

# Meet the Team

## Case Management, Vermont

### LEADERSHIP TEAM & SUPPORT



#### **Theresa Rickard - State Director**

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Theresa has devoted her career to working in the human services field. With a wide variety of experience Theresa began her work in behavioral assessments with children before moving into the mental health field within the hospital system and finally, then finding her path with developmental services. It was not long after becoming a case manager she found a renewed sense of direction working with these individuals who shine light and bring joy into our world. With a deep commitment to person-center care and community inclusion Theresa works to ensure that all Vermonters with developmental disabilities have access to the supports they need to live meaningful, self-directed lives. When she is not working, you can find Theresa with her family and two dogs. In the summer, they are usually at the pool or in the garden before the colder months close in and they are headed to the mountain or the hockey rink.



#### **Craig Bujold - Burlington Area**

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Craig is a Regional Supervisor for Greater Burlington and surrounding areas. Craig is a dedicated and experienced human services professional with 17 years of progressive experience working with diverse developmental services populations. He is a Qualified Developmental Disabilities Professional (QDDP) with a strong background in behavioral health, case management, and individualized care planning. He has proven expertise in crisis intervention, having served as a vital member of a crisis response team. Craig is committed to empowering individuals with developmental disabilities through compassionate support, advocacy, and evidence-based practices. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with my family, mountain biking, traveling, sports and being on the water. Go Celtics!!!!



#### **Khalila Cliché - Southern Vermont Area**

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I am the Regional Supervisor for the Southern Vermont area, and I am also a mother of four children. I'm originally from Jamaica but have spent my adult life living in Vermont. I started in Home Health Care and moved to development services back in 2019. I am a strong advocate for diversity, person-centered thinking and mindfulness.

On my off-time you can find me with my family. Out in the gardens or by my Koi pond. I have a love for hiking and supporting those around me. I am excited to be a part of the Benchmark Team.

# LEADERSHIP TEAM & SUPPORT



## **Austin Hornyak - Central Vermont and Surrounding Areas** **ahornyak@benchmarkhs.com**

Austin is the Regional Supervisor for Central Vermont and the surrounding areas. Before joining Benchmark, Austin worked as a direct support professional, case manager, and team manager serving individuals with developmental disabilities in Vermont for over a decade. Austin studied at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania and Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, and began his career in pastoral ministry. He enjoys backpacking and maintains a section of the Long Trail as a trail adopter for the Green Mountain Club. Other interests include puzzles and board games, reading, and film.



## **Isabela Knowles - St. Albans and Surrounding Areas** **iknowles@benchmarkhs.com**

Isabela is the Regional Supervisor for St. Albans and the surrounding areas. With over 15 years of experience in case management service, experienced in strong diagnostic skills and a client-centered approach. Isabela's passion for this work started back in middle school, where she experienced an inclusive learning environment. This was a stark contrast compared to Romania, where there was still so much isolation of individuals with disabilities. Isabela volunteered with the Special Olympics in high school. She has a Bachelor's in Health Promotion from Coastal Carolina University. For the past 9 years, Isabela has taught DBT (Dialectical Behavior therapy) and she has been the DEI- Multicultural chairwoman for the past 6 years as she continues to strive toward education and inclusivity for all. Isabela is a mother of 3 very active children; in her spare time you will often find her on the soccer/ baseball field cheering on her children. Isabela loves cooking, DIY house projects and in the last year she has been perfecting her bread making.



## **Will Manley - Rutland Area** **wmanley@benchmarkhs.com**

Will is a Regional Supervisor for the Rutland area. He has spent the last 15 years working in the human services field, holding various roles including direct service and supervisory positions. Will is deeply committed to serving individuals with developmental disabilities with a focus on advocating for resources and supports to meet the unique needs of each individual. Will, was born in Atlanta, and moved to Vermont as a child. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with wife, his two young children and barbecuing.

# LEADERSHIP TEAM & SUPPORT



## **Sara-Ann Pentenreider- Burlington and Northeast Kingdom Areas**

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Sara-Ann is a Regional Supervisor. A naturally social and outgoing person, Sara-Ann thrives on building genuine connections with others—a trait that has shaped her career in supporting individuals with disabilities. Her journey began in early intervention and youth support, where she developed a deep understanding of the transformative power of strong, foundational relationships. Over the years, she has taken on a variety of roles, all rooted in advocacy, empowerment, and accessibility.

