



**Building connections.  
Building community.  
Building a life...for a lifetime.**

2025 PA Lifesharing Conference

The Alloy, a Doubletree Hotel by Hilton | King of Prussia, PA | October 6 and 7

**Welcome to the 13th Annual  
PA Lifesharing Conference  
*Conference Program***

PA LIFESHARING COALITION



*Hosted by the PA Lifesharing Coalition, the 2025 Lifesharing Conference  
is supported by the PA Department of Human Services,  
Office of Developmental Programs*



## CONFERENCE APP

Download the conference app on your mobile device to get up-to-date information about the conference, access copies of session presentations, and view the conference program.

### New Yapp Users:

On your smartphone, scan the QR Code or go to: <https://my.yapp.us/LIFE>

Follow the instructions on screen (it's a quick process)

### Existing Yapp Users:

Tap "download existing app" or use the green + button (top right)

When asked for the Yapp ID, enter: LIFE

Press the "enter" button or tap "Add" at top right

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## BREAKOUT ROOM LOCATIONS

Main Level: Alloy Ballroom, Ironwork

Lower Level: Fusion, Steelwork C, Cobalt, Nickel

## PA LIFESHARING COALITION



Welcome to the 2025 Lifesharing Conference! We hope this year's educational sessions and exhibit hall provide you with valuable and useful information.

We also hope that you will consider becoming more involved as a volunteer with the PA Lifesharing Coalition. We have some open leadership positions for several regions. We also need volunteers to serve on the 2026 Conference Planning Committee.

**Please talk to any of the Coalition Leadership team and let us know of your interest or include it on your evaluation form.**

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**Visit Our Exhibitors and Sponsors:** Don't miss the opportunity to thank our exhibitors and sponsors for supporting the conference. Stop by each booth and spend a few minutes with each exhibitor to learn more about their resources.

**Safety:** We encourage you to take whatever precautions make you comfortable, including masking and distancing.

**Evaluations/Certificates:** Please complete the evaluation form in order to receive your certificate of attendance. Return the evaluation form to the registration desk at the end of the day you will be departing. Certificates will be emailed within two weeks after the Conference.

**Gift Baskets Drawing:** Join us at 3:15 p.m. on Tuesday and drop your raffle ticket in the basket. You could win a gift basket! Must be present to win!

### Thanks to the 2025 Conference Planning Committee!

Tayo Akinyemi, Hope for Living LLC – Conference Committee

Greg Aston, Achieva - Conference Committee

Tim Bailey, L'Arche Erie - Conference Committee

Jodi Bliss, KenCrest - Conference Committee

Joy Davies, Applied Counseling & Consulting Services - Conference Committee

Emma Doyle, Community Interactions, Inc. - Conference Committee

Barb Dyer, Citizen Care - Conference Committee

Sarah Forsette, HRC - Conference Committee

Kristen Fritzinger, KenCrest - Conference Committee

La'Tashia Gatling, Barber Institute - Conference Committee

Becky Kreischer, Bold, Inc. - Awards Program Chair

Cory Layton, Achieva - Conference Committee

Christopher Lynn, Community Interactions, Inc. - Conference Committee

Kristi Mentzer, Mercer Co. BHC - Conference Committee

Phil Orinko, EHCA - Conference Committee

Amber Shomper, KenCrest - Conference Committee

Jamie Weissman, HRC - Conference Committee

Lauren Williams, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and  
Intellectual disAbility Services - Conference Committee

Wendy Williams, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and  
Intellectual disAbility Services - Conference Committee

# AGENDA

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2025 – Steelwork BC**

Arriving Sunday night? Join us from 5 to 7 pm for some light refreshments, networking and music from Christian Huber, singer-songwriter, a disability policy advocate, and an aspiring virtual music educator for people with disabilities

