



ROOTED & RISING 2026:

Cultivating Strength through Mindful Practice

Friday, February 20, 2026

Wojcik Conference Center @ Harper College

Symposium Breakouts

All sessions offered AM and PM, 1 CEU each.

Breakout 1: What I Carried, What I Missed: A Personal Journey Through a Helping Career

Melanie Pignotti, LCPC

In this candid and reflective session, a current professional in leadership shares her personal journey in direct services through the invisible weight of secondary trauma. Drawing from years of experience in the helping profession, she offers testimony about the early warning signs she missed, the emotional toll of caring deeply, and the systemic and personal gaps that allowed that trauma to grow unchecked. This story is not just a recounting; it's a call to awareness. Through personal narrative blended with evidence-based insights, participants will explore the realities of vicarious trauma, learn how to identify it early, and walk away with tools to cultivate resilience and prioritize their own wellbeing. The tone will be informal, honest, and reflective with space for connection, learning, and healing.

Breakout 2: Compassion Fatigue: When the Burden Becomes Too Heavy

Dr. Jackie Anderson-Carter, PhD, LCSW

This training examines the intersections of living in uncertain times/dealing with ambiguity, the need to prevent and/or address workplace stress, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue and burnout and how learning to understand and maintain one's own boundaries while maintaining a self-care routine may help people in the helping profession remain true to the mission of their profession while not abandoning their own core values. During this training, attendees will discuss living and working in uncertainty, identify their core values and compare their own values to those of their workplace and be reminded of the reasons that they chose to be helping professional. It is the intent of the presenter that the attendees will leave the training with a renewed sense of self-awareness and passion for the work that they have chosen.



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Breakout 3: Can you feel it? What Beyoncé, Freud and your nervous system are trying to tell you **Michael Rangel, LCSW, R-DM**

When we are making meaning of our identities and relationships through movement, we are accessing different parts of ourselves. So how does this change the quality, rhythm and impact of our movement? This workshop asks, when was the last time you noticed movement and danced? How has it been encouraged or eroded in your life? How did you learn how to “move” through life? What societal and cultural groups do you belong to that influence your movements? And how does your identity shape and direct your movement?

In this presentation we will engage in discussion, dance and movement observation that will ground our understanding of our relationship to our movements and others through developmental psychology, identity, relationship building, community arts and creative youth development. Grounded in my own exploration of movement and dance that I learned from my nervous system, from Freud's teachings and theories and, most importantly, Beyoncé! I have witnessed and performed this phenomenon with youth in Chicago, specifically on the South and West sides of Chicago and will share my interventions and findings with the participants. I will also ask more questions that will challenge and confront our biases, notions and understanding of our bodies. Leaving us to consider: what would happen for you- if your movements and dance was affirmed for its unique positionality and purpose?



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Keynote: The Healer's Journey: Understanding the Impacts of the Archetypes Guiding our Work

Chaz Franke, LCSW, Owner of Light Source

Every helping professional has been brought into their work by a series of stories, narratives and forces that shaped them into being a helper. From the origin story of the wounded healer to the protective energies of carrying the shield of Athena all of us have come into this work to be part of alleviating suffering and helping others in ways that impact those we serve. In this training we will explore some of the most common archetypal energies that appear in the helping profession, and we will discuss strategies for understanding when these energies are present in our work. The work of Carl Jung gave us the language necessary to understand these universal human forces, and the helping professions are built on the foundation of many healing energies that have been present throughout all human history. In this training we will look into our origin stories as healers and helpers while finding common ground with the great healing and protective myths of the ages. We will do a deep dive into the myths and stories of Chiron the Centaur, Athena, Hermes, Hestia and many other figures that provide the foundational energy we all tap into in the name of being present for others. Mythologist Joseph Campbell wrote beautifully on, "The Hero's Journey," and in this training we will use Campbell's language and concept to embark on, "The Healer's Journey."

This keynote will provide 1 CEU.



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Closing: Body and Personal Myth: Strategies for Entering the Stream of the Archetypes and Deepening our Connection to Healing

Chaz Franke, LCSW, Owner of Light Source

Carl Jung spoke eloquently about concepts such as individuation and personal myth as living processes that reveal the true depth of character of each individual. In this training we will explore some of the ways in which we can tap into the healing archetypes and myths and build our own personal myth. Understanding the role of the body, the storytelling role of the mind and the depths of the soul we can all find ways that our deepest, authentic self is available in helping others. This training will explore exercises that can help us look inward, safely, and find the kind of space we need to hold to build our own intuitive connection to the archetypes. The body, breath and visualization will allow us to find the symbols that represent our work and tune into aspects of self and psyche we may be neglecting with over work, stress and disconnection from our personal myth. The energies of the archetypes are there for us to tap into and engage, and in this training we will find gentle approaches to start that conversation with our inner life.

