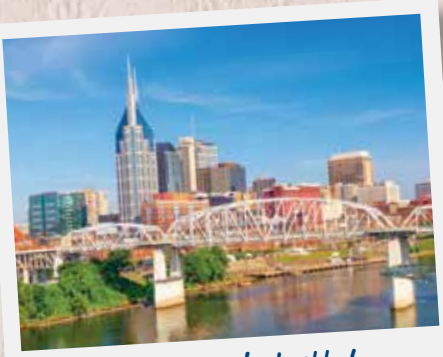
ANNUAL wellness SUMMIT



Join Us in Nashville!

July 28-30, 2026
Preconference: July 27
Grand Hyatt Nashville
Nashville, Tennessee

Early Registration Extended!
Details inside

PRESENTED BY

WELLNESS alliance

wellnessalliance.org/summit

ANNUAL wellness SUMMIT

July 28-30, 2026
Preconference: July 27
Grand Hyatt Nashville
Nashville, Tennessee

Here's what attendees have said . . .

This is a great way to feel connected to valuable resources in the wellness field and learn applicable tools to share in an easy way.

Evelyn Spangler,
Employee Wellness

The Annual Wellness Summit is life-changing. It is the best wellness event showcasing diverse subject matter experts and best practices.

Au Lisa McGovern,
Great Lakes Water Authority

The sessions were engaging and informative. I can take with me useful information and share with my followers and audience. I also met some great people and made lasting connections.

Cassandra Washington,
Teach and Take Time for You

The 2026 Annual Wellness Summit will provide attendees with the strategies, connections, and resources needed to advance well-being for themselves, their workplaces, their communities, and the individuals they serve. Set against the vibrant backdrop of Nashville, a city celebrated for its energy, creativity, live music, renowned culinary scene, and Southern hospitality, the Summit offers an inspiring environment designed to spark innovation and meaningful collaboration. Focused on bringing the industry's latest trends and best practices to the forefront, respected subject matter experts will deliver inspirational keynotes, concurrent sessions with tangible takeaways, and engaging activity sessions that prepare the mind and body for optimal learning. Beyond the educational experience, attendees will enjoy countless opportunities to connect and recharge through networking receptions, exhibitor interactions, and unforgettable Nashville experiences that make this event as energizing as it is impactful.

Program at a Glance

Monday, July 27

8:00-9:00 a.m. ..... Preconference Registration
9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. ..... Day Preconference Sessions
3:00-6:00 p.m. ..... Registration/Networking
3:30-8:30 p.m. ..... Evening Preconference Session

Tuesday, July 28

6:30-7:30 a.m. ..... Morning Activities
6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. ..... Registration/Information
7:30-8:30 a.m. ..... Continental Breakfast in Exhibit Hall
7:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. ..... Exhibits Open
8:30-10:00 a.m. ..... Welcome/Opening Keynote
10:00-10:30 a.m. ..... Break in Exhibit Hall
10:30-11:30 a.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. ..... Lunch in Exhibit Hall
12:45-1:45 p.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
1:45-2:00 p.m. ..... Break
2:00-3:00 p.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
3:00-3:30 p.m. ..... Break in Exhibit Hall
3:30-5:00 p.m. ..... Keynote
5:00-6:30 p.m. ..... Welcome Reception in Exhibit Hall

Wednesday, July 29

6:30-7:30 a.m. ..... Morning Activities
6:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. ..... Registration/Information
7:30-8:30 a.m. ..... Continental Breakfast in Exhibit Hall
7:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. ..... Exhibits Open
8:30-10:15 a.m. ..... Keynote
10:15-10:45 a.m. ..... Break in Exhibit Hall
10:45-11:45 a.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. ..... Lunch in Exhibit Hall
1:15-2:15 p.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
2:15-2:45 p.m. ..... Break in Exhibit Hall
2:45-3:30 p.m. ..... Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) Panel
3:30-5:00 p.m. ..... Keynote

Thursday, July 30

6:30-7:30 a.m. ..... Morning Activities
6:30 a.m.-12:00 noon ..... Registration/Information
7:30-8:15 a.m. ..... Continental Breakfast
8:15-9:15 a.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
9:15-9:30 a.m. ..... Break
9:30-10:30 a.m. ..... Concurrent Sessions
10:30-10:45 a.m. ..... Break
10:45 a.m.-12:00 noon ..... Closing Keynote

Conference Highlights

Preconference Sessions

Choose from three different one-day preconference sessions for in-depth training. (Separate registration required. See page 5 and 6 for details.)

Activity Sessions

Enjoy a balanced wellness experience with daily activity sessions. Each morning, you will be able to choose from a variety of activities such as yoga, guided walks, and more.

Meal Functions

The conference will provide a complimentary breakfast Tuesday-Thursday, as well as lunch Tuesday and Wednesday.

Exhibit Hall

Drop in between educational sessions to visit displays from our outstanding vendors. See what's new from these top organizations that provide products, services, and resources you are looking for to enhance your programs and plans.

The Patio Hub

Stop by the exhibit hall between sessions for some fun, care-free activities in the hub. Snap a picture and tag us! Enjoy free activities like bandana bedazzling, bag charm beading, and more to take home with you. Shop our gear store for some Wellness Alliance apparel.

Book Signing and Meet and Greets

Held in the exhibit hall. Meet the keynote speakers, ask questions, and get your book signed.

Welcome Reception

Join us Tuesday from 5:00-6:30 p.m. in the exhibit hall for light refreshments while mingling with all attendees, speakers, and exhibitors. Share your favorite session of the day or a takeaway strategy you are excited about from today's sessions.