Driven by a mission to create a more inclusive world, Sara-Ann brings warmth, passion, and purpose to everything she does. Whether mentoring her team or walking alongside those she supports, she leads with empathy and a steadfast belief in the potential of every individual.



## **Jennifer Savard - Office Coordinator/HR**

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My name is Jennifer Savard. I am excited to be a part of the Benchmark team in Vermont as the Human Resource and Office Coordinator. I graduated from Champlain College with a degree in Social Science. Before Benchmark, I was a director for a childcare program for 28 years. I have a strong attention to detail as I managed all of the office responsibilities, hired and trained staff, and led a preschool classroom of 20 children. I am a wife, mother of 3 beautiful girls, and a new Grammy. I love spending time with my family, being outside, and watching a good TV series.

# CASE MANAGERS - BURLINGTON AREA



## **Saba Ahsan - Burlington Area**

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Saba Ahsan, M.S. in Counseling Psychology, has a strong passion for human services and is committed to helping individuals lead meaningful and empowered lives. As a Coda (Child of Deaf Adults), she is fluent in Sign Language and has used her cultural and linguistic background to provide therapy to Deaf adults, achieving meaningful outcomes. In Pakistan, she worked with a nonprofit organization focused on enhancing education and advocacy for the Deaf community. After relocating to Vermont, she expanded her work to support adolescents on the autism spectrum in high school settings, helping them manage emotional and behavioral challenges. Now, as she joins Benchmark Human Services, she is eager to continue this journey by providing compassionate, inclusive support to individuals and their families. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys hiking, playing video games, and exploring new adventures.



# CASE MANAGERS - BURLINGTON AREA (Continued)



## **Kylie Cordner - Burlington Area**

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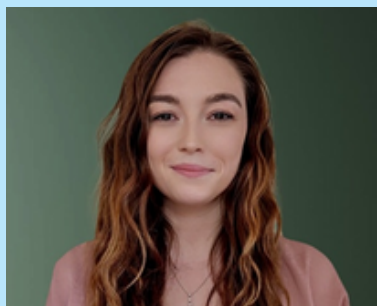
Hi, I'm Kylie, a dedicated Case Manager with a passion for supporting individuals to reach their goals and live fulfilling lives. I have a background in psychology and extensive experience coordinating services for diverse populations, including individuals with disabilities, mental health needs, and complex social situations. In my role, I pride myself on building trusting relationships, advocating for clients' rights, and developing individualized service plans that empower people to achieve greater independence. I am skilled in navigating community resources, collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, and ensuring that each person's unique strengths and needs are at the center of every plan. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my partner and my children, as well as, exercising, being outdoors, and finding ways to "adventure" within my own scope of life! These things help me stay balanced and energized for the important work I do. I am committed to making a positive difference and continually growing as a professional to better serve my clients and community.



## **Kara Fregoe - Burlington Area**

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I'm thrilled to be joining the team at Benchmark as a Case Manager! I began my journey in Social Services in 2015 after earning my degree in Psychology. Three years ago, I transitioned into case management. I am passionate about partnering with individuals to understand their goals, help them navigate complex systems, and secure the resources they need to meet their goals. I work hard to build meaningful relationships with my clients and learn their strengths, likes and dislikes to deliver the best care possible. Outside of work, I'm a mom of four, an animal lover and always ready to dive into a good book. I can often be found outdoors hiking, biking or cheering at a soccer match. During the Winter I love snowboarding, ice skating and a good hockey game. I'm looking forward to getting to know each of you and working together.



## **Maggie LaFlame - Burlington Area**

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With over eight years of experience supporting individuals with developmental disabilities across Vermont, I bring a deep commitment to compassionate, person-centered care. My approach centers on promoting independence, respect, and an enriched quality of life. Originally from the Adirondacks, I developed a love for the outdoors and playing hockey. In my free time, you'll find me catching the next flight to anywhere, enjoying a comedy show, or spending time with my dog, Chewy.



