



## ACCESS TO CAPITAL: Food, Beverage, and Agricultural Enterprises

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November 13, 2104  
SUNY Canton

#### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

##### **ROBERT G. ANDREWS**

Chair

St. Lawrence County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

Bob is a fourth generation owner and operator of a dairy farm his family originally established in 1931 in Fowler, St Lawrence County. Bob currently serves as the Chair of the St. Lawrence County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and as the Chair of the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District. Bob also serves as the Vice Chair for Gouverneur Central School's Agriculture Advisory Board, and is a member of the Steering Committee for the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program; the St. Lawrence County Farm Bureau; the St. Lawrence County Grange, and is an elected Tax Assessor for the Town of Fowler.

##### **BRIAN BUND**

Assistant Vice President

NYBDC

[bbund@NYBDC.COM](mailto:bbund@NYBDC.COM)

Brian Bund is the Assistant Vice President, Commercial Loan for the Syracuse and Watertown NY offices for NYBDC covering Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Lewis, Onondaga, Oswego and the surrounding counties. Born and raised in Western NY and a graduate of SUNY Oswego, Brian has leveraged several years of experience within the banking

community for success in providing access to capital for small businesses throughout New York State. Brian has also received his MBA with a concentration in Finance from Walden University. Prior to joining NYBDC, Brian worked as a commercial credit analyst for Community Bank and currently serves on the North Country Alliance Loan Review Committee.

##### **MICHELLE L. CAPONE**

Director of Regional Development

Development Authority of North Country

[mcapone@danc.org](mailto:mcapone@danc.org)

Michelle L. Capone is Director of Regional Development for the Development Authority of the North Country, a position she has held since October 2011. She has been with the Development Authority for 15 years having served most recently as Deputy Comptroller. In her capacity as Director of Regional Development she works with business and housing programs to enhance communities across the North Country.

Michelle serves on the board of directors for several organizations including the Northern New York-Fort Drum Association of the United States Army, United Way of Northern New York, CREDO Foundation, and Empire State Certified Development Corporation. She is a member of the Watertown Sunrise Rotary, Watertown Jaycess, and USO Advisory Council. Michelle has

been recognized as a “40 Under 40 Leader” by the Watertown Daily Times.

Ms. Capone was born and raised in northern New York. She holds an Associates Degree in Math/Science from Jefferson Community College, a Bachelor of the Arts Degree in Economics from SUNY Geneseo and a Masters Degree in Business Administration from SUNY Oswego.

#### **MICHELLE COLLINS**

Advanced Certified Business Advisor  
SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center (SBDC)  
[collinsm@canton.edu](mailto:collinsm@canton.edu)

Michelle Collins is an Advanced Certified Business Advisor at the SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center (SBDC). As one of the SBDC’s first advisors in 1999, Michelle has been assisting aspiring and existing entrepreneurs through many of the challenges they face on a daily basis. She also conducts training and seminars on a variety of small business topics and previously taught Small Business Management as an adjunct instructor at SUNY Canton for five years. In 2003 she received the New York State SBDC’s State Star award and was also honored with the agency’s Lead by Example award in 2007. Michelle earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Writing from SUNY Plattsburgh in 1991 and her M.Ed. at St. Lawrence University in 2009.

#### **KATE FISH**

Executive Director  
Adirondack North Country Association  
[kfish@adirondack.org](mailto:kfish@adirondack.org)

Kate Fish is the Executive Director of ANCA (Adirondack North Country Association [www.adirondack.org](http://www.adirondack.org)). She assumed the Executive Directorship of ANCA in December 2009. She brings breadth and depth of experience in the international non-profit and private sectors as well as multi-generational family roots in the Adirondacks. Her responsibilities include fiscal and personnel management, public communications, fund development, and coordination on a wide range of public and private North Country initiatives,

including development and implementation of ANCA’s strategic future directions. She is a member of the North Country Regional Economic Development Council.

Since she assumed ANCA’s leadership in December of 2009, Kate has led and implemented a comprehensive strategic plan for the organization, focused on implementing projects that build resilient local economies and vibrant rural communities. The project areas include Energy – efficiency and renewable local energy - recognizing that improving energy efficiency of buildings and training more building professionals in energy efficiency work is an important key to regional economic development; and Business and Community Development – with a goal of broadening access to resources that support entrepreneurs.

In the two years before joining ANCA, she worked closely with the Wild Center (Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks in Tupper Lake) developing, coordinating and implementing two major conferences focused on energy efficiency and climate change. Prior to deciding to return to the Adirondack region, she was Managing Director, Europe, for Business for Social Responsibility ([www.bsr.org](http://www.bsr.org)), a global non-profit that works with its 250 member companies to develop sustainable business strategies and solutions. She managed the European office for BSR, recruiting member companies to join the organization and leading multiple sustainability programs involving European-based companies. She also has extensive experience in the private sector as Vice President, Public Policy, in a major multinational corporation. Her experience also includes founding and managing a non-profit focused on community education about energy efficiency and sustainable building practices.

