

Dr. Christopher J. Hejmanowski Biography:

Dr. Chris Hejmanowski was born in Buffalo, NY in late 1971. At the age of 3 his family moved to Grand Island, NY. He went to Huth Road Elementary School, and then Grand Island Junior High School before graduating from the Senior High School in 1990. He attended and graduated from Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY in 1994 where he met his wife, Tracy.

Under a full U.S. Naval scholarship Chris moved on to medical school at Midwestern University in Chicago, IL. After completing a Naval surgical internship in 1998, and a subsequent flight surgery training in Pensacola, FL in 1999, he spent a year with a U.S. Marine Corps helicopter squadron in Okinawa, Japan. His final tour as a Flight Surgeon was a three-year stint in southern Spain with a U.S. Naval reconnaissance squadron. Completing an Emergency Medicine residency in 2007 at Portsmouth Naval Medical Center in Virginia, Chris and his wife moved with their four children to Jacksonville, FL. He spent his last deployment with the Marine Corps in Iraq from July 2008 to April 2009 before completing twelve years of active duty service in 2010.

Chris is a USA Award Winner for the book "Collider" in the "Fiction/Fantasy" Category of The 2013 USA Best Book Awards, sponsored by USA Book News. He also is an International Award Winner for the book "Collider" in 2013 Best International Fiction Book of the Year, sponsored by International Book Awards.

He has been employed with Emergency Resources Group as a staff physician since, taking the post of Medical Director of the free standing ER in Clay County in 2017.



DR. MILAN NIKOLICH BIOGRAPHY

Former Director, Defense Research and Engineering for Research and Technology

Dr. Milan “Mitch” Nikolich was the Director of Defense Research and Engineering for Research and Technology and served as the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering on all of the Department’s research and technology investments. He also served as the Mission Area Advisor for National Defense Strategy technology development implementation and oversees activities in Microelectronics, Cyber, Quantum Science, Directed Energy and Machine Learning/Artificial Intelligence. He establishes the Department’s annual strategic Science and Technology investment strategy, issues policy and guidance for aligning the Department’s Science and Technology investment to this strategy, and conducts reviews to ensure progress toward the Department’s goals.

Dr. Nikolich also served as the Department’s chief steward and advocate for defense laboratory infrastructure and science and technology workforce. He serves as the lead for ensuring the Department of Defense maintains its technological advantage through strategic research and technology investments. He also has responsibilities for the establishment and implementation of protection methodologies to mitigate the risk of loss of critical technologies to determined adversaries.

Dr. Nikolich has held senior positions with SAIC, CACI, National Security Research Inc., Defense Group Inc., W.J. Schafer Associates and served in the Physics Division of Los Alamos National Laboratory. He also served on the Congressional Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack and was a part-time faculty member at George Washington University. He was technical contributor to the Strategic Defense Initiative, the establishment of the Department’s Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction program, the advancement of the U.S. nuclear weapons program and has been a member of a number of U.S. arms control delegations.

Dr. Nikolich earned a Bachelor of Science degree Electrical Engineering in 1981, a Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in 1983, and his Doctor of Philosophy in 1985 in Electrical and Computer Engineering, all from the State University of New York at Buffalo. His area of emphasis was in plasma devices and pulsed power systems.



Lois Marie “Conn” Gibbs Biography

In the spring of 1978, a 27 year-old housewife named Lois Gibbs discovered that her child was attending an elementary school built on top of a 20,000 ton, toxic-chemical dump in Niagara Falls, New York. Out of desperation, she organized her neighbors into the Love Canal Homeowners Association and struggled more than 2 years for relocation. Opposing the group’s efforts, though, were the chemical manufacturer, Occidental Petroleum, local, state and federal government officials who insisted that the leaking toxic chemicals, including dioxin, the most toxic chemical known to man, was not the cause of high rates of birth defects, miscarriages, cancers and other health problems. Finally, in October 1980, President Jimmy Carter delivered an Emergency Declaration, which moved 900 families from this hazardous area and signified the victory of this grassroots movement.

