book, Mark’s writings have appeared in the New York Times, The Economist, Forbes and more.
Invited Speakers (cnt’d)

Polly Pitchford is the Aetna on-site health coach for Sarasota County Government, with more than 40 years’ experience in the health industry. As part of Sarasota County’s “Wellness Team,” she co-produced the “Workplace Positivity Study,” published in the Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine. Author of two natural-foods cookbooks and a certified personal trainer, therapist and yoga instructor, Polly speaks nationally on healthy lifestyles.

David Rachelson is Rubicon’s chief sustainability officer, leading efforts to end waste through landfill diversion and circular economy solutions. David’s team oversees waste and recycling metrics of customers and engages with sustainability departments on solutions. David previously served as a consultant with PwC and with InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), where he worked to provide tailored sustainability solutions.

Sophia Riesen is a high school junior, dually enrolled at State College of Florida, and a three-year intern at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium. A certified scientific SCUBA diver and high ranking member in SCUBA Nauts International, Sophia conducts coral disease surveys and restoration, fish population counts, and benthic transects. Sophia, 16, has a love for the ocean and is very passionate about advocating and teaching others about what makes this blue planet blue.

Jennifer Shafer is a marine ecologist and principal at Shafer Consulting, helping clients with environmental strategic planning and communications. Jennifer also serves as co-executive director of the Science and Environment Council of Southwest Florida, a consortium of 40 organizations. A Sarasota resident with a long family history here, Jennifer previously taught in the Hawaii Pacific University marine and environmental science program.

Christine Shepard is director of science for the Gulf of Mexico program, identifying where ecosystem-based approaches can reduce coastal hazards. Christine helps decision makers address coastal risks from climate change, and co-authored the 2012 World Risk Report with the United Nations University. After completing undergraduate work at the University of Florida, Christine earned a doctorate degree in ocean science from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

DeWanda Smith-Soeder is president and principal consultant with Smith Soeder Enterprises, LLC. A diversity, equity and inclusion strategist with an organizational development and training background, DeWanda has led large-scale consultations within Fortune 500 corporations across myriad sectors. DeWanda earned a master’s degree in psychology from Cleveland State University, and has taught as an adjunct professor of organizational psychology.

Tracie Troxler is the co-founder of Sunshine Community Compost, a non-profit offering composting education and programs in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Tracie is a Manatee County native with a background in pediatric and mental health care, community-based solar energy access, and regenerative agriculture. After time in California, Tracie returned to Florida to found Sunshine Community Compost, combining her life skills with her passion for healthy living.

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Cathy Carter is a reporter and host for WUSF Public Media who has covered issues from Gulf Coast aquaculture to COVID-19. She has been honored by the Public Radio Journalist’s Assn., Florida Associated Press Assn. and others.

Sean Russell is associate director of youth engagement and partnerships at EarthEcho International, helping young people build a sustainable future, and founding director of the annual Youth Ocean Conservation Summit.