

NHA keynote, general & breakout presenter biographies

Mike Abrashoff
Opening Keynote
Wednesday, October 21



Mike Abrashoff recounted the leadership lessons from the turnaround of *USS Benfold* in *It's Your Ship*, a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, with over 800,000 copies sold to date. This extraordinary interest in Abrashoff's leadership journey and *Benfold's* organizational lessons led to two follow-up books, *Get Your Ship Together* and *It's Our Ship*. Those books took readers deeper into ways these principles have been put into action by business leaders in their own organizations. Prior to commanding *USS Benfold*, Abrashoff served as the Military Assistant to Secretary of Defense William J. Perry. He also helped draft the air defense plan for naval forces in the Persian Gulf in 1990, coinciding with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and served as the Executive Officer of the Cruiser *Shiloh*, where he deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of United Nations sanctions against Iraq. [@itsyourship](#)

Michael Chase
Breakout Session #10
Thursday, October 22



Michael Chase is a member of the Health Care Section of Baird Holm LLP. He counsels clients on federal and state regulatory matters including the federal health care fraud and abuse laws, HIPAA, meaningful use, compliance program and investigations, and Institutional Review Board compliance.

Mr. Chase is a member of the American Health Lawyers Association and HFMA. He received his law degree from Saint Louis University School of Law and his master's degree in health administration from Saint Louis University School of Public Health.

Alex "Kelly" Clarke
Breakout Session #10
Thursday, October 22



Kelly Clarke is a member of the Health Care Section of Baird Holm LLP. He practices almost exclusively on behalf of health care providers, such as hospitals and physicians, and concentrates on regulatory, compliance and transactional issues. Mr. Clarke is a former member of the board of directors and a past president of the American

Health Lawyers Association. He has served on the Governance Committee of the American Bar Association's Health Law Forum and on the Catholic Health Association's Legal Services Committee. He is a graduate of the University of Virginia and he received his law degree from the University of Colorado.



Alan Dash
Breakout Session #11
Thursday, October 22



Alan Dash has more than 30 years of experience with consulting and design in the information technology field. His specialization includes 23 years of owner experience at all levels of information technology including operations, programming, networking, security and management. He is experienced with the

planning and design of legacy and emerging IT, clinical, security, audio/visual and facility systems for hospitals and health care. An expert on wireless networks, systems interface and communications within the hospital facility environment, he has been particularly focused on the flow of people and data, and in devising methods of decreasing the number of steps that staff and clinicians need to take in their daily efforts.

James Easter
Breakout Session #1
Wednesday, October 21
Breakout Sessions #11 & 14
Thursday, October 22



James G. Easter, Jr. is founder and principal of Easter Healthcare Consulting based in Nashville, Tennessee. His prior roles were SVP of HFR Design, president and founder of EMhc, VP of Quorum/HCA and director of facility planning for UT/MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. With

35 years of health care planning, design and construction experience, he has been involved in all types of health care projects from Cairo, Egypt to Mexico City, Mexico and in 37 states in the U.S. He has a bachelor's and a master's degree in architecture from Virginia Tech. He was an adjunct professor in the graduate school and has lectured at the University of Tennessee Belmont Massey School, Vanderbilt Engineering, Kent State University and Texas A&M, to mention a few.

Toby Freier
General Session
Thursday, October 22



Toby Freier, FACHE, is president of New Ulm Medical Center (NUMC) in New Ulm, Minnesota. Mr. Freier has 13 years of rural health care executive experience. During his time as president, NUMC has been received the AHA Nova Award, Minnesota Hospital Association Innovation of the Year and Community Health improvement award, five time Top 100 Critical Access Hospital Award by iVantage and numerous recognitions for quality and patient experience. NUMC, a part of Allina Health, is a fully integrated rural delivery system and national leader in population health.

Dr. Matt Johnson
Breakout Session #3
Wednesday, October 21



Dr. Matt Johnson is a board certified cardiologist and an interventional cardiologist at Bryan Health and serves as a chair for Nebraska's Mission: Lifeline task force. He provides outreach clinics to several communities and is a sought after speaker at many conferences across Nebraska.

