

## **John Sage**

In 1998, John Sage founded the Bridges To Life program as a result of the 1993 murder of his younger sister. Bridges To Life utilizes the assistance of victim volunteers who, as part of the program, go into prisons to show inmates the dramatic impact crime has on our communities. This process has proven to significantly reduce the recidivism rate of offenders, and thereby effect a consequent reduction in crime. Since 2000, Bridges To Life has experienced significant growth with over 38,000 inmate graduates and 2,200 volunteers, and programs in 135 prisons and alternative facilities. Bridges To Life is considered to be a model restorative justice program with a well-developed and seasoned curriculum, which has been used in eleven states outside of Texas, and in five foreign countries. Bridges To Life reduces crime, saves lives and millions of taxpayer dollars, and helps make our community a safer place to live.

The program has been recognized for numerous awards and received significant media coverage over the years for this unique work. John received the 2004 Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award by the Manhattan Institute in New York City. In 2009, John was chosen as the inaugural recipient of the Pioneer Award for Community and Restorative Justice presented at the National Restorative Justice Conference. He was the recipient of the American Leadership Forum Public Service Award in 2011. Bridges To Life was chosen as the prison Program of the Year for 2015 by the American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA). Most recently, John was the recipient of the 2017 Carol Vance TDCJ Volunteer of the Year Award for the state of Texas.

John holds a Bachelor of Science and a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from Louisiana State University. He lives in Houston with Frances, his wife of forty-eight years. They have two sons, two daughters-in-law, two grandsons, and a granddaughter.

## **Biographical Information on the Policy Forum Panelists**

### **Panel Moderator**

**Ilinda Jackson** is the president of CMCA. Ilinda has earned a M.Ed, LPC, is founder and CEO of Raising The Standard Ministries, Inc., and has served as the Senior Chaplain and Coordinator of the Faith and Character Community program in a female prison. She is currently the coordinator of the Victim Services Unit for Oklahoma Department of

Corrections.

**Panel**

**Leslie Brown**, a mother of six adult children, was abused physically, mentally, and verbally by her husband. She served nearly seven years at Dwight Correctional Center for defending herself against this abuse before being granted clemency. Her sister died as the result of domestic violence by her abuser in 2009. Since her release, she has dedicated her life to helping women who are incarcerated or who are recently released from prison and are without resources. Support Advocates for Women (SAW) was founded by Ms. Brown in 1989 and incorporated in 1992. Leslie's Place was opened in December 1994 when Ms. Brown began taking paroled women into her own home. Her main objective is to provide a safe, sober, homelike, transitional environment for female former prisoners and their children. Since its inception, over 1500 women have lived at Leslie's Place.

**Cheryl De Michele Price** is the Director for Volunteer Services at DVLC (Domestic Violence Legal Clinic). Cheryl has assisted low-income children and families as a pro bono attorney throughout the course of her career. In addition to representing individual clients, Cheryl has created and managed pro bono and community service projects for both law students and attorneys. Before joining DVLC, Cheryl was the Director of DePaul College of Law's Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center. Cheryl clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit after graduating from Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

**Stephanie Frogg** is the former assistant director of the Institute for Restorative Justice at UT-Austin. Currently she coordinates restorative programming on behalf of the Institute as well as working as a private restorative practitioner. Stephanie has over thirty years experience in the area of victim survivor rights and services, writing and speaking extensively on related topics. She is the former Director of Victim Services for MADD's National office, holds a masters degree in theological studies and is a trained mediator.

**Sarah Degner Riveros** is a survivor of domestic and gender-based violence. Sarah serves on the faculty at Augsburg University in Minneapolis where she teaches Spanish in the Department of Languages and Cross-Cultural Studies and through Augsburg's partnership with the Minnesota Department of Corrections. Sarah Degner Riveros earned her Ph.D. in Spanish from Columbia University in New York.