

# AL-APSE 2024 Keynote Speakers



**Dr. Steven Hunt** is a leading expert in the field of Supported Employment. Steven began his work with Briggs and Associates as a career specialist and currently serves as a Region Director for Floyd, Bartow and parts of Cobb and Paulding counties, in Georgia. During his tenure with Briggs & Associates, Steven has proven to be very successful in both securing employment for individuals with disabilities as well as helping them to maintain those jobs. Dr. Hunt serves as a lead trainer for new staff within Briggs & Associates as well as an expert trainer of staff from other agencies.

Dr. Hunt is a National Speaker providing research-based insights and guidance to Supported Employment organizations both large and small, on a state and local level.

Steven earned a Doctor of Psychology degree from the University of The Rockies, with an emphasis on Mental Health Administration. When asked, Steven said his greatest passion is guiding people and giving them tools to reach their fullest potential.

In the opening session at this year's conference Dr. Hunt will address a holistic approach to integrating philosophy, perspective and best practices for success in employment.



In January 2024, **Stephen Gaddis** retired from NASA . He is currently supporting and helping to lead the development of a new commercial space station. His work experience has been at Marshall Space Flight Center, HQ and Langley Research Center. He has worked with every NASA Center and every Mission Directorate. Working at NASA was a childhood dream that came true. He was a project test engineer for many years supporting upgrades to the SSME in the areas of turbomachinery and cold flow and hot fire testing. From there he became a chief engineer for one of the ISS propulsion modules. Then to a deputy office manager position for Nuclear Systems and deputy project manager for Orion Launch Abort System. He managed the Game Changing Program within STMD and then Flight Projects at LaRC. His last assignment at NASA was to develop a new rocket to launch Martian soil samples from the surface of Mars to orbit for a return trip back to Earth.

Stephen will insights on leadership and how best to launch our leadership skills



**Russell Lehmann** is an award-winning and internationally recognized motivational speaker, poet, author, and activist. He is known for his work in raising raw and transparent awareness about autism, mental health, and disabilities. Harboring immense wisdom and insight, Lehmann has delivered TEDx talks, is a contributor for Psychology Today, and has a significant following on social media platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn. He also serves on numerous national boards, taskforces, and councils.

His impactful speeches and poetry have inspired and educated many about the nuances of autism and mental health, while also contextualizing the intersection of disability and society. Russell shares his intense and painful personal journey of being diagnosed with autism at the age of 12 after 5 weeks in a lockdown psychiatric ward for severe OCD and phobias. These struggles, on top of a lack of support, compassion, and understanding led him to withdraw from the world for the next 15 years. Russell Lehmann's work has had a positive and life-changing impact on many, and his advocacy and activism have helped to increase understanding and support for individuals in the disability community.

Russell's talent lies in several areas, showcasing his diverse skills and abilities to deliver impactful, educational, and encouraging presentations that incorporate a range of emotions and perspectives, including significant elements of candor and humor. His spoken word poetry throughout each presentation presents a unique vehicle to the audience to provoke deep thoughts. Russell's multifaceted talents have allowed him to reach a wide audience and make a significant impact in the numerous areas of inequity throughout society, and his ability to engage and inspire audiences showcases a talent for connecting with people on a deep and meaningful level.

In this year's closing session, Russell will dissect the polarities of life as it relates to individuals with disabilities. Implementing various philosophical perspectives in an easily digestible manner, he will utilize his deep introspection and insight to empower the audience to realize that it is not success *or* struggle, not fear *or* courage, not disability *or* ability, but rather all of the above, and when we can embrace and accept the fluidity of life's ups and downs, we discover what steps need to be taken to discover the path to what is possible, whereby the potential of *all* individuals is unleashed.