Once families were relocated from Love Canal, Lois’s life was changed forever. During the crisis, she received numerous calls from people across the country who were experiencing similar problems. This revealed to her that the problem of toxic waste went far beyond her own backyard. She became determined to support these grassroots efforts.

In 1981, now a single parent, with two children and \$10,000, Lois left Niagara Falls for the Washington, DC area to establish a national organization to help families living near other Love Canal-like sites. Many doubted her ambitious goal to guild a movement – even her mother told her as she drove away “you’re forgetting you’re just a house wife with a high school education”. Lois knew she was no longer the innocent housewife of the past – but had become a sophisticated advocate of human rights and justice.

That same year, in 1981, Lois created the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, (CHEJ) (formerly Citizens Clearinghouse For Hazardous Wastes), an organization that has assisted over 10,000 grassroots groups with organizing, technical, and general information nationwide.

Today, Lois serves as Executive Director of CHEJ and speaks with communities nationwide and internationally about dioxin and hazardous waste pollution. As the author of *Achieving the Impossible, 2008, Stories of Courage, Caring and Community* she illustrates how ordinary people are creating extraordinary changes in their communities. The stories in this book illustrate how people have stepped forward and come together to meet the challenges facing their families and communities, as well as celebrating people’s willingness to engage in our democratic system of government. *Love Canal The Story Continues*, published in 1998, Lois brings the Love Canal story up to date and discusses the issues society faces today with chemical exposures. Lois along with a network of grassroots groups initiated the Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign and published *Dying from Dioxin* in 1995, to support local groups with the goal of eliminating the sources of dioxin exposure, a chemical she feared most at Love Canal.

Lois has been recognized extensively for her critical role in the grassroots environmental justice movement. She has spoken at numerous conferences and has been featured in hundreds of newspaper articles, magazine, and textbooks. Lois has appeared on many television and radio shows including 60 Minutes, 20/20, Oprah Winfrey, Good Morning America, The Morning Show and the Today Show. CBS produced a 2 hour prime-time movie about Lois’s life entitled “*Lois Gibbs: The Love Canal Story*” starring Marsha Mason.

Among the many awards she has received include the 1990 Goldman Environmental Prize, Outside Magazine's "Top Ten Who Made A Difference Honor Roll," in 1991, the 1998 Heinz Award, and the 1999 John Gardner Leadership Award from the Independent Sector, 2007 Business Ethics Network Individual Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution to Corporate Ethics, 2008 Green Corps Environmental Leadership Award. She has received honorary doctorates from the State University of New York (SUNY) Cortland College and Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania. She also sits on numerous Boards and Advisory Committees. She lives in Virginia with her husband and 2 of her 4 children.



Bryan Castellani Biography:

As Executive Vice President of Finance for Disney Media & Entertainment Distribution (DMED), Bryan Castellani is responsible for leading finance for the Platform Distribution, Advertising Sales and Networks businesses within the segment. He also leads the segment's consolidated financial reporting.

Bryan was previously Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at ESPN, where he oversaw its financial planning, strategy and real estate functions and played a key role in programming, affiliate and new business initiatives. Prior to joining ESPN, Bryan was Senior Vice President, Corporate Financial Planning and Analysis for The Walt Disney Company in Burbank, CA, where he and his team worked closely with the segment CFO teams, corporate strategy and investor relations in managing companywide operating and planning functions.

Bryan originally joined Disney in 1995 as a Financial Analyst at The Disney Store and advanced through a series of financial and operational leadership positions. In 1998 he relocated from Los Angeles to Tokyo to build out Disney Store Japan's financial operations and later ran its marketing and promotions team. He repatriated to New York City in 2000 to head finance and planning for the ABC Internet Group, where he guided its turnaround and integration into the ABC TV Network. In 2002 he assumed responsibility for the strategic planning of ABC News and in 2004 was promoted to Vice President and CFO, ABC News. In October 2005 he returned to Japan as Head of Finance and Planning for Disney Consumer Products, leading changes in its licensee base and franchise management strategy.