## Monday, October 6, 2025 – Breakfast & Morning Plenary Session

7:30 AM	Registration Open
8:30 AM Alloy ABC	Hot Buffet Breakfast Available
9:15 AM Cobalt	Activity Room Open
9:15 AM Alloy ABC	Welcome from PA Lifesharing Coalition
9:30 AM Alloy ABC	<b>Emotional Intelligence Isn't Just for Extroverts: A Practical Guide for Every Brain</b> <i>Dr. Ken Martz</i> Emotional intelligence is often portrayed as the domain of charismatic leaders, smooth talkers, or social butterflies—but what if that's only part of the story? For neurodivergent individuals, especially those on the autism spectrum, emotional insight might not look like animated conversation or open expression—but that doesn't mean it's absent. In this dynamic keynote, Dr. Ken Martz, psychologist, bestselling author of <i>Manage My Emotions</i> , and expert in emotional development, breaks down the outdated myths around emotional intelligence. With warmth and practical wisdom, he introduces a grounded approach that honors all brain types. Attendees will learn how to build self-awareness, manage emotional overwhelm, and grow relational confidence, without needing to become someone they're not. Because emotional intelligence isn't about being extroverted. Instead, it's about being attuned.
10:30 AM Alloy ABC	Break and Visit Exhibitors; Dr. Martz Book Signing
	<b>BREAKOUT SESSIONS</b>
11:00 AM Ironwork	<b>Lifesharing Best Practices: Setting Up Your Agency For Success</b> <i>Stephanie Farrow, Justin Hymon, Joe Karpinskie, Becky Kreischer, Ian Legeion, Kathy Trumbore, PA Lifesharing Coalition Leadership</i> This session is a compilation of more than 10 years of input from many Lifesharing agencies. We will share some helpful hints, things to think about, and ideas for supporting people in Lifesharing and their birth and Lifesharing families. Guidelines for Lifesharing Coordinators' involvement with families and timeframes for development will also be discussed.
11:00 AM Fusion	<b>Around the Curve: Circumventing Roadblocks and Detours</b> <i>Patrick Lane, Education Mgr., Tech First SHIFT</i> This session will provide an overview of the Technology First Movement. A "Technology First" approach to services is dependent on a "Person-Centered" approach and does not refer to putting technology before the person. Instead, Technology First refers to the idea of considering technology solutions rather than automatically defaulting to a more traditional in-person service model. Technology solutions are structured to promote best practices with HCBS final rule by helping people achieve their goals with less help from others, and more decision-making power. Each and every person supported should be considered as a candidate for enabling technology -

	<p>regardless of their disability or skill level. A Technology First approach to services does not eliminate in-person support. The balance of technology and in-person support is different for each person because it depends on the unique needs and circumstances of the person supported. We'll also discuss best practices, challenges of adopting a Technology First Approach, and strategies for overcoming them.</p> <p>With 19 years of human services experience, Patrick brings a wealth of knowledge working with adults who have neurodiverse support needs and a passion for developing the professionals who serve them.</p>
11:00 AM Steelwork C	<p><b>Building Resilience in the Face of Stress: Harnessing Psychological Capital</b>  <i>Chris Dubble, Owner and CEO, Pursuit of Training and Consultation</i></p> <p>In today's demanding work and life environments, stress is unavoidable—but burnout doesn't have to be. This interactive workshop will equip you with evidence-based strategies to strengthen your Psychological Capital, the powerful combination of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism that fuels personal and professional well-being. In this workshop, you will learn how to reframe challenges, sustain motivation, and bounce back stronger from setbacks. Whether facing daily pressures or major life changes, you'll leave with practical tools to build inner resources, improve coping, and be resilient in the face of stress.</p> <p>Chris is a professional speaker with 20 years of experience teaching others. His background includes being in leadership and administration for two different adult protective services organizations over the last 15 years.</p>
11:00 AM Cobalt	Activity Room Open
<b>LUNCH SPONSORED BY KEYSTONE HUMAN SERVICES</b>	
12:00 PM Alloy ABC	<p><b>Lunch and Visit with Exhibitors</b>  <b>Excellence in Lifesharing Awards</b>  <i>Presented by Becky Kreischer, Awards Program Chair, and Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, ODP, PA DHS</i></p>
12:45 PM	<p><b>Lifesharing Family Stories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Monique and Deacon, facilitated by Jennifer Harniman-Crangle</i></li> <li>• <i>Centalia and Joanne, facilitated by Angela Weir</i></li> </ul>
<b>AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION 1</b>	
1:15 PM - 1:45 PM	<p><b>ODP Updates</b>  <i>Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, ODP, PA DHS</i></p>
<b>BREAKOUT SESSIONS</b>	
2:45 PM Fusion	<p><b>ODP Lifesharing 101</b>  <i>Katie Marie Wilson, ODP</i></p> <p>This presentation is intended for individuals, families, and new or potential providers. Please join staff from ODP's Policy Division who will be reviewing the basics of the Lifesharing service such as what Lifesharing is, where to find information on Lifesharing, what other services and supports are available to an individual who receives Lifesharing, and more.</p>