She has two daughters and she lives in Lake Placid, New York.

**SHIRA GANS**

Relationship and Program Director  
Federal Reserve Bank of New York  
[Shira.Gans@ny.frb.org](mailto:Shira.Gans@ny.frb.org)

Shira Gans is a Relationship and Program Director in the Outreach & Education division of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. She develops key relationships, communication strategies, and produces events relating to small business.

Her prior positions include Policy Analyst for Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer where she was responsible for the Borough President's food and economic development policy portfolios; Senior Budget Analyst in the Economic Development Taskforce at the NYC Mayor's Office of Management Budget; Federal Investigator at the San Francisco District Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and legal team member monitoring mental health care in California prisons.

Shira holds a B.A. from Wesleyan University and a Masters in Public Policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at University of California, Berkeley.

**MICHAEL HAYCOOK**

Vice President and Branch Manager  
Farm Credit East  
[mike.haycook@farmcrediteast.com](mailto:mike.haycook@farmcrediteast.com)

Michael Haycook is a Vice President and Branch Manager of Farm Credit East, ACA located in Potsdam, NY. Prior to moving to Potsdam in 2000, Mike served as a Loan Officer and Tax Specialist for Farm Credit in the Litchfield, CT, Claverack, NY and Middletown, NY offices.

Raised on a small dairy farm in Orange County, NY, Mike was very active in 4-H showing and judging dairy cattle on the local, state and national level. He graduated from Cornell University in 1994 and is also a graduate of Class 8 of LEAD New York, The Empire State Food and Agricultural Leadership Institute.

Mike is active in his community and the agricultural industry including serving as Past

President of the New York State Agricultural Society, current Chair of the Agricultural Society's Distinguished Service Committee, delegate to the Empire State Council of Agricultural Organizations, Vice President of the Canton Human Services Initiative and coaching several youth sports teams.

Mike resides in Canton, NY with his wife Triva and their two children.

**MELINDA LITTLE**

Coordinator  
Point Postive, Inc.  
[mlittle231@aol.com](mailto:mlittle231@aol.com)

Melinda Little is an entrepreneur by background, perhaps most widely recognized regionally for leading the successful effort to establish The Community Store in Saranac Lake, for which she wrote the original business plan and still serves as president of the board of directors. In 1996 she co-founded Independent Means; the leading provider of family-centered financial education programs and products in the United States ([www.independentmeans.com](http://www.independentmeans.com)) and in the late 1980's founded The Company of Women, a national mail order catalog company. She is currently focusing her entrepreneurial skills on establishing and coordinating Point Positive ([www.pointpositiveadk.com](http://www.pointpositiveadk.com)), an angel investor group committed to investing in and nurturing promising and scalable start-up and early stage companies within the Adirondack.

Little lives in Saranac Lake. She's a member of the board of ROOST and is president of the Tri-Lakes Humane Society. Little has an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management and a BA from Wellesley College.

**GARY PEREIRA**

Business Program Specialist  
USDA Rural Development Agency State Office  
[Gary.Pereira@ny.usda.gov](mailto:Gary.Pereira@ny.usda.gov)

Gary Pereira is the Energy Coordinator and Business Programs Specialist at USDA Rural Development Agency State Office, located at the Galleries of Syracuse, Syracuse, NY.

As a Business Programs Specialist, Mr. Pereira has worked extensively over the past five years in the Value-Added Producer Grant Program at USDA. In addition, he is responsible for all aspects of the agency's business grant, loan, and loan guarantee programs for central and eastern New York State.

Mr. Pereira holds an MBA from Binghamton University, and a Bachelor's degree in Finance from SUNY IT.

Originally from Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island, Reaske and his family live in Homer, NY. He enjoys golf, playing the guitar, listening to music and is an avid fan of the Syracuse University Orange basketball team.

### **TOM PLASTINO**

Chief Financial Officer  
St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA)  
[TPlastino@slcida.com](mailto:TPlastino@slcida.com)

Tom Plastino has been in the economic development "business" since about 1978. In 2012 he began to work for the St. Lawrence Co. Industrial Development Agency (IDA) as its Chief Financial Officer. Previously he worked for two years as a Business Advisor with CITEC, Inc. Prior to 2010 he served as CITEC's executive director, a position he had held since 1992; for 12 of those years he was also the president of the North Country Alliance (NCA). He currently serves as a member of the NCA's Loan Review Committee. He is also a board member and Treasurer of both the Adirondack Economic Development Corporation and the Seaway Private Equity Corporation.