This closing session will provide 1 CEU.



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Keynote Speaker Bio



Chaz Franke, LCSW
Owner of Light Source, LLC

Chaz has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from McKendree University, and a Master of Social Work degree from Saint Louis University (SLU). Chaz received his clinical license in 2009.

Chaz is a therapist and clinical supervisor for Light Source. A small group practice in Belleville, Illinois. Chaz is also adjunct faculty in the Saint Louis University MSW program. Chaz has been practicing therapy full time since 2007. Since the beginning of his career as a therapist, Chaz has worked with trauma and its long reaching effects. This work has included extensive work with all ages and all walks of life. Chaz specializes in self compassion and integrating Eastern thought and philosophy into the therapeutic process. Chaz has presented on topics including, but not limited to Trauma, Wisdom and Self Compassion, Mindfulness, Self Care, Transference and countertransference, and Expanding the Self of the Helper. Chaz provides both clinical and reflective supervision to clinicians across many settings to help further their ability to find their voice in the field and maintain engagement in their work.



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Breakout Speaker Bios



Melanie Pignotti, LCPC, CAC Chief Executive Officer

Melanie is the dynamic Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Advocacy Center of North and Northwest Cook County (CAC), a role she proudly assumed in 2022 after serving as the agency's Director of Forensic and Advocacy Services since 2018. With over a decade of experience, Melanie has become a recognized leader in child advocacy, with an unwavering commitment to supporting vulnerable children and families.

A trained Forensic Interviewer since 2008, Melanie has conducted over 3,000 forensic interviews with child victims and witnesses across Florida, Indiana and Illinois, playing a crucial role in criminal investigations. Her expertise has also led her to train fellow professionals in forensic interviewing as a member of the esteemed Child First Illinois Faculty from 2018-2024. Additionally, Melanie is a Certified Instructor for the Interdiction of the Protection of Children (IPC).

Melanie holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology with an emphasis in Criminal Justice from Iowa State University (2004) and a Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling from Walden University (2010). As a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC), she has provided trauma therapy to children, adults, and first responders, using her clinical expertise to promote healing across diverse settings, including private practice.



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Michael Rangel, LCSW, R-DM, Art of Abundance Counseling and Wellness

Michael is an artist first, who values the innate ability to express our vulnerabilities and needs through non-verbal, audible, kinesthetic and visual ways. He grew up dancing, singing, performing and creating in every form. He believes in the power that art possesses for those who do not have the language for it yet or have different communication needs, and through this process can begin their healing.

Michael's work in the field expands across LGBTQ+ care and services, creative youth development, art education, gender/state violence, suicide prevention, art and performance, community mental health and social services. Michael has a specialization in somatic based-creative interventions and strategies for processing identity, culture, grief, anxiety, shame and transition.

As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Registered Dance/Movement Therapist, Michael utilizes a psychodynamic and creative arts approach to support his clients and community. His training in clinical social work practice, dance/movement therapy, expressive therapies and abolition and feminist perspectives allows him to incorporate each client's passions, joy and interest in the experience to reclaim, repair and reimagine their body and mind connection forward. Michael received his Masters of Social Work from Loyola University Chicago, Masters in Critical Ethnic Studies and Women and Gender Studies from DePaul University, and completed the alternate route in Dance/Movement Therapy from the Embodied Education Institute of Chicago. Michael works as an arts education consultant, psychotherapist, and program developer through his practice, Art of Abundance Counseling and Wellness PLLC and teaches in the LGBTQ+ Studies program at DePaul University.



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Dr. Jackie Anderson-Carter, PhD, LCSW

Dr. Jackie Anderson-Carter is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker specializing in providing services to people dealing with life transitions and those working to survive trauma, anxiety, depression and other oppressive life events and conditions. In addition to her work as a therapist, she works as a professor teaching social work to Bachelor's and Master's Level students. She received both my MSW and PhD from Loyola University of Chicago's School of Social Work. Her dissertation explored the "Nature of Hope Among Women Who Experience Homelessness," and she has extensive experience working with women and men who have experienced homelessness, trauma, mental health concerns and discrimination. In addition, she is a certified Aromatherapist specializing in Trauma-Informed Care and Holistic Self-Care. She uses "relational" therapies to form a connection with others that promotes trust. She has an interest in understanding how early childhood relationships inform current relationships and how unwanted "cycles" can be changed or broken in an effort to enjoy a more fulfilling and productive life. She also has experience using psychodynamic approaches (including Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Object Relations, Self- Psychology, Feminist modalities and Internal Family Systems) and Cognitive-Behavioral approaches (including Motivational Interviewing and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy).



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