2:45 PM Ironwork	<b>Strengthening Pediatric Complex Care: Expanding Access and Resources to Families in Need</b> <i>Jennifer Harniman-Crangle, Family Facilitator Coordinator; Katie Freeman, Director of the Advocacy Alliance Pediatric Complex Care Resource Center; Natalie Symons, Director of the Milestone Pediatric Complex Care Resource Center</i> This innovative program is dedicated to enhancing the support and resources available to families caring for children with complex medical needs. By expanding access to Pediatric Complex Care Resource Centers, the program aims to bridge gaps in care and provide comprehensive assistance to those who need it most.
2:45 PM Steelwork C	<b>Building Independence for Individuals with Disabilities Through Peer Learning and Cooking</b> <i>Aldyn Atkinson, Peer Instructor, Abby Martucci, and Sara Crimm, Director, Families Creating Communities for Adults with Special Needs (Families CCAN)</i> Is it possible to build important life skills like cooking on an on-line platform? How does peer learning motivate individuals and enable skill-building? This session will highlight one of our Peer Educators, an individual with disability, who will lead us in learning about: safety skills in the kitchen, teaching others about nutrition and building healthy meals in easy ways, how she uses generic products and online resources to teach herself skills, and how she instructs others.
2:45 PM Cobalt	<b>Activity Room Open</b>
<b>NETWORKING AND VISIT EXHIBITORS</b> <b><i>SPONSORED BY MERAKEY AND MILESTONE HCQU WEST</i></b>	
3:45 PM - 5:00 PM Alloy ABC	<b>Networking Reception</b> <b>Visit Exhibitors</b>

## Excellence in Lifesharing Awards Ceremony

Every year we like to acknowledge a few families from the different regions throughout Pennsylvania that not only represent but exemplify the true spirit of Lifesharing. Nominations are collected across the state and reviewed by the Coalition's Leadership Committee who is also tasked with designating four winners from across the state (one from each region).

**Presented by:**

**Becky Kreischer, Awards Program Chair, PA Lifesharing Coalition Leadership**  
**Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, PA DHS ODP**

***Congratulations to the Recipients of the 2025 Excellence in Lifesharing Award!***

**CENTRAL REGION RECIPIENT – Diane Clark- Keystone Human Services**

**WESTERN REGION RECIPIENT – The Dearborn-Schuster Family, Supports, Inc.**

**SOUTHEAST REGION RECIPIENT – Carol Williams-KenCrest**

**NORTHEAST REGION RECIPIENT – Linda Futterer-Keystone Human Services**

**Congratulations to All of the 2025 Nominees!**

- Debbie Morrison - Clarvida
- Kristy Cook - Clarvida
- Nicholas Mudgett - Focus Behavioral Health
- Samuel Anamo - Keystone Human Services
- Sara Cooper - Keystone Human Services
- Vernel Alleyne - Keystone Human Services
- Maryann Krajnaks - Access Services
- Michele Matherly - Merakey
- Amanda Jacobs - KenCrest
- Amber Latsha - KenCrest
- Bambi Parks - KenCrest
- Centelia Braxton - KenCrest
- Elena Jones - KenCrest
- Goldie Smith - KenCrest
- Jacqueline Berrian - SPIN, Inc.
- Joy Dixon - KenCrest
- Mark Zavotsky - KenCrest
- April Tucker - Mainstay Life Services
- Beth Kramer - Mainstay Life Services
- Christina Weber - Merakey/  
Westmoreland Casemanagement  
and Supports
- Rebecca Beyer - Citizen Care Inc.
- Tracey Mozeyko - Mainstay Life Services

