



**IdeaFestival Bowling Green 2020**  
***Land and Legacy: Building Ideas That Will Last***  
**February 11, WKU Campus**  
**Speaker Information Packet**  
**#IFBG20**

**SAMANTHA FORE, CHEF/OWNER, TUK TUK SRI LANKAN BITES**



A first-generation Sri Lankan-American from Lexington, Kentucky, Samantha Fore started her pop-up restaurant in 2016 after traditional Sri Lankan brunches in her home outgrew her dining room. One of the few representations of Sri Lankan cuisine in the country, Tuk Tuk Sri Lankan Bites reflects Sam's Sri Lankan upbringing in the American South; its menus include her spins on southern classics and riffs on her mother's time-tested recipes. Her work has been featured in *Food & Wine* and *Bon Appétit*. She is a 2019 Smith Fellow with the Southern Foodways Alliance and was selected as one of *Plate Magazine's* 2018 Chefs to Watch.

**Questions for the audience:**

Before the talk:

- How would you define authenticity?
- What is one thing you would do if there were no obstacles in the way, and what obstacles would derail you from that path?

After the talk

- How do we personally identify cultural similarities across the world?
- How do you adjust and adapt your views when presented with new, valid information? How do you filter out the noise?

**Quotation:** "If I can make people understand the roots of where I'm from, that means the flavors I grew up with and love will have a chance to be out in the world ... Southern and Sri Lankan food are not the same animal, but they have a common thread of hospitality."

**Fun fact:** When Padma Lakshmi was in Lexington to film an episode of *Top Chef* in 2018, Samantha cooked dinner for Padma and her crew at her house; Padma later tweeted to Samantha, "The best meal I've had in Kentucky!"

**Website:** [tuktuklex.com](http://tuktuklex.com)

**Articles:** *Bon Appétit*: "[Samantha Fore's Roving Pop-Up Is Hooking Americans on Sri Lankan Food](#)"  
*Plate*: "[Chefs to Watch 2018](#)"

**Podcast:** *Molé Mama*: [Episode 72](#)

## LARAH HELAYNE, SINGER/SONGWRITER, MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST, AND ACTIVIST



Larah Helayne is an 18-year-old singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and activist from Mount Sterling, Kentucky. Larah grew up in the foothills of the Appalachias, and the magnificence of the mountains have greatly impacted her life and music. Her work reflects both the beauty and struggles of living in Eastern Kentucky and weaves in the story of her own wild and wonderful life. Her songs possess a startling honesty and an unflinching hope and captivated the audience at TEDxCorbin in March 2019.

### Questions for the audience:

#### Before the talk

- What is my relationship with my home? How has where I was raised shaped and affected me?
- What do I know about my cultural and family heritage? What traditions do I come from?

#### After the talk

- What can I do to learn about and/or preserve the culture and traditions of my home, community, and family?
- How can I improve my relationship with my home, and how can I give back to the places and people who have shaped me?

**Quotation:** “Either you find a way to be grateful for everything, or you’re miserable.”

**Fun fact:** She loves Waffle House.

**Video:** TEDx Corbin: [“How Appalachian Music Helped Me to Plant Roots and Learn to Love My Home”](#)

**Podcast:** [Closesound](#): January 31, 2019

**Website:** Facebook: [@larahhelayne](#)

## GERRY SEAVO JAMES, FOUNDER, THE EXPLORE KENTUCKY INITIATIVE AND THE WATERMAN SERIES



Gerry Seavo James promotes adventure tourism, environmental protection, and community and cultural exploration across Kentucky and beyond. Through the Explore Kentucky Initiative and The Waterman Series, and through his past service as a steering committee member for the Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange, he has worked with communities on outdoor recreational events, branding initiatives, conservation projects, and more. An avid paddler, he was given a National Leadership Award by the American Canoe Association. He also uses photography, cinematography, and journalism to tell

stories about the landscapes and people he encounters; in 2017, Lexonomics named him the most impactful artist in the Bluegrass.

### Questions for the audience:

#### Before the talk

- Can you think of a viral moment that has passed and is now gone?
- Can you think of a viral moment that has passed but is still relevant?

#### After the talk

- How do you use your digital presence?
- Are you keeping it real online?