In 2007, he was appointed to Vice President and CFO of The Walt Disney Company (Japan) Ltd, where he was responsible for the consolidated financial operations of the company's portfolio of media, interactive, studio entertainment and consumer products businesses. In addition, he oversaw strategy, business development, and IT.

In 2013, Bryan was promoted to Senior Vice President of operations, business planning and strategy for ABC News in New York, where he was responsible for ensuring the quality, efficiency and flexibility of the division's production operations and for leading its long-range planning and growth strategy.

Prior to joining Disney, Bryan worked in international finance at the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, D.C. Born in Lewiston, N.Y., graduated from Grand Island High School in 1989, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics and political science from the University of Rochester where he graduated magna cum laude.



Kelly Landen Biography

Kelly Landen is a graduate of Grand Island High School, class of 1982. After finishing her BA degree at California State's University, Fullerton, she moved to Alaska, where she rekindled her love and passion for nature and wildlife, thus inspired her to embark on an adventurous, yet dedicated career in conservation.

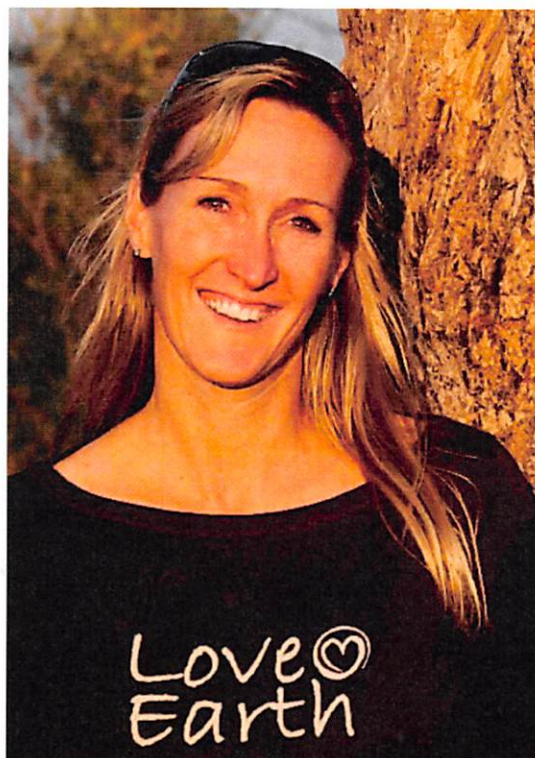
In Alaska, she studied to be a confident naturalist, field guide and mariner. Her International adventures began as crew on several Tall-ships, sailing across the ocean waters. On one trip she sailed from Baltimore to China, as an interim USA ambassador to Asia. These excursions contributed to Kelly earning her Merchant Mariners documents as a U.S. Merchant Mariner licensed Captain and International Able-Bodied Seaman. She continued her endeavors combining her maritime skills with conservation in Alaska, traveling and guiding in Central and South America. In Chile, Kelly served as advisor for the Ayacara Foundation, coordinating a program with the local fishing communities on environmental sustainability. At the same time, Kelly joined the UNOLS fleet of oceanographic research vessels, working for acclaimed establishments as Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and Scripps Institute of Oceanography. [She participated on voyages across the oceans: core-sampling of the earth's crust in the freezing waters between Iceland and Greenland; acoustical studies involving the US and British Navy, studying the mid-Atlantic ridge; chemical and geological sampling along the southern periphery of South America; biological surveys and assessments along the Pacific coast and from the Black to the Adriatic Sea; and a biological, chemical and geological sampling expedition over the "Ring of Fire" in the Pacific, including the ROV "ROPOS", studying and attaining the first live views of the Mariana, the deepest trench in the world.](#)