CWP Lounge

Certified Wellness Practitioners can head to the exclusive CWP Lounge to relax and connect with fellow CWPs throughout the Summit.

Sign and Dine

No need to eat alone or scroll your phone for nearby options. Join a group of Summit attendees for dinner on Wednesday evening at some of the area's exciting and unique restaurants. Each attendee pays for their own meal.

Preconference Sessions

Monday, July 27

8:00-9:00 a.m. | Preconference Registration

9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. | Wellness Laws 101

This full-day session is for anyone involved in workplace wellness program design and implementation, as well as health and wellness coaches or other wellness practitioners who deliver wellness services. The session will survey important legal concepts for designing a compliant and effective wellness program, as well as delivering legally compliant wellness services from wellness practitioners. The presenter will cover basic legal concepts so that attendees know where to look for legal guidance. Then, the presenter will discuss the latest legal guidance and activity on wellness incentives (such as recent lawsuits against wellness programs), scope of practice and licensing (including the introduction of the Wellness Law Method for staying legally safe while offering wellness services), how to combat wellness program bias through emphasizing social determinants of health and other methods, how to make wellness and health care more comprehensive and holistic through direct primary care arrangements, and data privacy issues.

INSTRUCTOR:

Barbara Zabawa, JD, MPH
Founder and President
Wellness Law, LLC

9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Growing a Purposeful Health Coaching Business

You may be at a crossroads in your coaching journey . . . whether you are newly certified, juggling coaching alongside another role, or feeling called to clarify how your work can make a broader impact on health and well-being. This full-day, immersive, hands-on workshop guides health coaches through five core pillars for building and sustaining a thriving coaching business. Participants will engage in reflective coaching exercises, small-group collaboration, and real-time planning designed to move past common challenges such as unclear offerings, misaligned pricing, inconsistent marketing, burnout, and uncertainty about what's actually working. Coaches will leave with renewed clarity, a personalized plan, and practical tools they can implement immediately. This workshop is designed for coaches currently working in the field, those exploring new directions for their coaching work or population health impact, and individuals considering certification who want to build a business aligned with both purpose and personal well-being.

INSTRUCTOR:

Leigh Saner Baker, MPH, NBC-HWC
Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach
Sincerely Your Wellness

Evening Preconference Session

Monday, July 27 (continued)

3:00-6:00 p.m. | **Registration/Networking**

3:30-8:30 p.m.

Well Written: How Creative Writing Impacts Mental and Emotional Wellness

Creative writing offers a quiet, generous space where tangled thoughts can be set down and examined without judgment, turning vague emotions into something named and survivable. By shaping experience into sentences, metaphors, or scenes, we provide our minds with a sense of order and control that daily life often withholds. Join Grammy-nominated songwriter and producer Aaron Rice and wellness authority and poet Dr. Mark A. Campbell as they explore how creative writing—especially songwriting and poetry—can support mental and emotional wellness by giving voice to inner experiences that are often hard to articulate. Through guided prompts, reflective exercises, and gentle discussion, participants will learn how shaping thoughts into lyrics or verses can help process emotions, reduce stress, and foster self-awareness. No prior writing or musical experience is required; the focus is on expression rather than perfection. By engaging imagination, rhythm, and personal storytelling, the workshop creates a supportive space where creativity becomes a tool for connection, resilience, and emotional management. Join us in learning how creative writing supports your personal levels of health and wellness while also strengthening your ability to care for those you serve.

CO-FACILITATORS:

Mark A. Campbell, PhD, CWP, NBC-HWC
Chief Performance Officer
Campbell Performance Systems
Podcast Host
Nature of Wellness

Aaron Rice, Esq.
Songwriter/Producer
Aaron Rice Music

Dinner is included!

Early registration extended through June 29!
Register online at wellnessalliance.org/summit.

Core Conference Agenda

Tuesday, July 28

6:30-7:30 a.m. | **Morning Activities**

6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. | **Registration/Information**

7:30-8:30 a.m. | **Continental Breakfast in Exhibit Hall**

7:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. | **Exhibits Open**

8:30-10:00 a.m.

KEYNOTE—Leading With Care: How Bold Benefits Strengthen People and Profit

What if your benefits strategy could do more than support employees? What if it could elevate engagement, strengthen retention, and deliver measurable impact across your organization? In this inspiring keynote, Lisa Bronner of Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps—North America's top-selling natural brand of soap—shares a real-world model that wellness and benefits professionals can learn from and apply. Grounded in the company's All-One philosophy and Constructive Capitalism principles, this session highlights how equitable, values-driven benefits—from zero-deductible health care coverage to child-care support, wellness perks, and more—can power both employee well-being and organizational success. Central to this approach is a commitment to offering benefits equally across all roles, recognizing the humanity and value of every employee.

You'll gain practical insight into how bold, people-centered decisions—such as implementing a 5:1 executive salary cap and investing deeply in employee supports—translate into outcomes that matter to your work: low turnover, high engagement, and sustained growth. This keynote will equip you with actionable ideas to strengthen your initiatives, advocate for meaningful investment, and align well-being efforts with organizational priorities.

SPEAKER:

Lisa Bronner
Consumer Educator and Author
Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps

Well Workplace® Award

The Well Workplace Award recognizes organizations' commitment to creating healthy workplace cultures and celebrates their accomplishments. Recent Award winners will be recognized during the conference. For more information, see page 23.

