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Colorado Restaurant Association and Foundation Announce 2023-2024 Boards of Directors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 24, 2023

Denver, CO – The Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA) and Colorado Restaurant Foundation (CRF) are pleased to announce each organization’s Board of Directors for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, including the CRA Board’s newly elected chair, **Marc Steron**, managing partner for Shanahan’s Steakhouse in Denver, who has taken over the role from **Daniel Ramirez**, co-CEO of Ramirez Hospitality Group, which has multiple Front Range locations. The CRF’s leadership includes Vice-Chair **Chris Weil**, Director of Sales, Foodservice West, for FOODMatch, Inc. and Vice-Chair of Fundraising and Vice-Chair Elect **Melissa Brooks**, who is VP of Human Resources for Breckenridge-Wynkoop, which also has multiple Colorado locations.

It is exciting to share the new governing leadership of the CRA and CRF, comprised of an outstanding group of professionals who will work tirelessly with the organization’s staff to support and advance the hospitality industry across Colorado.

The voting 2023-2024 CRA Board of Directors roster includes:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Immediate Past Chair: **Daniel Ramirez**, Co-CEO, Ramirez Hospitality Group (Centennial)
- Chair: **Marc Steron**, Managing Partner, Shanahan’s Steakhouse (Denver)
- Vice Chair, Government Affairs/Chair-Elect: **Aileen Reilly**, General Manager/Proprietor, Apple Blossom, Coperta (Denver)
- Vice Chair, Convention & Events: **Mark Brinkerhoff**, Co-Founder/Owner, Brinkerhoff Hospitality (Centennial)
- Vice Chair, Membership: **Laura McGinley**, CFO, Wahoo’s Fish Tacos (Boulder)
- Vice Chair, Communication: **Jason Gumer**, Corporate Vice President and General Counsel, Monarch Casino Resort Spa, Inc. (Black Hawk)
- Vice Chair, At Large: **Dana Query**, Owner, Big Red F Restaurant Group (Boulder, Denver)
- Vice Chair, At Large: **Peter Høglund**, COO, Frasca Hospitality Group (Boulder)
- Colorado Restaurant Foundation Vice-Chair: **Chris Weil**, Regional Manager, FOODMatch, Inc. (Centennial)
- Controller: **Sam Aghbashian**, Aghbashian Consulting (Aurora)
- Treasurer: **Andy Quarm**, EVP, Republic National Distributing Co. (Littleton)



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- Secretary: **Philippe Failiau**, Owner/CEO, Gastamo Group (Denver)

ELECTED DIRECTORS:

- **Cynthia Ayala**, Owner/General Manager, [Nachos Restaurant](#) (Pueblo)
- **Todd Clark**, DOO/Partner, Matsuhisa Colorado (Aspen)
- **Catherine Cooney**, Director of Recruiting, Cooney Consulting & Recruiting (Denver)
- **Christopher Davis-Massey**, Owner/COO, ChoLon Restaurant Concepts, LLC (Denver)
- **Adam Deutschmann**, General Manager, Bargreen Ellingson (Denver)
- **Josh Dinar**, Principle, [Working Title Food Group](#) (Boulder)
- **Ryan Fletter**, Owner & Wine Director, Barolo Grill (Denver)
- **Jason Ganahl**, Founder, GQue BBQ & Ice Cream Farm (Lone Tree)
- **Carrie Hart**, EVP, Accounting & Finance, Snooze (Denver)
- **John Imbergamo**, President, The Imbergamo Group, Inc. (Denver)
- **Dan Klehm**, COO, [Elevated Inc.](#) (Cheba Hut, SkinnyFATS; Denver)
- **Jason Lessnau**, Owner/Operator, SOMIP inc. DBA McDonalds (Aurora)
- **David Patterson**, VP of Food and Beverage, [Broadmoor Resort](#) (Colorado Springs)
- **Rob Rita**, Area President, US Foods (Centennial)
- **Dana Rodriguez**, Executive Chef/Founder, [Work & Class/Super Mega Bien/Cantina Loca](#)/Rioja Partner/[Doña Loca/Casa Bonita](#) (Denver; Westminster)
- **Rich Schneider**, Owner, Raquelitas Tortillas (Denver)
- **Mark Stanley**, President, Phantom Partners Corp. (Culver's; Colorado Springs, Aurora, Thornton)
- **Alice Tomlin**, Director of HR, Wendy's of Colorado Springs (Colorado Springs)

CRA CHAPTER PRESIDENTS:

