



FLY's Executive Leaders

Christa Gannon, JD, Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Christa is an honors graduate from University of California Santa Barbara, where she earned a B.S. in Sociology and Law and Society and was a first-team Academic All-American basketball player. Christa continued on to Stanford Law School, graduating with honors, and is now a member of the State Bar of California. While at Stanford, she created a volunteer program using law students who taught basic law curriculum to incarcerated youth. The program received a California State Department of Education award for violence prevention, and the course and model became FLY's flagship program.

After completing a yearlong clerkship for Federal Judge Napoleon A. Jones, Jr. at the Southern District Court of California, Christa was selected as one of ten people in the United States to receive funding from the George Soros Foundation to develop an innovative criminal justice program. With this seed funding Christa launched FLY. In recognition of Christa's abilities, in the fall of 2000, she was selected by the National Law-Related Education Consortium (funded by the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) to be California's State Coordinator of Law-Related Education. For several years in that role she supported individuals and organizations that wanted to start law-related education projects.

Christa has received numerous awards for her work at FLY, including:

- October 2001, City of San Jose Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Award for her work in creating FLY
- Spring 2003, Santa Clara Law School Bay Area Woman of Distinction for her work in mentoring and nurturing public interest law students
- Fall 2003, Youth Advocate of the Year Award from Legal Advocates for Children and Youth
- Fall 2006, Stanford Law School - Inaugural Alumni Public Service Award
- Winter 2009, Jefferson Award from CBS 5 News
- Winter 2010, Named an Ashoka Fellow one of the first juvenile justice fellows in the country
- Winter 2011, James Irvine Leadership Award for efforts to implement innovative and effective solutions to a critical state issue
- Fall 2013, In Harmony with Hope Award, Social Entrepreneurs Who Change Young Lives
- Fall 2018, Christa was one of 10 nonprofit executives in California to receive a 2018 Cal Wellness Sabbatical Award

Christa is a former member of Stanford's National Haas Advisory Board. She sits on the Board of Directors of the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits (an alliance of nonprofits in Santa Clara County), and does guest lecturing at Stanford University. Christa is also a wife and the mother of two children.

Ali Knight, MPA, Chief Operating Officer

Ali has a Masters of Public Administration from New York University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. Ali has an integrated approach to youth leadership, systems change, and community transformation, grounded in more than 15 years of public service. Throughout his career, Ali has held increasingly impactful roles in policy, program administration, research evaluation, and organizational development. His commitment to developing our nation's opportunity youth (young people ages 16-24 years who are disconnected from school and work or are systems-involved) into community leaders is spurred by his own childhood experience as a former foster care youth.

Most recently, Ali served as the Chief of Programs at Youth UpRising, an East Oakland nonprofit that provides services and programs to increase the physical and mental wellbeing, community connection, educational attainment, and career achievement among youth members. Prior to that position, Ali served as the Chief Program Officer at Groundwork Inc., a nonprofit that applies a family and community empowerment approach to help get youth through school and into college.

Earlier experiences include serving as the Interim Executive Director of the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and working for the New York City Department of Small Business Services to design and develop criminal justice programs aimed at increasing employment opportunities for individuals with criminal records. He has also held program leadership roles at the Vera Institute of Justice. Ali lives in Alameda with his wife and two children.

Lisa Breen Strickland, Chief Development Officer

Lisa possesses 30 years of leadership and fundraising experience for organizations, foundations, and companies with offices throughout the Silicon Valley, including in San Jose, Redwood City, Cupertino, Milpitas, and Mountain View. Her nonprofit expertise includes running her own consulting firm for seven years, hired by a dozen nonprofits to assist them in fulfilling their missions and developing their fundraising strategies.

Lisa's focus has been on organizations that are focused on our Valley's most underserved populations – survivors of domestic violence, homeless individuals, those without regular access to food, and at-risk youth. As an executive, Lisa has also served as the Chief Officer at two Bay Area nonprofit organizations – WATCH and Support Network for Battered Women –

for a total of seven years. As a fundraiser, Lisa pioneered these organizations' efforts to diversify their funding sources, resulting in budget increases of 25% and 63% respectively. In addition, she has facilitated the development and implementation of a \$4.3 million donor advised fund in her career. She also has led a collaborative of seven nonprofit agencies that raised over \$13 million dollars while serving as its spokesperson.

Lisa started working as a consultant to FLY in July 2015 and began her role as Chief Development Officer in 2016. Lisa is married to Scott Strickland and their adorable doodles Finn and Fergus, bring them much joy.

Carlos Garcia, MPA, Chief Financial Officer

Carlos received a B.S. in Managerial Economics from the University of California at Davis where he graduated with honors. After graduation, Carlos worked for a financial consulting firm that worked directly with the healthcare industry. Working as a consultant afforded him the opportunity to live in places such as Seattle, Los Angeles, Houston, and even Oklahoma. After taking some time to rediscover the values that were truly important to him, he decided to pursue a career in the nonprofit sector.

Carlos joined FLY in 2006 where he was initially part of the Community Resources and Development team working closely with our accountants and other external stakeholders. After nine years with FLY, Carlos became head of the Finance and Operations Department and oversaw a team of operations and administrative staff. During that time, he earned a Master of Public Administration degree from San Jose State University. He now serves as FLY's Chief Financial Officer.

Carlos says about FLY, "I work for FLY because of the clients that we serve. System-involved youth deserve a second chance to become more than their past mistakes. I find the work that our programs do inspirational."

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