Core Conference Agenda

Tuesday, July 28 (continued)

10:00-10:30 a.m. | Break in Exhibit Hall

10:30-11:30 a.m. | Concurrent Sessions

From Vision to Action: A Systems-Based Guide to Creating Health-Promoting Organizations

What does it take to move beyond isolated programs and build a practical, sustainable culture of well-being? This interactive session introduces a systems-based approach that helps practitioners align purpose, people, priorities, pathways, and practices (the why, who, what, how, and when) across campuses, health care systems, and communities. Using real-world examples and hands-on tools, this session will allow participants to reflect on where their current efforts are strong—and where gaps, overlaps, or opportunities exist. Attendees will leave with adaptable frameworks and actionable next steps to improve coordination, strengthen impact, and make their well-being efforts easier to implement and sustain.

SPEAKER:

Suzy Harrington, DNP, RN, MCHES®, Well-Being Executive

A Spectrum of Strengths: How to Optimize Your Neurodivergent Employees

One in five people is neurodivergent (e.g., has ADHD, giftedness, autism, or dyslexia), which means that they have different brain processing and ways of interacting with the world. And while some fields tend to attract more neurodivergent employees than others, supporting neurodivergent employees is everyone's task. Understanding the neurodiversity of our employees empowers leaders, managers, and HR professionals to not only support their needs but also amplify their significant strengths. When we collaborate well with our neurodivergent stakeholders, we improve our culture, output, and bottom line.

SPEAKER:

Matthew Zakreski, PsyD, Co-Founder, The Neurodiversity Collective

Core Conference Agenda

Tuesday, July 28 (continued)

Connection by Design: Because Every Great Bond Starts With a Weird Hello

Strong relationships don't happen by accident—and many of them start with a hello that can feel a little awkward. They're built over time through shared experiences, trust, and understanding. In this interactive session, you'll explore the key variables that move connections beyond that first hello and into something meaningful. Through engaging activities and practical insights, you'll learn how to create authentic bonds in everyday moments. Whether you're strengthening friendships or navigating new connections, you'll leave with tools you can use immediately. If you've ever left a conference thinking, "I wish I'd met more people," this is the session designed to change that.

This session stands alone but pairs perfectly with the companion session Connection by Design: From Curious George to Connected Colleagues.

SPEAKERS:

Jesse Gavin, DrPH, Well-Being Officer, Baylor College of Medicine

Mitch Martens, MA, Clinical Wellness Director, Huntington Health

11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. | Lunch in Exhibit Hall

12:45-1:45 p.m. | Concurrent Sessions

SKILL BUILDING—Prompt Power: AI for Well-Being

AI isn't coming. It's here. It's reshaping nearly every industry, and well-being is certainly no exception. Teams are using AI to create content, personalize experiences, and scale programs, but the results you get depend almost entirely on how you ask. Prompt Power: AI for Well-Being gives wellness leaders practical, ethics-minded AI and prompting skills, along with ready-to-use templates, so they can produce polished communications, campaigns, strategies, dashboards, and even entire applications in minutes. Through a guided, hands-on practice, participants will leave with usable prompt templates and the confidence to immediately leverage AI in their work.

SPEAKER:

Brett Powell, President, American Institute for Preventive Medicine

New This Year

Skill-Building sessions offer experiences designed to help you actively develop and refine practical skills. Through engaging, interactive formats, you'll leave not just inspired—but equipped with tools and techniques you can apply right away.

Core Conference Agenda

Tuesday, July 28 (continued)

The Wellness-Eating Disorder Paradox: Rethinking What We Praise, Measure, and Reward

Employee wellness programs often encourage behaviors seen as "healthy" within weight-loss and wellness culture, such as food restriction, strict tracking, moral judgments about food choices, and body monitoring. These behaviors are also central characteristics of eating disorders and disordered eating diagnoses. This session examines the central paradox of modern wellness: Well-meaning programs can sometimes encourage harmful behaviors by what they praise, measure, and reward. Using current research and real examples, we will discuss how incentives, digital health metrics, and workplace norms affect employee behavior and psychological safety. Participants will learn practical ways to identify wellness practices that may increase risk and redesign programs to support healthy habits, autonomy, and inclusion while still keeping people engaged and maintaining credibility.

SPEAKER:

Heather Sayers Lehman, MS, NBC-HWC, NASM-CPT, CSCS, CIEC, CWP, Founder and Head of Well-Being Strategies & Solutions, Overcoming U—Cultivating Employee Well-Being

People-First Practices: How Advocacy Practices Can Transform Well-Being Work

As organizations invest more deeply in workplace well-being, it's becoming clear that the effectiveness of support depends not only on what is offered but also on how it is experienced. Drawing from decades of victim advocacy work and informed by advocacy frameworks that center choice, empathy, and relational safety, this session explores advocacy as a primer for people-first well-being. Participants will examine how core advocacy tenets—believing people, honoring autonomy, minimizing harm, and sharing power—can fundamentally reshape clinical and organizational well-being efforts. The session connects these principles to applied well-being work within clinical systems and leadership-driven initiatives, offering a practical, relational model for wellness that truly centers the people it is meant to support.

CO-SPEAKERS:

Jeffrey Bucholtz, MA, Social Impact Educator, Rady Children's Health

Allison Ross, MA, Wellness Program Manager, Rady Children's Health

1:45-2:00 p.m. | **Break**

Early registration extended through June 29!
Register online at wellnessalliance.org/summit.

Core Conference Agenda

Tuesday, July 28 (continued)

2:00-3:00 p.m. | Concurrent Sessions

SKILL BUILDING—Leading a Team-Building Activity: From Group Agreements to Debriefs

This highly interactive session offers a behind-the-scenes look at facilitating effective team-building activities from start to finish. Participants will experience a live team-building activity while learning how to intentionally lead introductions, establish group agreements, and facilitate meaningful debriefs. Throughout the session, the facilitator will model and unpack strategies that promote psychological safety, inclusive participation, and purposeful learning. Attendees will leave with practical tools they can immediately apply to their own groups and contexts.