Dr. Johnson works in both the urban and rural settings across the state. As a rural Nebraskan, he understands the barriers and challenges faced with providing timely care to rural Nebraskans.

Tim Johnson
Breakout Session #4
Wednesday, October 21



Tim Johnson's practice with Gray Plant Mootty includes the general and special representation of health care organizations, including national health care providers, health systems, hospitals, single- and multi-specialty physician groups, home health agencies, nursing homes, local and national ancillary service providers, and

other health care providers and suppliers. Mr. Johnson's practice focuses on representing health care companies in various merger, acquisition, divestiture and other significant business transactions, corporate finance and corporate counseling. He has significant experience in dealing Medicare and Medicaid participation requirements, government fraud and abuse laws, HIPAA privacy requirements, health system governance and other general corporate matters.

Patrick Leahy
Breakout Session #1
Wednesday, October 21
Breakout Sessions #11 & 14
Thursday, October 22



Patrick J. Leahy, AIA, EDAC, LEED, is director of health care planning, research and innovation for Holland Basham Architects in Omaha. He is also a senior health care designer/planner, consultant, facilitator and senior project manager leading projects, as well as the health care group.

Mr. Leahy is recognized for his expertise in consulting health care clients in developing solutions for the current and future health care business, delivery and facility challenges. He is a national expert in developing architectural master plans and planning for complex health care institutions. He has over 20 years of professional experience planning, designing and serving as project leader for more than 200 health care projects.

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Kelli Lieurance
Breakout Session #8
Wednesday, October 21



Kelli P. Lieurance, JD, is a partner with Baird Holm LLP who focuses on labor and employment law compliance, assisting employers with proactive, rather than just defensive, compliance efforts. Her practical approach not only offers clients a realistic view of their legal obligations, but also assists clients in implementing such obligations in a way that best suits their business needs. She received her Juris Doctor from the University of Kansas School of Law in 2005, where she was awarded the Justice Lloyd Kagey Leadership Award.

Allison Massari
Keynote Session #2
Thursday, October 22



Meetings & Conventions magazine lists Allison Massari as one of the top 10 best speakers for "motivation" in the United States. Through her unified work as an international keynote speaker, executive coach and artist, she ignites vitality, rebirth and renewal to audiences worldwide. Ms. Massari assists people at deep levels, equipping them with tools to better manage their lives, to be in the world vital and grounded. She has become a fiery voice for the potent power of compassion, kindness and indestructible perseverance. Her more serious credentials come from her life experience. Allison Massari found peace, purpose and happiness after overcoming two extraordinary personal tragedies. In 1998, she survived a 60 mph car crash where she was trapped and burned alive; conscious the entire time. Just three years later, she was hit again at 60 mph and sustained a closed-head brain injury. Ms. Massari has always believed in the miraculous. Her fiery determination and the love of family and friends helped bring her to a full recovery years later. She says, "I didn't want to just heal. I wanted to feel peaceful. I became relentless in my pursuit to find the answers to life and to master it in totality." The triumph of her physical and emotional recovery inspired her to propel her business to pinnacle achievements. @AllisonMassari

Sona Mehring
Breakout Session #15
Thursday, October 22



Sona Mehring is the founder and CEO of CaringBridge, the first and most widely used nonprofit social networking site focused on communicating with loved ones during a health journey. She founded CaringBridge in 1997 when the Internet was just becoming a household name. She was among the first to recognize that the Internet could be a powerful tool in helping people connect, share and rally support during a health journey.

Ms. Mehring is frequently recognized for her passion and visionary leadership. In 2015, the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* named her one of Minnesota's "Titans of Technology." In 2014, the Women's Health Leadership TRUST named her one of the top 35 Women Leaders in Minnesota Healthcare.