## **Deirdre Martin-Baker - Burlington Area**

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Deirdre began her career path in education and has worked at The Joshua School for students with autism and then within the public school sector as a Special Educator. Deirdre then moved to working as a Program Manager for the past 2 years and has recently transitioned to Case Management here at Benchmark. Deirdre enjoys taking her dog, Ronin, on walks, grabbing a Maple creeme, and just being outside!



## CASE MANAGERS - BURLINGTON AREA (Continued)



### **Joey Mercier - Burlington Area**

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My name is Joey. I recently made the move from Rhode Island to Vermont. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's in Physician Assistant Studies. Before joining Benchmark, I worked as a crisis clinician with First Call and at the Mental Health Urgent Care. My experience includes clinical assessment, diagnosis, and therapeutic intervention, and I'm especially passionate about helping individuals navigate challenges and connect with the resources needed to thrive. On a personal note, I'm a proud dog dad to my pup Sloan—she's a lake-loving, fetch-obsessed ball of energy! I also come from a big Italian family, with a twin brother and two older sisters who keep life interesting. I'm excited to be here and look forward to connecting with you as we work together to support your goals and well-being!



### **Tiffany Tenney - Burlington Area**

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I am very honored to be a new Case Manager for Benchmark Human Services and to welcome them to our beautiful State of Vermont. I myself am a seventh-generation Vermonter that was born and raised in Charlotte, VT where I graduated from Champlain Valley High School in 2010. I obtained my QDDP in 2020 and worked in a variety of roles including: Medical Case Manager, Behavior Interventionist, Reach Up Case Manager and Program Manager serving a vast array of clients in Chittenden and Franklin Counties. My passion for delivering exceptional services grew exponentially when two of my children were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and I began to navigate services not only from a professional standpoint but as a consumer as well. My natural resourcefulness, unique perspectives, knowledge of resources and a passion that goes beyond education is why I would love to serve you.



### **Sam Reynolds - Burlington Area**

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Sam is a Case Manager for our program.

## CASE MANAGERS - ST. ALBANS AREA



### **Angel Goldsmith - St. Albans Area**

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Hello, I'm Angel Goldsmith, a Case Manager with Benchmark Human Services. I was born and raised in Franklin County, VT. I have been working in the human services field for over 10 years and have directly supported consumers throughout this time. I previously managed a respite home, where I worked with a diverse caseload that included individuals with high medical and behavioral needs. I strongly believe in person-centered care and strive to provide well-informed advice. As a compassionate advisor, I am dedicated to understanding your personal goals. Outside work, I enjoy spending time with my family and two dogs. We lead an active and adventurous lifestyle.

# CASE MANAGERS - ST. ALBANS (Continued)



## **Nichole Jacobs - St. Albans Area**

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Hi, I am Nichole Jacobs, a Case Manager at Benchmark Human Services. With nearly 24 years of experience in the developmental services field, I've had the privilege of working with individuals across a wide range of needs, from low support to complex behavioral and high medical care. Caregiving is not just my profession; it's my passion. As a case manager, I will strongly advocate for and support individuals in reaching their goals and helping them succeed. Outside of work, I'm a proud mom of three and have hosted 18 exchange students worldwide. I share my home with three energetic dogs and love to travel with my husband of 22 years.



## **Lisa Lumsden - St. Albans Area**

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I am a Case Manager for St. Albans and the surrounding area. My career has centered on promoting independence, with experience in Human Resources, Federal Recruitment and Placement, Adolescent Services at Vermont's Department for Children and Families, and coordinating Adult Family Care at Upper Valley Services. From 1997 to 2023, I also served as a Shared Living Provider for Developmental Services—an experience that deepened my understanding of supporting entire families.

Outside of work, I enjoy time with my Pug, my Blue Heeler, and my family.



## **Briannah Mercier - St. Albans Area**

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With 8 years of experience in case management and healthcare, I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Salve Regina University. I specialize in managing complex cases, coordinating care, and collaborating with multidisciplinary teams to ensure clients receive the support they need. Passionate about advocacy, I focus on building strong, trusting relationships and offering empathetic, client-centered care to help individuals and families navigate their challenges with confidence.