In 2003, Kelly's adventurous nature brought her to Africa, where she was bitten by the African "bug" where she knew she found a new place to call home. Within months, she dropped anchor and moved to Botswana. With her partner, ecologist Dr. Mike Chase, they established Elephants Without Borders (EWB), a conservation research organization studying the largest remaining elephant population on the African continent and many other wildlife species. EWB is now at the forefront of elephant conservation and research work in southern Africa. [EWB is based in Kazungula, a small border town on the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, where 4 countries converge, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, over a region now commonly referred to as the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, the largest wilderness area left on our planet and is home to nearly half of Africa's elephant population.](#)

In 2014, they conceptualized the Great Elephant Census, the first and only African Continent-wide, aerial survey of elephants and wildlife in the elephant range. With support provided by billionaire Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft, they organized teams consisting of other NGO's, national agencies, 81 airplanes and 286 crew flying roughly 463,000 km in 18 countries, or 90% of the elephant range across Africa. Within 2 years, the project was complete, discovering that the African savannah elephant population had decreased by 1/3 in just 7 years.

Their work has been given International recognition, accepted by Heads of State, multi-level government agencies, promoted by well-known celebrities, and featured by International media, including featured news on CNN, BBC International and Al Jazeera, worked with numerous film teams and programs aired on BBC, National Geographic, Animal Planet, PBS Nature, Netflix, Vimeo and many others. Their feature film, Elephants Without Borders was an award winner at the Jackson Hole International Film festival and Animal Planet submitted the film for Emmy nominations in 3 categories. Most recent projects include an elephant documentary, by MBC aired in Korea, being distributed to other Asian countries.

Kelly is a co-author publishing several scientific papers, magazine and news articles, contributed book chapters and co-written several children's books. She is also a professional photographer and uses her photographs to promote the organization's mandate, featured in a number of prestigious magazines, books, web sites, journals, and news articles, around the world.



Jeffrey W. Stone Biography:

Jeff Stone is a 53-year Grand Island resident and a 1976 graduate of GIHS. He and his wife, Eileen (Conboy) from the GIHS Class of 1977, have raised their three children (Meredith, Brendan and Griffin) in our community, and are proud to call Grand Island home.

Jeff graduated from the University of Rochester and the University of Michigan Law School before practicing law for over 40 years (and counting) as a partner at Hodgson Russ LLP (Buffalo's largest law firm). Jeff heads the firm's Public Finance Group, and specializes in the structuring and financing of school district capital improvements projects and other public infrastructure projects. Jeff represents, as bond counsel, over 70 school districts in Western New York and elsewhere in New York State, and has overseen and handled over \$1.2 billion of school construction projects in just the past five years. He also represents Erie County and is working on the financing for the new stadium for the Buffalo Bills.

In the course of Jeff's work, he is frequently found at Board of Education meetings, BOCES meetings, project planning meetings, education awards dinners, professional conferences, charitable events, political events and other gatherings of educators and community leaders.

Jeff is involved in many professional organizations, including the Erie County Bar Association (having chaired both its Corporation Law Committee and its Municipal and School Law Committee); the NYS Government Finance Officers Association (serving on the Western Region Advisory Council for that group); the NYS Association of School Business Officials (being active in all four WNY chapters); and the National Association of Bond Lawyers (attending the Bond Attorneys' Workshop and serving as a member of the General Law and Practice Committee). Jeff lectures frequently at professional educational programs sponsored by all of these groups.

In the community, Jeff is active in St. Stephen Church; the Knights of Columbus; the Parish Players (having been involved with this theater group, as an actor, director, officer and board member, for almost 35 years); the Grand Island Democratic Committee (having chaired that group for eight years); the Erie County Democratic Committee (having served on the Executive Committee and having chaired the Judicial Screening/Qualifications Committee); the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County (having participated in its annual campaigns and having chaired various committees and working groups); the Buffalo Council on World Affairs (having served as a trustee and as President); the Irish Classical Theatre Company (serving as a trustee and as President); and SUNY Erie Community College, or "ECC" (serving as a trustee and chairing the Budget and Audit Committee) and currently serving as the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Jeff's personal interests include life-long learning, community involvement, history, politics, travel, boating, fishing, golf, the Buffalo Bills, the Buffalo Sabres, and acting in (and directing) local stage productions.

