

## SENIOR FELLOWS AND FRIENDS

Alert. Relaxed. Collegial.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers\\_in\\_Redwood\\_City,\\_California.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers_in_Redwood_City,_California.jpg)

### Recap of 4/30/20 session on Public Service-Related Side Projects

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

This is a progress report more than anything, as more members of this network take up the work of their lives. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, we heard the tale of a few colleagues whose unique efforts and commitments are strengthening public service.

#### What I Heard

CHERYL ABRAM reskilled herself to such an extent that she is about to begin a position at Booz Allen Hamilton as a senior consultant for cybersecurity programs. Her previous position was in learning & development at OPM's Federal Executive Institute. She told us that she "decided to make room to grow."

Cheryl's story is intriguing for two reasons:

- She was pulled into cybersecurity while volunteering with the Future Kings STEM Afterschool Program, a collaboration with Northern Virginia Community College. By deciding to look into cybersecurity, doing the work, and landing the new job, Cheryl embodies the mission of the Future Kings cybersecurity program and has shown students that it can be done.
- Unlike the first cohort of the [Federal Cybersecurity Reskilling Academy](#), Cheryl found a way to make it pay. She did not wait to be pushed along, instead blazing a path to a new career. She "worked out loud" as she studied and sat for certification exams, and even shared the initial

failed attempt on LinkedIn. That provided an opportunity for others to support and help her, including Jerry Davis, former federal CISO who retired as CIO, NASA Ames Research Center.

Cheryl also has three websites, has written a book, and has made short videos. She has been consulted by agencies seeking to improve their training evaluation processes. She wrote a groundbreaking [post](#) on LinkedIn that showcases her agile mind.

CHRIS HARRINGTON, who now does public finance consulting at MuniCap, began developing a web-based decision support tool on his own time, impelled by his observations while a budget analyst for the City of Baltimore. The Public Health Equity Framework encourages users (advocacy groups, agency officials, concerned stakeholders, elected officials, and private companies) to consider public health equity when creating practices, programs, and budgets. The tool's interactive nature, combined with its easily understandable questions, creates an online learning environment that allows those who are unfamiliar with health policy to understand how a proposal can improve or worsen public health outcomes. Chris presented the draft tool at a recent Northeast Conference on Public Administration and has begun discussing it with local governments and public administrators. He invites you to contact him at [christophereharrington@gmail.com](mailto:christophereharrington@gmail.com).

Chris also contributed a script to our 2019 ebook, [Unfettered: Mission-Aligned Boundary Spanning](#), and worked with Barbara Maroney as she animated the hypothetical scenario.

BARBARA MARONEY, a corporate senior instructional designer who has worked remotely from Colorado for years, is fairly new to Senior Fellows and Friends. Her generosity, ever-expanding skill set, and open mind made her a great fit for the ebook project mentioned above. She has mastered industry best practices yet is not chained to them. This frees her to play and work with those of us who are creating new supports for employees of large organizations to expand their comfort zones and equip themselves to lead or partner on cross-agency challenges. While Barbara was partnering with us on last year's ebook, she was getting into a new job at Walmart International and attending team meetings that started as early as 5:30 a.m. and as late as 11 p.m.

JOHN SPORING, an economist who worked at the Bureau of Economic Analysis for years and became the chief data scientist at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts before retiring to teach at the Jack Welch Management Institute, is a serial entrepreneur. Last week, he told us about his mentoring projects, both at the office and on his own time. All draw on key Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) competencies, *Leveraging Diversity* and *Developing Others*. We heard about BEA employee mentoring, the 2009 13L FedPitch contest on the National Mall during Public Service Recognition Week, work with the Federal Asian Pacific American Council and Blacks in Government, and scholar mentoring at George Washington University's Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute.

John also connects university students and faculty through the [Southern Regional Science Association](#) (SRSA), where he serves as Co-Executive Director. When COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the 59th Annual Meeting, John asked the board for permission to move some of the sessions online so that young scholars and faculty could present, have their research discussed, and build their networks with other scholars. The first session on May 1<sup>st</sup> disseminated research on broadband & effects on business creation in rural areas, among other topics. Attendance was double the usual and virtual sessions are continuing.

John also contributed a chapter section and a script to our 2019 ebook, working with Barbara on the animated scenario. With an eye toward retirement, in 2011 he became a sommelier and started A Life Well Drunk wine tours – but that’s a story for another day!

### **Food For Thought**

These able individuals are contributing to outcomes that are much bigger than themselves. Far from being incapable of innovation, un-engageable, or asleep, each is discovering the art of possibility. This may be news to those unimaginative leaders who “manage talent” in bulk, who do not understand that retaining seasoned employees and recruiting new ones are two sides of the same coin. Having trouble attracting young talent to government work? Look to the inability or unwillingness to see and unleash seasoned talent.

### **The Afterparty**

Six of us took a 5-minute break and came back for more. To my surprise, the topic of COVID-19 did not come up. One topic that did was the fine line between alienating people and getting one’s point across, prompting the mention of Carmen Medina’s and Lois Kelly’s useful handbook, *Rebels at Work*.

Dan Slattery, who worked at four cabinet-level agencies before he retired and took up local government, explained how he kept work fresh whenever he got to the point that he was bored, setting new goals for himself and meeting them before moving on. He and Connie Berhane, whose office is comprised almost entirely of people nearing retirement who do not seek training or development, will talk soon to strategize her next move. Connie, our moderator for this event’s Q&A, has deep expertise in her specialty coupled with a boss who would prefer that things stay as they are – reminding me of the Kaye & Giulioni book, *Help Them Grow Or Watch Them Go...*

Jackye Zimmermann explained to the group what “not waiting for permission” has meant in the context of her work with Conversations About Leading and the student art exhibit program, both of which she initiated and shepherded to long-term success in the U.S. Department of Education’s main building.

### **How You Could Play**

A call to explore opportunities for participation in our next collaboration will be emailed to select individuals within the next few weeks. How does one become a “select individual”? By emailing me and asking for an invitation to the organizing session – after having read and watched the output from the first two projects at <https://seniorfellowsandfriends.org/boundary-spanning-in-practice/> and <https://seniorfellowsandfriends.org/unfettered-boundary-spanning/>. Those who made original contributions to either of the earlier projects will also have the opportunity to play. If “white space” or liminal space is calling you, then think about showing up to find out more.

### **Participant affiliations**

Agile Government Leadership  
ASPA National Capital Area Chapter  
Basic Concepts Ltd.  
Booz Allen Hamilton  
Center for Public Administrators  
Charlestown, RI Town Council  
Dell Technologies

Department of Education  
Department of Education, Retired  
Department of Energy  
Federal Communications Commission  
Jack Welch Management Institute  
Government Accountability Office, Retired  
Municap, Inc.  
Shaw Bransford & Roth  
U.S. Army  
Walmart International

Participants joined from Charlestown, RI, Baltimore/Washington Area, Toledo, OH, Colorado Springs and Denver, CO, and San Mateo County, CA. Please consider joining us in the future.

Sincerely,  
Kitty Wooley

**The people that I've seen who burned bright and burned out didn't understand that they had to keep reinventing. This is a hard journey. - Lynda Weinman, WorkLife with Adam Grant**



**Cheryl Abram**



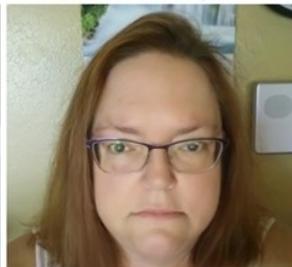
**Chris Harrington**



**John Sporing**



**Connie Berhane**



**Barbara Maroney**



**Kitty Wooley**