SPEAKER:

Jesse Greenfield, MPH, CHES®, Co-Founder, Lead Facilitator and Director of Programming, Kaleidoscope Training Center

Real Talk: How Wellness Professionals Can Address Financial Stress and Why We Should

A major predictor of health and wellness is money, yet it is rarely addressed directly in wellness spaces. The industry often places responsibility on individual mindset, behavior, and discipline, even when outcomes are heavily shaped by financial and tax policy. In this session, Cecily Welch challenges the idea that wellness exists in a vacuum and explores how financial stress shows up as burnout, anxiety, and disengagement. Attendees will examine how systemic financial pressures influence health outcomes and what wellness professionals can do to acknowledge and mitigate these realities in their work.

SPEAKER:

Cecily Welch, CPA, CFP®, PFS, Owner, Welch Financial Advisors, LLC

Beyond Survival: How Food and Movement Shaped My Story of Healing, Resilience, and Public Health Leadership

This session weaves together the speaker's personal journey of surviving stage III colorectal cancer with their professional role as the division director for nutrition and physical activity for the Indiana Department of Health, leading the statewide Food is Medicine initiative. Participants will explore how centering the patient experience can shape program design, policy development, and coalition building to improve health outcomes and chronic disease prevention. The talk will emphasize practical strategies for integrating food and nutrition into wellness frameworks across clinical, community, and policy settings.

SPEAKER:

Naima Gardner, MPH, Assistant Commissioner, Women, Children, and Families Commission, Indiana Department of Health

Core Conference Agenda

Tuesday, July 28 (continued)

3:00-3:30 p.m. | **Break in Exhibit Hall**

3:30-5:00 p.m.

KEYNOTE—Before We Repeat Social Media: The Mental Health Reckoning of AI

When social media scaled, the warning signs were there, but the frameworks weren't. By the time the research caught up, teens were spending an average of 3½ hours a day on social media, and those who exceeded three hours daily were facing double the risk of depression and anxiety symptoms.

AI companionship is moving fast, and the psychology is layered. People are forming genuine emotional bonds with AI chatbots. Not metaphorically, but in the clinical sense: attachment, dependency, and grief when access is lost.

This keynote draws directly on Dr. Vasan's clinical, research, and advocacy work. It covers what's already showing up in therapy rooms and emergency departments, not just in research abstracts. It names the specific design choices that create psychological risk, the populations most vulnerable, and the window we have to make different choices than we made with social media.

This is not a talk about whether AI is good or bad. It's a talk about how these tools work on us psychologically, where that leads if we don't intervene, and what intervention looks like in practice.

SPEAKER:

Nina Vasan, MD, MBA
Founder and Executive Director
Brainstorm: The Stanford Lab for Mental Health Innovation

5:00-6:30 p.m. | **Welcome Reception in Exhibit Hall**

Showcasing the Certified Wellness Practitioner™ (CWP™) Certification

The exclusive CWP Lounge at the Annual Wellness Summit will offer current CWPs a chance to network, share ideas, provide support, and build relationships with their peers. Want to learn more about the CWP designation? Look for posted times to meet current CWPs and Wellness Alliance staff to ask your questions!

Core Conference Agenda

Wednesday, July 29

6:30-7:30 a.m. | **Morning Activities**

6:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. | **Registration/Information**

7:30-8:30 a.m. | **Continental Breakfast in Exhibit Hall**

7:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. | **Exhibits Open**

8:30-10:15 a.m.

KEYNOTE—Leading in the Storm: Decision Making in Disruptive Times

Disruption isn't a future event; it's our current operating environment. Health care uncertainty, economic whiplash, cultural change, and global instability have made leadership more complex, more personal, and more consequential than ever. In this candid and energizing session, Dr. Michael Burcham challenges the idea that leadership is about having the right answers. Instead, he shows why the leaders who endure—and emerge stronger—are those who can make clear, principled decisions when certainty is unavailable and pressure is unavoidable. Drawing from decades of advising founders, executives, investors, and public-sector leaders, Michael shares real stories from the front lines of disruption, as well as insights from moments when the map was wrong, the data incomplete, and the stakes very real. His message is especially relevant for solopreneurs and mid-level leaders who are quietly carrying more responsibility than their titles suggest. This session is about what happens after the frameworks fail: when the data is incomplete, the clock is ticking, and people are looking to you for direction. Leadership in these moments is not performative. It's quiet, disciplined, and consequential. The ability to decide well under pressure is what ultimately separates leaders who endure from those who don't.

SPEAKER:

Michael R. Burcham, DHA, MBA
Executive Partner, Chief of Strategy & Talent Development
Shore Capital Partners

10:15-10:45 a.m. | **Break in Exhibit Hall**

Continuing Education

All educational sessions are approved for Category 1 continuing education (CE) credit for those with the Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) designation. CEBS® Compliance credits are available for select sessions. Up to 13.25 CE credits will be sought for core conference sessions (July 28-30), with additional credit sought for preconference participation on July 27, from ACSM, NCHEC (CHES®/MCHES®), HRCI®, NBHWC, and SHRM®.

Core Conference Agenda

Wednesday, July 29 (continued)

10:45-11:45 a.m. | Concurrent Sessions

SKILL BUILDING—Tending the Collective Heart: Community Grief Tending as a Practice of Belonging

Loneliness has become one of the defining health challenges of our time, yet many communities lack shared structures and literacy for emotional processing and support. This session explores community grief tending—an evidence-informed, cross-cultural practice that transforms isolation into connection through intentional rituals and collective expression. Participants will learn how structured communal grief processes can improve resilience, belonging, and mental well-being in diverse settings. Using case studies and experiential reflection, this session offers practical tools for bringing grief-tending practices into wellness programs, offices, and community spaces.