**Tuesday, October 7, 2025**

**MORNING PLENARY SESSION**

7:30 AM –  
3:00 PM

**Registration Desk Open**

8:30 AM –  
9:30 AM  
Alloy ABC

**Hot Buffet Breakfast & Roundtable Discussions**

8:45 AM  
Nickel

**Mental Health First Aid Class (pre-registration required) all day class**  
**Shemiah Cooper and Vanessa McCloskey**  
*Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services*  
We think of First Aid as something administered to people in need of physical health intervention. What about people who need immediate assistance for their mental health? The Mental Health First Aid course teaches the skills needed to identify, understand, and respond to signs of behavioral health challenges or crises. Once a certified aider, you will be able to recognize behavioral health signs and administer aid until appropriate treatment and supports are received, or until the crisis is resolved

9:30 AM  
Cobalt

**Activity Room Open**

9:30 AM  
Cobalt

**Welcome, PA Lifesharing Coalition**

9:35 AM  
Alloy ABC

**Overwhelm to Overcoming: Using the KHAOS Mindset to Build Emotional Resilience in Lifesharing Families**

*Dr. Candice E. Cox, LCSW, CCTP, CATP*

Lifesharing brings unique opportunities for connection—but also unique stressors for everyone involved: providers, host families, biological families, and individuals receiving care. Without tools to regulate emotions, communicate effectively, and set healthy boundaries, these relationships can experience burnout, misunderstandings, and emotional strain. The KHAOS Mindset is a trauma-informed, practical framework for Recognizing emotional patterns, Regulating responses, and Rebuilding connection. In this session, participants will learn the four core KHAOS tools—RAW, RESET, FREE, and PATIENT—and see how they apply to real-life situations, including caregiver stress, family tension, and the overlooked needs of siblings.

Dr. Cox is a licensed clinical social worker, author, and internationally recognized speaker with over two decades of experience in trauma-informed care, emotional regulation, and community healing. She is the founder of KHAOS Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping individuals and communities Keep Healing And Overcoming Struggles. Dr. Cox blends clinical expertise with lived experience to create practical, engaging strategies that address the impact of toxic and traumatic stress on individuals, families, and support networks. Her work has empowered audiences from schools and corporate settings to mental health and disability services, equipping them with tools to build resilience, strengthen relationships, and foster emotional well-being.

10:30 AM	<b>BREAK</b>
10:45 AM Fusion	<b>ODP: Staying Up-to-Date with Policy</b> <i>Katie Marie Wilson, ODP</i> This presentation is geared towards Lifesharing professionals. Understanding what is changing in policy is important because it impacts what is being done within your agency or organization. ODP Policy will be giving a high-level overview of policy changes that impact Lifesharing.
10:45 AM Steelwork C	<b>Lifesharing and Employment</b> <i>Francine Hogan, PA Family Network</i> This session will explore the benefits of employment for people with disabilities who live in LifeSharing arrangements through Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs. Participants will learn how meaningful work supports independence, confidence, and community inclusion while strengthening LifeSharing homes and local communities. The presentation will highlight available employment services, practical strategies for supporting job seekers, benefits of the InVEST Project, and the use of LifeCourse tools to guide planning. Success stories and real-world examples will demonstrate how everyone can work with the right supports, creating opportunities for individuals, families, and employers alike.
10:45 AM Ironwork	<b>Caring For Loved One with Special Needs: What Every Caregiver Needs to Know</b> <i>Brian Kelnhofer, 1847 Financial</i> This workshop provides an overview of financial and estate planning for individuals with special needs. We will address critical areas of concern, such as navigating and maximizing government benefits through an overview of programs such as SSI/SSDI, Waivers & Social Security. The workshop will also address important estate planning considerations such as Wills, Special Needs Trusts, and the differences between Guardianship and Powers of Attorney. Finally, it will make attendees aware of how special needs financial planning is different than traditional financial planning. Strategies will be presented to address funding of special needs trusts, tax planning considerations, and ensuring quality of life and lifetime care are maintained for loved ones. Our goal is to make sure attendees learn the importance of integrating all the necessary pieces into one cohesive plan, so the vision for the individual's life can become a reality.
10:45 AM Nickel	<b>Mental Health First Aid Class, continued (pre-registration required) all day class</b>
10:45 AM Cobalt	<b>Activity Room</b>
<b>11:45 AM: Performance by the SPIN Choir, Alloy ABC</b> <b>12:00 – 1:00 PM: LUNCH AND VISIT EXHIBITORS</b> <b>(exhibitors depart at 1 pm)</b>	