## CASE MANAGERS - ST. ALBANS AREA (Continued)



### **Krista Smith - St. Albans Area**

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I began my career as a special education Para educator, working with students across a range of mental health and developmental needs. Through that experience, I developed a strong passion for supporting individuals, especially those on the Autism spectrum, both in educational settings and in the broader community. This passion led me to transition into Care Coordination, where I focused on collaborating with families and community partners to help individuals access the services and supports they need. Now, as a Developmental Case Manager, I'm dedicated to ensuring that each person I work with is heard, respected, and empowered to reach their goals. In my free time, I enjoy paddle boarding, doing puzzles, and spending time with my puppy.



### **Liz Smith - St. Albans Area**

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Hello, my name is Liz Smith, and I serve as a Case Manager. I bring over 20 years of experience in the human services field, having worked in a wide range of roles including Home Provider, Respite/Day Worker, Family Support Advocate, Specialized and Clinical Case Manager, and Program Manager/Coordinator. I earned my Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) from the University of Vermont. My personal and professional paths have intersected in powerful ways—particularly through my journey as a parent to four children, one of whom was diagnosed with Autism two years ago. Navigating social services and the education system as a parent has deepened my understanding of the challenges families face and strengthened my ability to advocate and support others on similar paths. I am known for being compassionate, optimistic, and having a good sense of humor. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time outdoors, tending to my garden, and making memories with my family—including our dog, cat, and fish. I look forward to connecting with and supporting the individuals and families I serve.

## CASE MANAGERS - CENTRAL VERMONT



### **Kylie Brown - Central Vermont**

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Hello, I am Kylie, over 20 years of service in the field of social work, specializing in supporting vulnerable unhoused families. I use a trauma informed approach to all of my work, helping families and individuals navigate the complex systems, connecting them to critical resources to ensure success. In my free time, I am a local flower farmer/florist. I am a grandmother to 4, mother to 3 and enjoy all time spent with family. I enjoy all outside activities and love to explore new places.



### **Susana Salinas - Central Vermont**

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# CASE MANAGERS - CENTRAL VERMONT (Continued)



## **Tiffany Drown - Central Vermont Area**

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I was born and raised in Central Vermont. My mother worked in the Traumatic Brain injury Pilot program when I was in middle school and later went on to run her own business focusing on providing services to people with Traumatic Brain injuries so I guess you could say human services is all I've ever known. I have 20+ years of experience working within different spectrums of human services including direct support, program management, unit supervision, with my longest position being held providing crisis management and psychiatric care to Vermonters. I have a strong emphasis on inclusion and person centered care. In my spare time I enjoy spending time with my husband and children. The place I'm happiest is the ocean.



## **Al Pransky - Central Vermont Area**

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Al Pransky has a decade of experience working in the human services field. He began his career working a day habilitation program, and managed a full group of individuals with different abilities, and was able to aid them in flourishing in their own life paths, and fostered a culture of respect, dignity, and empathy. Al then had multiple jobs in the field in which he was able to develop his positive behavioral support skills, emotional expressive skills, taught how to develop coping mechanisms, trauma informed skills, and how to deal with and cope with stress, as well as aid his clients and their care givers in learning all of those skills. Al has a passion for helping people, and aiding them where they best see fit. Al has a bachelor of science in human services and applied psychology from Lyndon State College.



## **Andrea Provencher - Central Vermont Area**

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I am excited to be a part of Benchmark Vermont. I graduated from Northern Vermont University (previously Johnson State College) with a BA in Psychology. I have worked for designated agencies in the following roles- DSP and career coach, provided recovery supports at a Level 3 mental health facility and have previous experience in case management targeted towards Traumatic Brain Injury and Adult Family Care. Change can create a lot of feelings, I get it. However I look forward to meeting you where you're at, partnering with you to reach YOUR goals in YOUR journey in living your best life.



## **Rebecca Stark - Central Vermont Area**

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Hi! My name is Rebecca, though most people call me Becca, and I'm so excited to be on this journey as a Case Manager with Benchmark Human Services. I was born and raised here in central Vermont and I think you can tell a lot about a person by their favorite Ben and Jerry's flavor (feel free to ask me mine!). My case management experience is in adult developmental services. I have specialized training in working with adults who have been adjudicated for violent or sexual offenses, who are on probation & parole, and who are working on community reintegration. Rehabilitation and learning new skills to circumvent challenging behaviors is a lifelong task with lifelong benefits if we keep working on it together!