- Boulder County: **Alicia Harmon**, Executive Asst. & Office Manager, Frasca Hospitality Group
- Breckenridge: **TJ Messerschmitt**, Fatty's Pizzeria
- Durango: **Mandi Davis**, El Moro Spirits & Tavern
- Mile High: **Patrick Hartnett**, Food & Beverage Director, Denver Museum of Nature & Science (Denver)
- Northern Colorado: **Robert Duran**, Regional Manager, Blue Agave Grill (Fort Collins)



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- Pikes Peak: **Rebecca Taraborelli**, Owner, Rasta Pasta of Colorado Springs and **Jenny Sherman**, Owner, Odyssey Gastropub
- Steamboat Springs: **Nick Sharp**, Director of Operations, Rex's Family of Restaurants

The voting 2023-2024 CRF Board of Directors roster includes:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Chair: **Marc Steron**, Managing Partner, Shanahan's Steakhouse (Denver)
- Vice Chair: **Chris Weil**, Director of Sales for Foodservice West, FOODMatch, Inc. (Centennial)
- Vice-Chair Elect/Vice President, Fundraising: **Melissa Brooks**, VP Human Resources, Breckenridge Wynkoop (Denver)
- Vice President, Education: **Josh Niernberg**, Chef/Owner, Bin 707 Foodbar, Taco Party (Grand Junction)
- Vice President, Health & Wellness: **Ashley Hoffman**, VP of People and Culture, Gastamo Group (Denver)
- Vice President, At Large: **Mallory Cullen**, Territory Manager, US Foods (Centennial)
- Controller: **Emily Biederman**, COO, Secret Sauce F&B (Denver)
- Treasurer: **Luis Ramirez**, Co-CEO, Ramirez Hospitality Group (Highlands Ranch)
- Secretary: **Rich Schneider**, Owner, Raquelitas Tortillas (Denver)
- Executive Director: **Sonia Riggs**, President & CEO, Colorado Restaurant Association (Denver)
- President: **Laura Shunk**, Colorado Restaurant Foundation (Denver)

ELECTED DIRECTORS:

- **Justin Adrian**, President of Operations, Vibe Concepts (Denver)
- **Kirk T. Bachmann**, Campus President & Provost, [Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts](#) (Boulder)
- **Truett 'Blaine' Bailey**, Executive Director, In the Weeds (Durango)
- **Kevin Burke**, Dining Room Manager, [Tavernetta](#) (Denver)
- **Matthew Coates**, CEO, [Meta Burger Inc.](#) (Commerce City)
- **Shelley Cox**, Owner & COO, [Riff Raff Brewing Company](#) (Pagosa Springs)
- **Audra Dunleavy**, Hospitality & Tourism Pathway Lead, Cherry Creek Innovation Campus (Centennial)
- **Ron Hall**, COO, [GB Fish & Chips Inc.](#) (Denver)
- **Wayne Hilston**, VP Sales – Programs & Payroll, [Employers](#) (Brookfield, WI)



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- **Nikki Kolakowski**, Co-Founder, Eclectic Activation, LLC (Denver)
- **Thuan La**, VP, [Creative Team Media](#) (Aurora)
- **April Lambatos**, Owner & COO, [Footers Catering](#)/MIBE/Social Capitol Events (Arvada)
- **Lundy**, Founder & CEO, Khesed Wellness (Denver)
- **Mawa McQueen**, Executive Chef & Owner, [Mawa's Kitchen](#)/McQueen Hospitality LLC (Aspen)
- **Elizabeth Nicholson**, CEO, [Chook Chicken](#) (Denver)
- **Dr. Eric Olson**, Interim Dean, [School of Hospitality, Metropolitan State University of Denver](#)
- **Amy Rapisarda**, Customer Care Advocate, [What Chefs Want](#) (Denver)
- **Julie Stone**, Executive Director, Work Options (Denver)
- **Greg Warner**, Director of New Business Development, [Sysco Foods](#) (Denver)

Emeritus Director:

- **David Goetz**, Executive VP, SSA Group, LLC (Denver)

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About the Colorado Restaurant Association

The Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA) is dedicated to the enhancement and success of Colorado's foodservice industry. Founded in 1933, the CRA is the leading trade organization for the state's dynamic restaurant scene. The CRA represents, educates, and promotes a \$20+ billion industry comprised of more than 12,800 eating and drinking establishments and more than 303,000 workers, representing 11% of the state's workforce. [corestaurant.org](#)

About the Colorado Restaurant Foundation

Established in 1987 as the 501(c)3 philanthropic foundation of the CRA, the CRF's mission is dedicated to enhancing the industry's training and education, career development, and the overall well-being of the industry and its workforce. The CRF supports individuals in the restaurant industry as they advance and thrive. [corestaurant.org/foundation](#)