SPEAKER:

Alyssa Rose, Grief Guide and Ritualist, Alyssa Rose Healing Arts

Why Leadership Is a Health Intervention

Most workplace wellness efforts routinely focus on helping individuals manage stress and health but overlook one of the most powerful influences on well-being: leadership and workplace culture. This session explores how psychosocial factors—such as management practices, psychological safety, and day-to-day leadership behaviors—are major drivers of stress, burnout, disengagement, and performance. Drawing on simple, accessible neuroscience, alongside key insights from social and behavioral science, we connect how work environments directly shape health, safety, and engagement. Leaders and the culture they create are a critical element of a comprehensive health and high-performance strategy.

SPEAKER:

Andrew Stephenson, MBA, Vice President of North America, HBD International

Core Conference Agenda

Wednesday, July 29 (continued)

Concrete Strategies for Helping Your Wellness Client Get Unstuck With Behavioral Change

People sometimes hit an internal barrier that causes them to feel stuck and unable to progress in improving their lifestyle, thus diminishing progress, motivation, and self-efficacy. In this session, we will explore and demonstrate strategies and techniques to circumvent the type of linear, analytic thinking; assumptions; and self-defeating perspectives that hold a person back from success. Using a person-centered approach, we will employ elements of Solution-Focused Therapy and the Transtheoretical Model of Behavioral Change to demonstrate how to work with metaphor and analogy, guided fantasy, visualization, and reframing to help facilitate new thinking and help people discover a way forward to successful change.

SPEAKER:

Michael Arloski, PhD, PCC, NBC-HWC, CEO and Founder, Real Balance Global Health Coach Training

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. | **Lunch in Exhibit Hall**

1:15-2:15 p.m. | **Concurrent Sessions**

SKILL BUILDING—Exercise Snacks: How to Lead a Midday Move That Energizes and Connects Teams

This interactive session will teach participants how to design and lead a Midday Move. These "exercise snacks" are short, accessible movement breaks that boost energy, connection, and well-being across teams. Drawing from the successful St. Luke's Health System Midday Move program, participants will explore the psychology of engagement and leave with a ready-to-use framework to launch or enhance movement-based wellness moments in their own organizations.

SPEAKER:

Eren Barker, MS, ATC, CSCS, ACE-CHC, LSSGB, Co-Founder, Everyday Wellness Collective

Core Conference Agenda

Wednesday, July 29 (continued)

AI as an Emotional Companion at Work: The New Mental Health Risk for Wellness Leaders

Employees are increasingly turning to AI tools for emotional support, coaching, and therapy-like conversations, often on employer-provided platforms, such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot. Recent reports suggest that more than a million people each week discuss suicidal thoughts with ChatGPT, while traditional supports, such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), still see single-digit utilization. Dr. Serena Huang will unpack how AI is quietly becoming an emotional companion at work, as well as what that means for wellness and benefits leaders. This session focuses on practical, evidence-informed strategies to update policies, protect employees, and design human-first AI ecosystems that complement, rather than compete with, existing mental health supports.

SPEAKER:

Serena Huang, PhD, Founder and Author, Data With Serena

High-Impact Programming With a Small Wellness Team: Balancing Claims Data, Engagement, and Human-Centered Wellness

Small wellness teams are often asked to improve claims outcomes, increase engagement, and meet diverse employee needs without additional staff or resources. This session introduces a practical planning framework that helps wellness leaders prioritize programs at the intersection of claims data, employee engagement, and team capacity. Participants will learn how to translate high-level benefits data into meaningful, human-centered programming while protecting team bandwidth and avoiding burnout. Through real-world examples and guided application, attendees will leave with a clear, repeatable approach they can implement immediately within their own organizations.

SPEAKER:

Kourtney Bassett, MS, CHES®, Assistant Director, Employee Wellness, Texas A&M University

2:15-2:45 p.m. | **Break in Exhibit Hall**

Core Conference Agenda

Wednesday, July 29 (continued)

2:45-3:30 p.m.

Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) Panel: Competencies in Action

Whether you support the well-being of individuals or groups, and regardless of setting, advancing your professional impact requires more than experience alone. In this session, explore the value of the Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) credential and the Wellness Alliance's Wellness Promotion Competency Model that underpins it. Hear from CWPs as they share how certification has strengthened their practice, credibility, and career growth—along with real-world examples of applying the competencies. Walk away with a clearer understanding of how competencies and certification can elevate your work and strengthen the profession. Consider how they might support your next step—if you're exploring CWP, already certified, or simply curious about what's possible.

PANEL FACILITATOR:

Bridgette Stewart, MEd, NBC-HWC, CWP, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Center for Integrative Wellness, University of West Georgia

PANELISTS:

Karla Clark, CWP, Employee Health & Wellness Program and Project Manager, Seattle King County Balanced You Program

Brandon Graves, MS, CWP, Director of Health & Wellness, Transit Employees Health and Welfare Plan

Gabriela Monge, MS, NBC-HWC, CWP, Director of Community Engagement, KnoWEwell, P.B.C.

Cathy Temple, MBA, CWP, Director, Employee Experience, University of Illinois Hospital and Clinics

3:30-5:00 p.m.

