

Organization Biographies

Lynn Thomas, LCSW **Executive Director, Co-Founder EAGALA**

Lynn received her Master's of Social Work from the University of Utah and has over 16 years experience working with adolescents, families, individuals and groups in youth corrections, wilderness and ranch programs, private practice and mental health agencies. As executive director for Aspen Ranch, a residential boarding school for troubled adolescents, she developed a program integrating horses as the primary treatment component. Lynn additionally served as executive director for the Aspen Achievement Academy, a wilderness therapy program. In 1999, recognizing the efficacy of the experiential learning approach, the intense impact of the equine relationship, and a need to professionalize standards for this new modality, Lynn formed EAGALA, a non-profit 501(c)3 association. With the help of an energized and dynamic team, Lynn developed the organization's training and certification programs and ancillary training manuals. Today, she continues to spearhead operations both domestically and abroad as EAGALA augments its global presence.

Mickey DiGiacomo **Program Director, EAGALA**

Mickey has devoted a lifetime to the equine industry, having spent many years teaching 4-H and training, breaking and showing horses. She also spent 15 years as a jockey in 10 states. Craving a bit of sunshine but still wanting to work with horses, she moved to the race-tracks of the West Coast and spent the next three years as an exercise rider for some of the nation's acclaimed thoroughbreds.

Looking to parlay her extensive knowledge of and penchant for horses into another career, Mickey left the track and created a riding program at a residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed boys, Sierra Boys Ranch. It was there she also served as a residential counselor and house director. Mickey attended her first EAGALA training in September 2000. When named that year as equine services director for Sierra Family Services, she helped transform the equine component into a true EAGALA-model program. Hundreds of hours of sessions later, and after contracting as an EAGALA trainer in 2004, Mickey now works full-time as program director for the association. She oversees the global training schedule, mentoring program and networking groups among many other duties.

Ellen Stroud **Chairman, EAGALA Board of Directors**

Ellen is co-founder and vice-president of Pinnacle Ranch and serves as an equine specialist. She is also President of ESI Strategies which is a government and public relations consulting company. Ellen holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Roanoke College and has management experience in private, public, and nonprofit organizations. She is a graduate of the Kingsport Leadership Program. Her professional and community service work was recognized by the Tri-Cities Business Journal as a 40 Under 40 award winner in 2008. Earlier, she served as Press Secretary and Director of Special Projects for a Member of Congress. Because of her participation in EAGALA EAP and working with clients, she is pursuing a Master's degree in Social Work. Ellen and her husband, Jason Dorfman, live in Kingsport, Tennessee.