# CASE MANAGERS - CENTRAL VERMONT (Continued)



## **Zac Waldner - Central Vermont Area**

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My name is Zach Waldner, and I am excited to be joining Benchmark as a Case Manager. My previous roles as a Children and Family Care Coordinator and Service Coordinator gave me the invaluable opportunity to work closely with families, building relationships and supporting them through a range of services. These experiences have shaped my commitment to a person-centered approach, where each individual's unique needs, goals, and preferences guide the support I provide. I was born and raised in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, which has fostered my deep love for the outdoors. When I am not working, you will find me hiking, mountain biking, or skiing, taking full advantage of the beautiful Vermont landscape. I am also passionate about music and make it a point to attend live concerts whenever I can, always seeking out new bands and experiences. I look forward to working with you and getting to know you better. I am excited for the opportunity to collaborate with you, understand your goals, and support you along the way!



## **Loretta Wilson - Central Vermont Area**

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Loretta Wilson, a Case Manager for Benchmark Human Services, was born and raised in central Vermont and has over ten years of experience supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and those on the spectrum. Loretta specializes in case management, service coordination, advocacy, and person-centered planning to help clients lead fulfilling and independent lives. QDDP certified with a background in Early Childhood Education from Community College of Vermont and Norwich University, Loretta is committed to fostering inclusion, empowerment, and meaningful outcomes. Loretta is passionate about helping individuals reach their full potentials. She strives to support success in all aspects of their lives; personal, social, and developmental.



## **Mary Zentara - Central Vermont Area**

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Mary is excited to join the Benchmark Team and meet you. She comes to the role of Case Manager from the world of Special Education as well as Somatic Experiencing Practitioner. She has been a collaborator with All Brains Belong, a Neuro-inclusive HealthCare and Community non-profit serving neurodivergent community members in Central VT. Mary values listening and takes a person-centered approach to her work. She loves getting to know and building thoughtful, caring relationships with individuals and their care givers, learning what individuals need and love and coming around the table with each client and their team with a commitment to collaboration, advocacy and the right of all humans to live their best lives. Mary earned a Master's Degree in Special Education from the University of Vermont with a minor in Trauma-Informed and Resiliency-Based practices. She is the mom of an 18-year-old and brings a playful spirit to her work. When not working in the community, Mary can be found in the garden, cooking, on her bike or skis, playing fiddle, singing with a local community group, or simply taking in the beauty and sounds of the Vermont landscape.

# CASE MANAGERS - NORTHEAST KINGDOM AREA



## **Bonnie Cleverly - Northeast Kingdom Area**

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I was raised in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont and hold a degree in Technical Theater and Theater Arts from Johnson State College. For the past 10 years, I've worked in Human Services, beginning my journey as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) and later stepping into the role of Service Coordinator. Throughout my career, I've been passionate about empowering others. I've had the privilege of helping facilitate our local Self-Advocacy Group, where I supported individuals in leading their own meetings and organizing annual events. I enjoy helping the people I work with achieve their goals and grow together as a community. Outside of work, I enjoy a variety of crafts including knitting, crocheting, quilting, and gardening.



## **Peggy McGee - Northeast Kingdom Area**

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I am a mom of four and a grandmother of six. My family is my heart and soul. They are my greatest accomplishment! I hold a degree in Early Childhood Education/psychology. I have worked as a preschool teacher for Head Start and a parent educator for the Early Head Start Program. I have worked as an emergency worker for the CRT Program and a Service Coordinator for Northeast Kingdom Human Services Developmental Services. Most recently I worked for the VNA and Hospice agency as a supervisor and scheduler.



## **Scott McGee - Northeast Kingdom Area**

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My name is Scott McGee and I graduated from Lyndon State College with a BA in psychology. After graduating, I was hired at Northeast Kingdom Human Services as a supported employment specialist before transitioning to a case manager in the same program. I moved on to work as a case manager at OEVNA in 2021 before getting the opportunity to work at Benchmark. I look forward to working with hopefully some familiar faces and meeting some new ones as well. As you can probably tell I am a big fan of the patriots and New England sports!