KEYNOTE—Feel More Alive: Creative Health as the Missing Pillar of Well-Being

We often talk about physical health and mental health, but there's another pillar of well-being that we've been overlooking—It's at the root of why so many of us feel exhausted despite rest, disconnected despite success, and burned out despite all our wellness practices. Creative health is the emerging field focused on the cognitive and emotional capacities that allow us to feel genuinely rejuvenated, vital, and fully alive. In this keynote, Katina Bajaj, creative health scientist and chief science officer of Daydreamers, explores why creativity is a biological necessity in an overwhelmed world, how it revives our nervous system in ways sleep alone cannot, and the science-backed practices wellness professionals can bring back to their work and organizations. Attendees will leave with an accessible new framework for understanding vitality and practical tools to help themselves and their communities reclaim what makes them feel most alive.

SPEAKER:

Katina Bajaj, MA
Co-Founder and Chief Science Officer
Daydreamers

Core Conference Agenda

Thursday, July 30

6:30-7:30 a.m. | **Morning Activities**

6:30 a.m.-12:00 noon | **Registration/Information**

7:30-8:15 a.m. | **Continental Breakfast**

8:15-9:15 a.m. | **Concurrent Sessions**

SKILL BUILDING—Attentive Connection: Three Listening Practices That Support Well-Being

Connection supports well-being when it is grounded more in attention rather than in evaluation, fixing, or performance. This skill-building workshop trains wellness professionals in three practical listening practices that foster presence, curiosity, and psychological safety. The practices draw from applied research on attention, inquiry, and connection (capacities often described in positive psychology as foundational to wonder and human flourishing) without requiring therapeutic disclosure. Participants will learn how to guide these practices with clear instructions, appropriate pacing, and professional boundaries.

SPEAKER:

Jeffrey Davis, MA, Founder, Educator, and Facilitator, Tracking Wonder Consultancy

The Wellness Evolution: Women's Perspectives on Industry Trends and Strategies to Secure Your Seat at the Table

Join us for an inspiring conversation with leading wellness experts—each bringing over two decades of hands-on experience in shaping employee wellness strategies, consultations, and programs. Through powerful storytelling, we'll dive into the real challenges of supporting organizations that struggle to fully embrace mental health, substance misuse, food insecurity, and more. Expect candid insights, hard-earned lessons, and honest dialogue about the future of our industry in the face of AI, "social influencers," and shifting government messaging. Most importantly, this interactive session will challenge you to go beyond ideas—transforming them into actionable plans that strengthen your confidence and commitment as a wellness professional long after the Summit ends.

SPEAKERS:

Diana Bishop, MA, NBC-HWC, CWP, Design and Delivery Consultant IV, Kaiser Permanente

Bridgette Stewart, MEd, NBC-HWC, CWP, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Center for Integrative Wellness, University of West Georgia

Neema Black, MS, CWP, Wellness Director, Neighborhood House Association

Lana Saal, EdD, MCHES®, NBC-HWC, CWP, CTTS, Associate Director, Community Education, Wellness and Impact, American Diabetes Association

Core Conference Agenda

Thursday, July 30 (continued)

Building a Culture of Health: How Local Agencies Can Design and Implement Effective Employee Wellness Programs

Building and sustaining an employee wellness program can feel overwhelming—especially within complex local government and public health settings. In this interactive session, participants will learn how one of the nation's largest local health departments designed, implemented, and scaled a comprehensive employee wellness program serving over 7,000 staff. Attendees will explore actionable strategies for assessing workforce needs, securing leadership buy-in, strengthening partnerships, and expanding wellness offerings across diverse worksites. Whether launching a new program or enhancing an existing one, participants will leave with practical tools and a clear action plan they can apply immediately.

SPEAKER:

Jermey Taylor, MPH, CHES®, CWP, Worksite Wellness Director, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

9:15-9:30 a.m. | **Break**

9:30-10:30 a.m. | **Concurrent Sessions**

SKILL BUILDING—Ritual, Not Religion: A Skill Lab for Designing Microrituals for Burnout Recovery (Culturally Humble, No Spiritual Bypassing)

Ritual is a human technology for meaning-making, transition, and resilience—Yet, it is often misunderstood as religion or dismissed or mischaracterized as unscientific. This skill-building lab trains wellness professionals to design and facilitate brief microrituals (two to five minutes) that support recovery from burnout and moral fatigue in diverse settings. Participants will learn a simple, repeatable, ritual-design framework and practice applying two critical safety filters: a No-Bypassing Check (to prevent forced positivity harm) and a Cultural Humility Check (to support ethical adaptation, attribution, and audience fit). Learners will leave with two facilitation-ready microrituals, a short facilitation script, and take-home templates they can implement immediately in workplaces, campuses, and community programs.

SPEAKER:

Bobby Ansari, MA, CWP, CCC, Wellness Advisor and Spiritual Care Professional, McGill University

Core Conference Agenda

Thursday, July 30, (continued)

Connection by Design: From Curious George to Connected Colleagues

Building strong connections at work often starts the same way great learning does—with curiosity and a brave little hello. At a time when the U.S. Surgeon General has identified loneliness as a growing public health concern, the workplace has become one of the most important places to rebuild meaningful human connections.

In this session, participants will explore how the key variables of strong relationships show up in everyday work interactions. You'll discover how asking better questions, sharing experiences, building trust, and communicating with intention can transform routine moments into stronger team connections—even in hybrid or remote environments.

This session stands alone but pairs perfectly with the companion session Connection by Design: Because Every Great Bond Starts With a Weird Hello.