In his spare time, Tom serves as a board member and the Treasurer of the St. Lawrence County Housing Council and as board member of the St. Lawrence County Arts Council. He also served as an adjunct instructor at Clarkson University for two years, harassing 5-6 student teams each semester as they did real-world consulting projects for area businesses and other organizations.

Before joining CITEC in 1992, Tom had served for over ten years as the assistant

administrative director of the IDA and as the facilities manager for the St. Lawrence Co. Office of Economic Development. At various other times since 1969 he has also worked in a malleable iron foundry and in construction, as well as managed a solid waste authority, a housing agency, a technology transfer organization, and a construction company. He has also taught college history and high school English at one time or another for a few years. He was at one time an electrician by trade. He holds an embarrassing collection of degrees from the University of Notre Dame, and has also taken courses at two other universities. None of this book learning has any obvious relevance to what he has done for a living since 1978, but it sure beat working for a living.

### **MOLLIE PULVER**

VP & Senior Agricultural Relationship Manager  
NBT Bank  
[MPulver@nbtbank.com](mailto:MPulver@nbtbank.com)

Mollie Pulver has been with NBT Bank for 13 years, currently as Vice President/Sr. Relationship Manager. In addition to underwriting agricultural credits she does specialized work with both agricultural and business borrowers in need of loan servicing arising from negative events affecting their businesses.

She has over 30 year experience in agricultural lending and financial services. Her employment history includes Farm Credit, North East Appraisals & Management and two smaller NYS banks which held significant agricultural portfolios prior to joining NBT.

A graduate of Cornell University's College of Ag and Life Sciences she is an advocate for both Cornell for New York Agriculture. Ms. Pulver currently serves as Board President of NY Farm Net/Farm Link and Treasurer of the Herkimer County Cooperative Extension Board of Directors. She is also a member of the Dutchess County Agricultural Society, the Eastern New York Holstein Club and is treasurer of the 2016 National Holstein Convention Committee.

**ANDREW RICE**

VP of Agricultural Banking  
Community Bank  
[andrew.rice@communitybankna.com](mailto:andrew.rice@communitybankna.com)

Andrew Rice is a VP of Agricultural Banking for Community Bank NA. He is a NNY native who grew up on a small dairy farm in Lewis County and graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Economics. His professional roots began with the USDA NRCS before moving into the financial services industry. He has worked for Community Bank for 26 years and services agricultural accounts in Northern NY, the Finger Lakes and Central NY. Andrew is a member of the New York Bankers' Agricultural & Rural Affairs Committee and Treasurer for CCE of Lewis County.

**BROOKE E. ROUSE**

Executive Director  
St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce  
[brouse@stlawrencecountychamber.org](mailto:brouse@stlawrencecountychamber.org)

Brooke E. Rouse became the Executive Director of the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce in June 2014. The chamber is a county wide business network of almost 500 members, dedicated to building a vibrant business climate. The Chamber is also the tourism promotion agent for the County.

Brooke worked for the SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center as a business advisor before moving to the Chamber. There she worked with art-based and ag-based enterprises as well as businesses in the tourism sector to start and grow. Brooke was also involved in procurement efforts with emphasis on local purchasing. She owns a Bed & Breakfast in Canton with her husband, which has been open since 2008. She graduated from St. Lawrence University in 2006 and received her Masters in Tourism and Hospitality Management from the University of the West Indies, Barbados in 2011. She has a strong interest in sustainable rural development, with tourism as a catalyst for economic development.

Brooke currently serves on the Village of Canton Board, is a Canton Rotarian and assists with organizing the Remington Arts Festival and Canton Canoe Weekend.

**BRIAN WEINER**

Business Development  
Bibby Financial Services, Inc.  
[BWeiner@bibbyusa.com](mailto:BWeiner@bibbyusa.com)

Brian Weiner formerly a partner of Atlantic Veal & Lamb an established Brooklyn, New York based veal-processing company marketing the Plume De Veau brand of veal. Brian was instrumental in turning the family business with \$15 Million in revenue to an industry leader with \$100 Million in sales. The growth was spearheaded by an acquisition of Plume De Veau from ConAgra. Brian has also started up a profitable pet food business as well as sold off the company's hide and skin business to Cargill.

Brian has consulted with food specific private equity and investment banking firms creating structured sales, financing and marketing programs.

Following a successful three years as Meat Director at Fresh Direct, Brian has helped local New York farmers grow their business and was instrumental on finding private investors to fuel their growth.

A few years ago, Brian created Protein Funding Group, Inc. a factoring business focused on financing food companies in the New York metro area. He now heads up the Food and Beverage funding initiative at Bibby Financial Services a 207 year old UK based factoring company. Bibby operates businesses in 14 countries with over \$1 billion in assets. The company funds over \$9 billion of receivables to more than 7,000 businesses.