## **Connie Montague - Northeast Kingdom Area**

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Hi, my name is Connie. I have worked for Northeast Kingdom human services in the past. I worked there for five years. I worked as a service coordinator and I also worked as a residential care staff. I then went onto the VNA & Hospice in Newport. I worked there for seven years with clients on the Choices for Care program, due to conflict free case management the home health agency is no longer serving Choicesfor Care clients we transitioned all those clients to the council on aging and that led me to join Benchmark as a case manager, which goes to show when one door closes there's always another door to be opened in front of you. You just have to look for it and walk through it! I am excited to join this new team and I am excited to be able to get to know you!



## CASE MANAGERS - NORTHEAST KINGDOM AREA (Continued)



### **Shaun Ruch (he/him) - Northeast Kingdom Area**

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Shaun Ruch serves as a Case Manager with Benchmark Human Services, bringing over three years of experience supporting individuals with developmental disabilities across all stages of adulthood. Shaun's favorite part of the role is walking alongside people as they work toward their goals, treating the process as a true partnership rooted in respect and shared progress. Shaun's work is deeply informed by their personal life—both as a foster parent for five years and as a parent and partner to individuals with developmental disabilities. These lived experiences fuel Shaun's passion for person-first advocacy and creating space for self-advocacy to thrive. Extensively trained in trauma-informed care, Shaun approaches every relationship with the understanding that healing and support begin with safety and trust. They prioritize creating environments that are welcoming, predictable, and sensitive to each individual's history and culture—always shifting the focus from "What's wrong?" to "What happened?" and fostering meaningful, compassionate care.



### **Christine Gilbertson - Northeast Kingdom Area**

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I have a Bachelor of Science in Human services/Counseling, graduate courses at UVM and Southern New Hampshire, special education. I taught special education at Lyndon Institute for 14 years and then developed a culinary program and taught for 4 years.

I worked and Northeast Kingdom Human Services as a Service Coordinator for 16 years. I am very compassionate at supporting individuals to reach their highest abilities and live productive and happy lives.

## CASE MANAGERS - RUTLAND AREA



### **Caitlin Cassidy - Rutland Area**

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Greetings! My name is Caitlin Cassidy and I was born, raised and reside in Rutland County, Vermont. I graduated with my Social Work degree from VTSU Castleton in 2011. Since graduation I have had the pleasure of working alongside many different individuals in such settings as residential for at risk and runaway youth, women transitioning back into the community after incarceration, those experiencing homelessness and most recently students with any type of disability. Why I chose and continue to choose the human services field is my genuine interest in what each individual I work with has to offer; building upon their strengths and assisting them when they face challenges! When I am not at work I can be found enjoying community events, attending my children's activities, and spending as much time outside as I possibly can in the summer and fall. I am so pleased to have been selected to join the Benchmark team and continue serving in my community.

# CASE MANAGERS - RUTLAND AND SURROUNDING AREAS



## **Amanda Dwyer - Rutland Area**

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Amanda brings 15+ years of Human Services experience to Benchmark Human Services. For the last 8 years of her career, she has focused on supporting people with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Disorders while employed at one of the Vermont Designated Agencies. Amanda has been a Family Advocate, where she has supported families to access their community resources, such as housing, mental health, and educational needs. Amanda also brings her experiences as a Social Worker within the State of Vermont, at the Department of Children and Families. Amanda is looking forward to working with you all and your teams!



## **Madelyn Gardner - Rutland Area**

**mgardner@benchmarkhs.com**

Madelyn Gardner is a Case Manager with Benchmark Human Services, serving individuals and families in Rutland County. She has over eight years of experience in the human services field, specializing in case management, client advocacy, and trauma-informed care. Her work focuses on helping individuals regain stability, access essential resources, and build toward long-term independence. Madelyn began her career providing direct support to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her most recent role was as a Victim Advocate and Program Coordinator, where she worked closely with multidisciplinary teams to support families affected by trauma and abuse. This work further shaped her trauma-informed, person-centered approach and strengthened her coordination and crisis response skills. Outside of work, Madelyn loves exploring Vermont's backroads, thrifting, spending time with my friends and family, and re-watching Law & Order. She is excited to be part of the team and would be honored to support you or your loved ones on your journey.