@gogosona

Julie Moretz
Breakout Session #6
Wednesday, October 21



Inspired by her young son's battle with heart disease—multiple surgeries and heart transplant—Julie Moretz has spent the better part of her career as a family leader passionate about improving health care. In 2013, she was named associate vice chancellor, Patient- and Family-Centered Care, at the University of Arkansas for

Medical Sciences, where she has overall leadership responsibility for developing clinical and academic programs related to patient- and family-centered care. She serves on the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute's Advisory Panel on Patient Engagement—the first of its kind developed to ensure the highest patient engagement standards in the research it funds. She is a recipient of the Woman of Excellence in Health Care Award and the American Heart Association's Lifetime Achievement Award. Ms. Moretz and her family were featured in the PBS *Remaking American Medicine* series, Hand-in-Hand, where she was named a "Champion of Change."

Kurt Mosley
Breakout Session #7
Wednesday, October 21



Kurt Mosley serves as vice president of strategic alliances for Merritt Hawkins, Staff Care, companies of AMN Healthcare, the innovator in health care workforce solutions. With over 20 years of health care staffing experience, Mr. Mosley is one of the nation's leading authorities on medical staffing trends and has been cited for his expertise

in numerous publications, including *USA Today*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Modern Healthcare*, *Hospitals & Health Networks*, *HealthLeaders*, *Medical Economics* and many others. Mr. Mosley served as Contributing Editor to Merritt Hawkins' highly regarded book "Will the Last Physician in America Please Turn off the Lights," and was an expert adviser to the Health Care Advisory Board's white paper "Transforming Primary Care." A nationally noted speaker, he has addressed over 90 health care professional organizations over the last two years reaching over 6,500 industry leaders. @kurt_mosley

Brad Nieder, MD
Awards Banquet
Wednesday, October 21



Brad Nieder, M.D., CSP, is a funny doctor, keynote speaker and clean comedian who blends health care humor with wellness advice and an uplifting message. Audiences love his "Laughter is the Best Medicine" program, finding it entertaining and inspiring (and informative, too, as Dr. Brad explains—without being boring—how laughter really is good medicine...for managing pain, enhancing immune system function, reducing stress and more.) Always a fan of stand-up comedy and improvisation, Dr. Brad became a founding member of the SIMPS improv troupe while attending Stanford University. During medical school at the University of Colorado, he frequently performed stand-up comedy throughout Denver for both live audiences ... and cadavers. He then moved on to the Medical College of Virginia for his residency. He still traverses the country, a general practitioner by training who some would say is really a specialist in Healthy Humor™. @HealthyHumorist

Dan Nikkel
Breakout Session #13
Thursday, October 22



Dan Nikkel is senior health care Lean consultant with ICE Technologies, Inc. All his time in the health care industry has been spent in continuous improvement or Lean, as its known, where he has facilitated over 70 Lean project teams. He gained expertise in Lean from his previous life of 25 years in manufacturing where he was on over 50 improvement teams, mostly in various management positions. This enabled him to not only learn any of the facets of Lean, but how broad the thinking is. @icetechnologies

James O'Connor
Breakout Session #5
Wednesday, October 21



James E. O'Connor's practice focuses on providing representation for clients with respect to the development, acquisition and use of technology and other forms of intellectual property. In addition, he assists clients with matters involving e-commerce, the Internet, privacy and security, risk assessments and emerging technologies. He represents clients in the financial, health, technology and cyber industries. He is the chairperson of the Technology and Intellectual Property section of Baird Holm LLP. Since 2006, he has been selected by his peers for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America® in the fields of Copyright Law, Information Technology Law and Trademark Law. He was also included in Great Plains Super Lawyers 2009 for his work in information technology/outsourcing.

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Sarah Pavelka
Breakout Session #12
Thursday, October 22



Sarah Pavelka, MHA, OTR/L, CPHQ, FNAHQ, has over 15 years of experience teaching and coaching in organizational performance and continuous improvement in business, industry, education and health care. She is the owner of Pavelka's Point Consulting, LLC, an Improvement Advisor for the Iowa Healthcare Collaborative and serves as

a faculty member for the Master of Healthcare Administration program at Des Moines University. She volunteers nationally as the Director-at-Large for the National Association for Healthcare Quality Board of Directors. Mrs. Pavelka's experience includes being a five-time National examiner and a seven-year state, Iowa, examiner for the Baldrige Performance Excellence program.