# AFTERNOON CONCURRENT BREAKOUTS

1:00 PM Ironwork	<p><b>Life Sharing with Medically Complex Conditions</b>  <i>Barbara Dyer, Director of Lifesharing, Citizen Care</i>  <i>Jessica Cerullo, Priority Services Specialist, Allegheny County DHS</i>  <i>Sheila Fullerton, Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Director, Washington County BHDS</i>  <i>Susan Patrick-Harris, Program Specialist, Westmoreland County BHDS</i>  <i>Christy Markel, Promising Practices Coordinator, Allegheny County DHS</i></p> <p>Join a panel of professionals currently supporting children and families through a provider agency and three county AEs to share your successes, barriers, questions, concerns, and ideas around MCC Lifesharing. What happens when a child ages out? What are the resources available to me? How does respite work? How do we recruit a provider family? We'll talk about this and more. Are you currently supporting a child in your home or through your agency or are you thinking about it? This session may be just what you're looking for...we want to know what's working and what isn't. All feedback will be shared with ODP and the Pediatric Complex Care Resource Centers as our partners in providing this vital service.</p>
1:00 PM Steelwork C	<p><b>Making Travel Possible for Those You Love</b>  <i>How Families Travel With Children And Adults With Medically And Behaviorally Complex Conditions</i>  <i>Gavin O'Marehen, Associate Director of Life Sharing, Mainstay LifeServices;</i>  <i>Lifesharing Families: Beth and Hunter Kramer, April and Hailey Tucker, Sandra Nesbit and Parriz Peele</i></p> <p>Many families might avoid overly complex vacations due to the fear of not knowing how to navigate the more complex needs of the person they support while traveling; this panel will help educate families that want to travel but do not feel prepared to do so. We are hoping that these families can shed light so others, especially kids with medical complexities, can experience a vacation with their loved ones.</p> <p>Our presenters include families that participate in Medically Complex Condition Lifesharing or regular Lifesharing. They will talk about their lived experiences travelling internationally and nationwide. They will share tips and tricks they have learned through lived experience with others. We'll also provide an opportunity for those in the audience to share their tips.</p>
1:00 PM Fusion	<p><b>Sexuality and Online Dating (two hour session)</b>  <i>Kimberly Thomas, PMHCC</i></p> <p>This training will examine, discuss and destigmatize sexuality within the ID/A community. Attendees will learn how to begin to discuss sexuality with individuals (as well as their team) with an emphasis on safety, privacy, and consent between partners. Resources to facilitate these discussions will also be provided.</p>
1:00 PM Nickel	<b>Mental Health First Aid Class, continued (pre-registration required) all day class</b>
1:00 PM Cobalt	<b>Activity Room</b>
2:00 PM Lower Level	<b>BREAK, Sponsored by Brian's House</b>