SPEAKERS:

Jesse Gavin, DrPH, Well-Being Officer, Baylor College of Medicine

Mitch Martens, MA, Clinical Wellness Director, Huntington Health

Restoring Balance Through Words: Poetry as a Pathway to Closing the Stress Cycle

Most of us carry far more stress than our bodies were designed to hold, and our tendency to stay "on" long after the moment of challenge has passed leaves our bodies flooded with lingering stress hormones. Drawing on her background in science education and poetry, along with positive findings from a year's worth of data from her Managing the Stress Cycle program, Skye Nicholson blends evidence-informed stress science with engaging, expressive writing practices. Participants will take part in two simple, interactive, poetry-based micropractices, supported by decades of research on expressive writing and its impact on mental health, emotional processing, and physiological regulation. The session demonstrates how practical tools to close the stress cycle can be integrated into meetings, check-ins, or trainings to strengthen resilience, promote work–life balance, and build connection, leaving attendees with clear implementation ideas for fostering healthier work environments.

SPEAKER:

Skye Nicholson, MEd, Founder and CEO, Wellbeing Workshops Co.

Core Conference Agenda

Thursday, July 30, (continued)

10:30-10:45 a.m. | Break

10:45 a.m.-12:00 noon

Closing Keynote

Leading From Where You Stand: How Everyday Leadership Shapes Culture, Energy, and Well-Being

Leadership is not a title. It is a behavior, and culture is built in the moments we think do not matter. In this closing keynote, Kyle Ewing reframes leadership for those without formal authority and shows how trust, ownership, and well-being are shaped from the middle of organizations, not just the top. Drawing from real-world experience building high-performance teams, Kyle reveals how small shifts in language, responsibility, and service can transform burnout into engagement and compliance into commitment. Attendees will learn how healthy cultures are sustained by people who take initiative, remove friction for others, and model clarity under pressure. This session is not about doing more or carrying the weight alone. It is about leading in ways that make work more human, sustainable, and energizing. The keynote closes the Summit with a renewed sense of agency and responsibility, reminding attendees that culture change starts exactly where they are.

SPEAKER:

Kyle Ewing, MBA
Founder and CEO
TerraSlate

Join the Wellness Alliance

With a history of leading the charge in supporting wellness for individuals, communities, and workplaces, the Wellness Alliance offers trusted education and certification programs, evidence-informed resources, and networking opportunities so that professionals are empowered to positively impact well-being.

Exclusive Membership Benefits

- **Well Workplace Process**
  Access the proven methodology to help transform the workplace into a healthy, high-performing culture, built around the 7 Benchmarks: A Framework for a Well Workplace.
- **Recognition for Your Well Workplace**
  The Well Workplace Award initiative recognizes organizations' commitment to creating sustainable, healthy workplace cultures and celebrates their accomplishments.
- **Legal Helpdesk and Research Service**
  Members can work with an expert to get their challenging wellness questions answered—from deciphering laws that govern wellness plans to benchmarking data covering specific wellness initiatives.
- **Live and On-Demand Webinars**
  Discover a convenient source for continuing education (CE) credits. Webinars feature emerging research and timely case studies that will advance your work.
- **Discounts on Courses, Conferences, and More**
  Receive discounts on education, including the Annual Wellness Summit and the Art & Science of Health Promotion Conference, the Wisconsin Employee Wellness Conference, as well as on the Certified Wellness Practitioner (CWP) exam.
- **Resources and Toolkits**
  Utilize models, frameworks, checklists, assessments, and other tools to support wellness initiatives, including the Six Dimensions of Wellness.
- **Well Balanced Monthly Observances**
  Build out wellness campaigns in a snap with our monthly toolkits, which include a suite of ready-made communication materials.
- **Connection**
  Access community-building forums and a career center designed for wellness professionals.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

Visit wellnessalliance.org/join to get started.

Save up to **$500** off your Annual Wellness Summit registration with membership.

Well Workplace Award

Be Recognized as One of the Healthiest Companies!

The Well Workplace Award is the final step of the Wellness Alliance's Well Workplace Process, providing the ultimate recognition for your organization's commitment to protecting and enhancing the health and well-being of each and every employee. This validation of your hard work extends beyond just an award—winners will receive special recognition at this year's Annual Wellness Summit!

New this year is an updated Awards platform, streamlining the application process and allowing you to more easily collaborate with colleagues across departments as you complete your application.

Recent Well Workplace Award winners will be recognized on Wednesday!

Learn more and get started at wellnessalliance.org/awards.

The Well Workplace Process

The Well Workplace Process helps employers understand the current health of their workplace culture and provides an accessible change management process, along with all of the tools and resources needed for organizations to foster positive progress. With a healthier culture, your organization will see stronger attraction and retention rates, impacting the bottom line.

Well Workplace Checklist

Step 1: EVALUATE organizational health with the Well Workplace Checklist.

7 BENCHMARKS

Step 2: EDUCATE yourself and learn to improve your worksite wellness program with the 7 Benchmarks Framework, Course, and Tools.

Well Workplace AWARD

Step 3: CELEBRATE your achievement with the Well Workplace Award.

The Well Workplace Process and Award are available exclusively to Wellness Alliance members. Become a member today when you visit wellnessalliance.org/join.

Sponsorship Opportunities

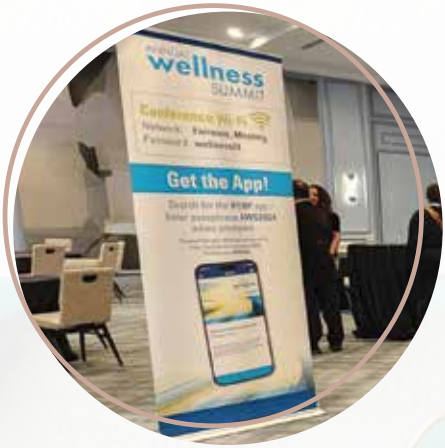
Sponsor the Annual Wellness Summit to network with thought leaders, experienced practitioners, and industry experts. There are multiple opportunities for attendees to visit the exhibit hall and a variety of sponsorships to maximize your brand exposure to this niche audience.