Jeff Prochazka
Breakout Session #1
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Jeff Prochazka, MBA, is the director of strategic planning for Methodist Health System. Serving in this capacity, his primary responsibility is the development of strategic and tactical plans for the system and its affiliates. Additional duties have included running the

systems Community Health Needs Assessments, new business development, facilities master planning and financial analysis. Mr. Prochazka is an experienced speaker and delivers presentations across the region about health care reform and changes to the health care industry. He led many software implementations with an emphasis on process re-engineering throughout clinical and administrative functional areas. Serving large corporations in construction, telecommunications and banking industries, he was an expert in supply chain and enterprise resource planning software solutions. He earned his bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Nebraska and his MBA from UNO with a graduate minor in management information systems.

Rob Quillen
Closing Keynote
Friday, October 23



Rob Quillen is an inspirational speaker that has a powerful life-changing message that everyone can benefit from hearing. His emotional journey is from his very personal 9/11 experience and a very positive lesson that he learned from the tragic events of that day. Nineteen days after the events of 9/11, Rob Quillen made the dream come true for Jason's 15-year-old son. He outlines how to make this happen and he challenges each and every one in the crowd to think of one person in their life, and set out to make their dream come true before it's too late. Mr. Quillen's Midwest down-to-earth speaking style captures audiences of all sizes. His story will enlighten you and his message will inspire you to make a difference in someone's life. His story is so captivating, it was featured in *Chicken Soup for the NASCAR Soul*, as well as *Fields of Thunder, The Story of the Kansas Speedway*. Mr. Quillen has also been written about in *USA Today*, *Kansas City Star* and *Omaha World Herald*, as well as several local newspapers across the U.S. He has also appeared on the *Today Show*, *Evening News on NBC* and dozens of local TV stations. In addition, he authored the multi-award winning book titled *Why Wait?* Since its release in the fall of 2010, the book has won four different awards including being the runner-up for International Book of the Year. *Why Wait?* is currently on its third reprint and can be found in book stores everywhere, as well as several popular book websites. [@WhyWaitRQ](#)

Julie Smith
Breakout Session #3
Wednesday, October 21



Julie Smith, RN, BSN, MHA is director of Mission: Lifeline Nebraska through the American Heart Association. She has over 25 years of experience in health care and has worked in both urban and rural settings. In her current position as director, she coordinates the activities of the statewide initiative and is a facilitator between the stakeholders. These include physicians, nurses, EMS services and personnel, Critical Access Hospitals and Percutaneous Coronary Interventional (PCI) capable hospitals across the state. Her experience with quality improvement, data reporting, electronic health record implementation and utilization enables her to be a resource for health care facilities faced with the changes and challenges in today's environment.

Ryan Tipton
Breakout Session #2
Wednesday, October 21



For clients, Ryan Tipton often serves as the face of The Delta Companies. He oversees day-to-day client interaction and continues to drive business growth by ensuring that clients are aware of each service line The Delta Companies has to offer. Mr. Tipton works closely with marketing directors across Delta to advocate and achieve clients' goals. His top priority at The Delta Companies is to ensure the client's experience is unmatched in the industry. Mr. Tipton has served in various roles within TCD, which helped developed his adept industry acumen for best in class recruitment and human capital management practices. He joined the company in 2000 as a search manager for Delta Physician Placement, and then served as the companies chief talent officer for six years before moving into his current role of executive vice president. [@rhinotipton](#)

John Wendling
Breakout Session #9
Wednesday, October 21



John Wendling is a health care professional with more than 25 years of experience with both a managed care and provider discipline. He has recently joined Magellan Healthcare from Ohio where he was accountable for developing the foundation and infrastructure for a provider-owned managed care organization. This venture was built to be both a Medicare Advantage and Medicaid HMO. This experience has fostered the integration of services (i.e. Accountable Care Organizations {ACO}, Integrated Health Homes (IHH), community-based and school-based PCP clinics, and Patient-Centered Medical Home Models). His vision for improving the outcomes for the consumer has led him to incorporate the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) adoption of the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Triple Aim. This fundamental paradigm shift focuses on three (3) objectives: 1) Improve quality of care (improving the health of the population); 2) Enhance the consumer experience (including quality, access and reliability); and 3) Reduce or control the per capita cost of care.