2:15 PM Steelwork C	<p><b>Debriefing: Supporting Families and People Supported Through a Traumatic Event</b>  <i>Staci Sypien, MS, LBS, Director of Quality, Compliance, &amp; Support Services, Citizen Care</i></p> <p>Working as a lifesharing provider in a residential habilitation environment or with families who experience a mental health diagnoses, family members, staff and people supported have or will experience many traumatic events. Families, staff and people supported have little or no guided support to help process these emotions in the most effective way to promote recovery. Debriefing is a process that can help to make use of a personal experience for the families, staff, and person's supported learning and development. Through a guided conversation, debriefers provide information and education to promote a community of care for people supported and the people who support them. This session will include a discussion of how to integrate the use of two separate debriefing protocols for family, staff and people supported as well as exploring the use of crisis, safety, and self-care plans.</p>
2:15 PM Fusion	<b>Sexuality and Online Dating continued</b>
2:15 PM Ironwork	<p><b>SEEN—Spellers Empowering Education for Nonspeakers</b>  <i>Ben Crimm, Chris Rafferty, Sarah Ackerman, Gregory Tino, Matthew Cramer of SEEN</i></p> <p>It's a common misconception that people who cannot speak cannot learn or think for themselves. However, nonspeaking does not mean nonthinking! This session, led by a Philadelphia-area Advocacy group comprised of nonspeaking individuals, highlights how communication access can reveal both the intelligence and empower the agency of people who were previously under-estimated. Learn how they – and others like them – are capable of complex ideas and deep emotions.</p> <p>SEEN is a group of nonspeaking individuals with autism and Down syndrome who have learned to communicate via typing, spelling and using various apps on their i-Pads. Most learned to communicate after aging out of school and were never given an appropriate academic education.</p> <p>SEEN was formed in 2020 to increase public awareness about nonspeakers' abilities and needs, to empower other nonspeakers, and to advocate for change. The presentation includes several short videos produced by the group, a spoken powerpoint presentation and a Q&amp;A panel with the presenters. This session is guaranteed to change attitudes and assumptions about nonspeaking individuals!</p>
2:15 PM Nickel	<b>Mental Health First Aid Class, continued (pre-registration required) all day class</b>
2:15 PM Cobalt	<b>Activity Room</b>
3:15 PM Fusion	<b>Gift Baskets Drawings and SPECIAL PRIZE DRAWING!! (must be present to win)</b>
3:30 PM	<b>Adjourn—Safe Travels Back Home!</b>

# Thanks to Our Supporters

A Special Thank You to PA ODP for their extraordinary support of this year's conference.



**pennsylvania**

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

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Rebecca Stone-Schock, rstone@khs.org

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**Milestone HCQU West**

Natalie Symons, jshotts@MilestonePA.org

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## Break and T-Shirt Sponsor

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## Tote Bag Sponsors

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## Exhibitors and T-Shirt Sponsors

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**Simply Home**

Kristie Ondisco, kristie.ondisco@simply-home.com

**The Advocacy Alliance**

Katie Freeman, kf1@theadvocacyalliance.org

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## Exhibitors

**Achieva Family Trust**

Andrea Mackiewicz, aackiewicz@achieve.info

**Elwyn**

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**ICare Manager**

Andrew Kelly, jennie@icaremanager.com

**Geisinger**

Cheryl Callahan, ccallahan@geisinger.edu

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Francine Hogan, fhogan@visionforequality.org

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## T-Shirt Sponsors

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Crystal Imier, crimier@valleycs.org



## **Are You a PA Lifesharing Coalition Member?**

**The Coalition holds statewide and regional meetings. For more information on these meetings, please email the following Regional Contacts:**

- **Central Region**  
Becky Kreischer ([bkreischer@boldinc.org](mailto:bkreischer@boldinc.org))  
Courtney McGee ([cmcgee@persondirectsupport.com](mailto:cmcgee@persondirectsupport.com))
- **Northeast Region**  
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- **Western Region**  
Ian Legion ([ilegeion@merakey.org](mailto:ilegeion@merakey.org))

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**For more information,  
[www.palifesharing.com](http://www.palifesharing.com)**

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**2026 Conference  
More Information Coming Soon!**