## **Brittney Holmes - Rutland Area**

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With over a decade of experience in special education and program coordination, Brittney has cultivated a deep passion for advocacy, collaboration, and individualized support. Originally from Connecticut, Brittney moved to Vermont in 2014 to teach intensive special education at an autism program, where she spent six years refining her approach to fostering growth and autonomy in her students. Her leadership and dedication led her to become the program coordinator. Now transitioning into case management for adults with disabilities, Brittney brings her expertise to ensure that each person has the opportunity to pursue their goals and aspirations. Beyond her professional life, Brittney is a proud mother of two active boys, who keep her on her toes and bring her endless joy. She has a love for singing and finds happiness in music, as well as a deep appreciation for animals. Whether advocating for individuals, enjoying time with her family, or embracing her passions, Brittney is driven by a commitment to connection, growth, and making a meaningful impact.



## CASE MANAGERS - RUTLAND AREA (Continued)



### **Melissa Knox - Rutland Area**

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I am Melissa L.A. Knox, a Case Manager for Benchmark Human Services. I first pursued my interest in Social Work way back in high school as a direct care aide. Since, I have provided person-centered supports in different capacities, ranging in age from newborn to the elderly, as a Dept for Children and Families Case Manager on the abuse/neglect team, as a Case Manager to individuals with developmental/ intellectual disabilities, and more. My goal is to provide individualized supports to each person, to you that are driven by you and supported by the team you choose! I am a Vermonter of many generations and have resided in Vermont for my entire life making me very resourceful in regards to available services/supports. I am a proud wife as well a proud mumma to my twenty-year-old daughter along with 2 fur pups (1 Rottie and 1 rescue from LA)! I have several interests, beyond my family and career, including friendships, scrapbooking, gardening, walking and swimming, and nature including sunrises/sunsets.



### **Allison Losi - Rutland Area**

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I would not be where I am today, with the morals and values instilled in me by my mother and father. One day in fifth grade, my mother and I were driving in the car when I had my very first seizure. It was after the third seizure where my parents brought me to a neurologist. The Doctor told my parents that I most likely would not even make it to college. They were appalled by the words that came out of the doctor's mouth. From that day on until present day, my parents never stopped advocating for me. Shame on those doctor because I ended up getting my graduate certificate in Applied Behavioral Analysis, Masters in Education and Certificate as a Personal Trainer and Health and Wellness Coach. Because of the drive my parents instilled in me, I played college soccer, dabbled in marathon running and weightlifting. Today, I have three beautiful children. I worked at the public school for 12+ years until I relocated back to my home town of Rutland, VT with my children. Benchmark combines all my passions: writing a story to illustrate the beauty of an individual, where they came from and where they want to be. Then taking that story and creating a plan to provide the necessary resources to meet their goals.



### **John Testa - Rutland Area**

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I'm your typical Vermonter who enjoys life's simple pleasures. My favorite pastimes include gardening, kayaking and exploring the state's remote corners and back roads. I also enjoy time spent reading and watching science fiction, gaming and puttering in my workshop. My journey toward supporting those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities came by way of an early career in public education. After teaching middle level general education for more than a decade, a foray into special education provided me with renewed professional vigor and a wealth of experience assisting students with disabilities to develop skills that promote independence and pursuit of their dreams. The fulfilling and rewarding nature of this work steered me toward Service Coordination at one of Vermont's Designated Agencies, and then on to Benchmark Human Services, where I am eager to grow my experience as a helper and facilitator focused on supporting individuals to live their best lives.

## CASE MANAGERS - RUTLAND AREA (Continued)



### **Megan Whitney - Rutland and Surrounding Areas**

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Megan was born and raised in Addison County, where she graduated in 2010. Megan has experience as a community support manager as well as a DSP and is committed to ensuring all individuals that their voice is heard and at the forefront of every decision. Megan comes with a go getter approach always trying to find the best solution to any situation. Megan is excited to be a part of the benchmark team and looks forward to working with all of you. Outside of work Megan enjoys time with her family and pets, traveling and being outdoors.