Sponsorship Levels

$10,000—Keynote Introduction and Tote Bag (*exclusive*) **SOLD**
Welcome Gift (*unlimited availability*)

$7,500—General Session Introduction and Tote Bag Insert (*three available*)

$5,000—Vendor Demonstration (*two available*)
Continental Breakfast (*two available*)
Networking Welcome Reception (*exclusive*)
Attendee Lunch (*two available*)
Conference App (*exclusive*)
Main Stage Activity (*one remaining*)
Wi-Fi (*exclusive*)
Lanyards (*exclusive*) **SOLD**
Conference Room Space Sponsorship (*two available*)
Professional Photos (*exclusive*)



$2,500—Morning Wellness Activity **SOLD**
On-Site Emails **SOLD**
Summit Pens/Highlighters (*exclusive*)
Summit Notepads (*exclusive*)
Hand Sanitizer Bottles (*exclusive*)
Tote Bag Insert (*unlimited availability*)

Benefits of Sponsoring (Included With ALL Sponsorships Levels)

- Exclusive branding
- Conference communications
- Banners and signage
- Sponsor listing
- Registration allotted per value of sponsorship
- Online acknowledgment

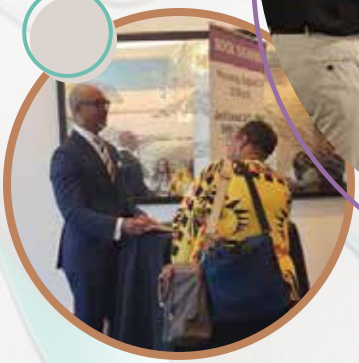
For More Information

Contact Sara Milner at
sales@wellnessalliance.org
or (803) 868-3853.

Exhibitor Benefits

- Core Summit registration for TWO people with additional registration discounts available
- Exhibitor organization listed on Summit websites and Summit agenda
- Attendee information sent prior to Summit (name, company, city, and state)
- Six-foot table for display, two chairs, and wastebasket included
- Options to utilize lead retrieval via Expo Pass app (additional fees apply)
- Digital advertisement played on screen in high-visibility locations
- Logo displayed in rotation on large screen in keynote room prior to session
- Logo displayed on signage throughout the Summit space

$5,500



Travel Information

Bridging its historical roots to its vibrant music, food, and entertainment scene of today, Nashville's status as a creative and exciting destination strikes all the right chords. Music City's reputation is well-earned, thanks to iconic landmarks such as the historic Ryman Auditorium, the Grand Ole Opry, and many other live music venues. Beyond the melodies, Nashville boasts a thriving culinary and arts scene, with a backdrop of inviting green spaces to take it all in.

Book by June 29 for the best Summit and hotel rates!

Grand Hyatt Nashville

Please visit wellnessalliance.org/awshotel to book your hotel reservations online and to view applicable taxes and fees. For hotel questions, contact the Registration Department at (888) 334-3327, option 2, or edreg@ifebp.org.

Reservation Deadline: Monday, June 29, 2026

Rate: $289 single/double occupancy (Additional $25/person per night for a third and/or fourth guest)

Taxes and Fees (subject to change): Room tax of 16.25% plus $2.50 daily fee

Resort Fee: None

Nightly Rate Includes: Complimentary in-room Wi-Fi and access to the fitness center

Hotel Cancellation Policy: A fee of one (1) night room rate plus tax will be charged for reservations cancelled within 24 hours prior to arrival.

Note: Hotel room availability is not guaranteed outside of scheduled program dates.

Learn more and prepare for your leisure time or an extended stay in this vibrant and lively city at visitmusiccity.com!

Student Rates Are Available!

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Wellness Alliance members and International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans members receive exceptional discounts on Summit registration.
Register at wellnessalliance.org/summit.

CORE CONFERENCE

Extended through June 29, 2026	Member: $1,095	Nonmember: $1,395
After June 29, 2026	Member: $1,295	Nonmember: $1,595

DAY PRECONFERENCE

Extended through June 29, 2026	Member: $325	Nonmember: $425
After June 29, 2026	Member: $425	Nonmember: $525

EVENING PRECONFERENCE

Extended through June 29, 2026	Member: $395	Nonmember $495
After June 29, 2026	Member: $495	Nonmember: $595

POLICIES

Cancel and transfer fees are based on registration fee paid: 60+ days of meeting is 10%; 31-59 days of meeting is 25%; within 30 days of meeting is 50%. Registration fee is forfeited once the program commences. Visit www.ifebp.org/policies for more details and to view the current policy.

Wellness Alliance Mission

Advancing health and wellness for individuals, workplaces, and communities.

About the Wellness Alliance

The Wellness Alliance united the strengths of the two most recognized and influential professional associations in the wellness industry: the former Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) and National Wellness Institute (NWI).

In 2026, the Wellness Council of Wisconsin formally joined the Wellness Alliance—expanding peer connections, shared knowledge, and opportunities to advance workplace well-being.

ANNUAL
wellness SUMMIT

July 28-30, 2026
Preconference: July 27
Grand Hyatt Nashville
Nashville, Tennessee

Summit Features:

- Five keynote sessions
- Concurrent sessions
- Skill-building sessions
- Wellness activities
- Exhibit hall
- Book signings
- Welcome reception
- CWP lounge

Attendees will leave with new professional connections, practical strategies to make their work more effective, and helpful resources needed to advance wellness for themselves, their workplaces and communities, and the individuals they serve.

SAVINGS extended through June 29, 2026. Register online at wellnessalliance.org/summit.

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WELLNESS alliance

18700 West Bluemound Road
Brookfield, WI 53045

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