**Fun fact:** His mom and dad were in the Army, so he grew up on military bases all around the country and the world.

**Quotation:** “We, as citizens, need to patronize our parks more and help save them.”

**Article:** *Lexington Herald Leader:* [“UnCommonwealth: Explore Kentucky wants to help you experience the outdoors”](#)

**Websites:** [The Explore Kentucky Initiative](#)  
Instagram [@explorekentucky](#)

**Podcast:** Floor Seats: [Episode One: First Day Out](#)

### **TIMOTHY KERCHEVILLE, FARM MANAGER, INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF KENTUCKY**



Timothy Kercheville is a full-time farmer and agriculture consultant who discovers cooperative and regenerative agricultural solutions for both urban and rural settings. He contracts as a farmer/consultant with private properties, organizations, and public institutions across Kentucky and Tennessee to build new farms, improve existing farm systems, transform lawns to gardens, or serve as a farm manager. All the systems he designs are biodiverse and food-productive and combine agriculture with education.

#### **Questions for audience:**

##### Before the talk

- Can you imagine what your life would be like if you were a refugee? What would it be like to have to flee your country, find a new home, community, and place to make a living?
- What are some of the obstacles in establishing a new farm system, especially for refugees, or for any person or group of people who do not own farmland?

##### After the talk

- How can working with an organization or institution help in overcoming the obstacles of establishing a new commercial farm, especially for people who do not own farmland?
- How can you take the lessons learned from working with organizations and institutions and apply them to your life as you grow up and mature in your community?

**Quotation:** “Farming in a personal sense means a personal discovery in tune with earth care, people care, the moon in its cycle, the water, and returning what comes.”

**Fun fact:** Raised in Yorba Linda, CA, Timothy was always interested in living in Kentucky, where he had family. He moved here in 2010 and worked as a stonemason.

**Articles:** *Bowling Green Daily News:* [“Local farmer promotes sustainable farming practices”](#)  
*Bowling Green Daily News* [“Local farmer grows opportunities for refugees”](#)

**Website:** Instagram [@festinalentefarms](#)

**Video:** [Returning What Comes](#) by Skyler Ballard

**KELLYN LACOUR-CONANT, COASTAL RESOURCES SCIENTIST, COASTAL PROTECTION AND RESTORATION AUTHORITY OF LOUISIANA**



Kellyn LaCour-Conant is a wetland scientist and a daughter of Isle Brevelle. Having worked in restoration ecology for over 10 years, she's knowledgeable about many different ecosystems and traditional relationships with nature. Kellyn grew up learning about wildlife from her family and went on to earn a bachelor's in biology from Amherst College and a master's in marine and environmental biology from Nicholls State University. She now works for CPRA in Baton Rouge to advance Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast.

**Questions for audience:**

Before the talk

- What is ecology, and what do ecologists do?
- In what ways are people, wildlife, and the physical environment connected to each other?

After the talk

- In what ways are coastal states, like Louisiana, and inland states, like Kentucky, connected?
- How can we help restore broken ecological connections in our everyday lives?

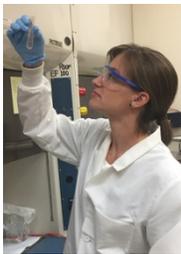
**Quotation:** "The typical academic approach to science isn't the only way to view science ... Articles detailing scientists' 'discoveries' are in constant publication, but they often actually encapsulate indigenous wisdom that has been known for generations!"

**Fun fact:** She has a B.A. in Russian language and culture from Amherst College in Amherst, MA.

**Websites:** *NW the Website:* ["New student organization designed to empower women"](#)  
[Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana](#)

**Video:** *Explain Yourself* by The Roving Naturalist: ["Rely on the communities you can find' with Kellyn"](#)

**SHELBY RADER, ASSISTANT RESEARCH SCIENTIST IN GEOCHEMISTRY, INDIANA UNIVERSITY**



Dr. Shelby Rader is a geochemist who originally hails from Irvine, Kentucky. A graduate of The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, she received her bachelor's degree in geology and chemistry from WKU before obtaining her doctorate in geochemistry from the University of Arizona. Afterwards, Shelby completed a postdoctoral researcher position at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, then moved to Indiana University, where she currently works. Through her research, Shelby is able to observe how large-scale geologic processes, both from the past and currently, alter the geochemistry of our environment, ultimately impacting plant and animal life, our

resources, and us.

**Questions for the audience:**

Before the talk

- When you think of geoscientists, what words would you use to describe them?
- What are some uses or applications for rocks and geology?

After the talk

- What are some things you have encountered before that you will now see differently or pay more attention to?
- What geologic legacy do you think we will leave for those that come after us?

**Quotation:** “I study the earth for a living.”

**Fun fact:** Shelby spent a summer term studying on a cruise ship with Semester at Sea, visiting ten ports where she explored geology and water resources.

**Website:** [shelbytrue.com](http://shelbytrue.com)

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