## CASE MANAGERS - SOUTHERN VERMONT



### **Ashleigh Alvarado-Garcia - Southern Vermont**

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My name is Ashleigh Garcia. I am so excited to be a part of the Benchmark team as a Case Manager. I was born in San Jose, California but grew up and graduated high school in Bennington, Vermont. I started my journey with joining the United States Army as an All-Source Intelligence Analyst right out of high school for six years, and I am now medically retired from the armed forces. I have worked in Human Services for over four years, servicing in different roles with direct support and managing experience. I have a passion for helping others and being in a professional environment that fosters that. I am a lover of nature and being outside doing activities including camping and kayaking. I enjoy listening to music and catching up with friends in my free time. I am the owner of four cats that I love so much.



### **Mark "Dru" Andrew - Southern Vermont**

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Having been in the human services field in various capacities for about 10 years. I started my journey in Los Angeles working for a supported Living agency (2014), where I rose to the position of Program Director. My main focus in this past decade has been assisting adults with Developmental Disabilities and Autism spectrum disorders. I have also been involved in Homeless outreach, Psychiatric care and most recently: I worked as a Senior Clinician Supervisor in a locked facility assisting women, court ordered for drug rehabilitation (Section 35).

I am a former full-time musician, composer, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist. I spend much of my free time writing and recording in my home recording studio.



# CASE MANAGERS - SOUTHERN VERMONT (Continued)



## **Sharon Croteau - Southern Vermont Area**

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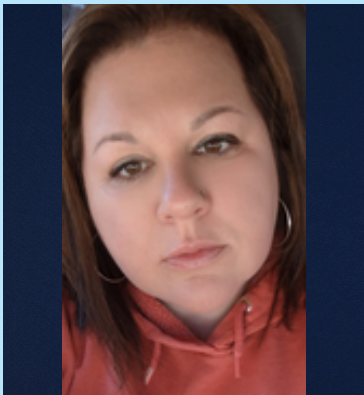
My name is Sharon Croteau and I am a Case Manager. Before working in Human Services, I was a General Manager for McDonald's Corporation for over 25 years. Four years ago, I decided to do something more meaningful, and wanting to assist others. I started as a Direct Support Provider in Brattleboro, Vermont supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities. Within 8 months, I became a Service Coordinator so I could better support my clients' needs. Going into Human Services has been the best decision I have made. I have three adult children, one who just recently graduated high school and will be attending college in the Fall. I am a big animal lover, having two cats, Penny and Georgie, and my goofy but lovable golden retriever, Rosey. I enjoy kayaking, antiques, reading, attending 80's music concerts, traveling, and cooking.



## **Jazz Cruz - Southern Vermont Area**

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I'm a self-motivated, outgoing 30-year-old single mother who enjoys nature walks, music, and pottery! With a deep passion for helping others, and a strong background in the human services field—both personally and professionally—I bring empathy, resilience, and hands-on experience to every opportunity. I'm driven by a genuine desire to make a positive impact and am always ready to lend a helping hand where it's needed most.



## **Paige Denu - Southern Vermont Area**

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Paige is a Case Manager in our program.



## **Whitney LaCroix- Southern Vermont Area**

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My name is Whitney LaCroix. I was born and raised in Bennington, VT. I am excited to be joining the Benchmark Team as a Case Manager. I have a lot of experience with Human Services. I was a shared living provider for over 13 years. I have worked in an elementary school for the past 10 years. I first started my journey in a program working with children with autism, performing ABA training. I then moved into the role of a behavior specialist in a gen ed setting. I love working with children and adults to advocate and make sure their needs are met. I also love being outside, camping, and spending time with my daughter!

## CASE MANAGERS - SOUTHERN VERMONT (Continued)



### **Francy Ray - Southern Vermont Area**

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Francy Ray is a new Case Manager for the Brattleboro area. She has a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology and an abundant history with mental health help. She is the oldest of three sisters and close with her whole family. Born and raised in Western Mass, she knows her way around. Having worked at Groundworks Drop-In center she feels a deep connection to the Brattleboro community. Her priorities are harm reduction, sustainability, and advocacy of accommodation. Hannah is straightforward, bubbly and detail-oriented. Her personal passions include fantasy novels, video games, and adventuring. After more than a decade of self-advocacy she's ready to help others learn how to make life work for them instead of feeling the pressure to make themselves work for life.