

MEET THE LEADERSHIP TEAM



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Sweet Baby J'ai, Founder, Executive Artistic Director

is an award-winning vocalist, composer, writer, and producer honored as a Living Jazz Legend and California Jazz & Blues Hall of Fame inductee. A U.S. Jazz Ambassador and festival producer, she curates that inspire, educate, and empower future generations.



Florence Mansfield, President of the Board

is a retired PMP-certified Project Manager with decades of experience leading large-scale IT initiatives. A strong advocate for equity, she brings leadership and organizational expertise to SMEF and has served on the boards of the L-Fund and Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival.



Gladys Brown, JD, Vice President

is a retired Assistant Vice Chancellor for Equity & Diversity Education at UC Riverside. With deep experience in higher education and community advocacy, she champions the power of music to uplift, educate, and transform lives across generations and communities.



Jennie Ford, Treasurer

brings a sharp financial eye and commitment to community growth. With a background in precision and management, she ensures resources support the foundation's mission. Her dedication to transparency and organizational excellence provides stability that empowers long-term success.



Monica Coward, Secretary

has more than 35 years of leadership in human resources, serving organizations including Wells Fargo, Blue Cross, and YMCA/Metro LA. Now retired in Palm Desert, she contributes humor, heart, and expertise to SMEF's mission of music and education.



Charles Huff, Board Member

began his love of music singing in church before a career in musical theater and 20+ years in banking operations and civic service. He now directs Food Security at The LGBTQ Center of the Desert and continues to share his voice on stage.



Sheila O'Rourke, Board Member

is a dancer and teacher dedicated to celebrating women musicians and expanding cultural appreciation. She brings energy and commitment to SMEF's mission of connecting community through music and performance.



Dr. Anne Staveren, Board Member

is a retired pediatric allergist and immunologist with 30 years of medical practice. Passionate about child development, she advocates for music education as a tool for emotional, cognitive, and creative growth.

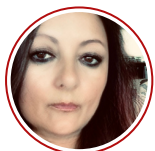


Dr. Imani Woody, Board Member

is the founder and CEO of Mary's House for Older Adults, the first LGBTQ+-affirming senior housing project in Washington, D.C. A national leader on elder and LGBTQ+ rights, she strengthens SMEF's mission with decades of social justice advocacy.

MEET THE DREAM TEAM

THEY MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN!



Elizabeth "Liz" Borden, Producer is a versatile musician and producer who blends artistry with organization, leading SMEF productions that deliver bold, high-quality performances aligned with the foundation's mission and vision.



Felecia "Fee" Howell, Production Manager is known as the "queen of calm in chaos," managing logistics, crews, and technical details to ensure SMEF concerts and festivals run seamlessly and professionally.



Marlene Cohen, Community Outreach Liaison is a creative connector who builds partnerships and expands SMEF through outreach and program development, ensuring the foundation's impact resonates on stage and throughout the community.



Ambassadors: Yvette Graves & Joyce Oldham bring decades of leadership, insight, and cultural knowledge. Serving as trusted advisors, they lend their expertise to SMEF while championing its mission of equity, education, and transformative music experiences.



Sarah Fitzpatrick, Merchandising & Exec Support keeps events running smoothly while leading merchandise operations. She brings organization, creativity, and flair to every event.



Kim Keiler, Box Office Coordinator is the welcoming face at SMEF events. Known as the "Gatekeeper of Good Times," she ensures audiences feel valued while keeping ticketing and guest services smooth and professional.



Michele Weiss, Stage Manager/Press Relations blends backstage expertise with public relations, media outreach, and communications. An improviser at heart, she amplifies SMEF's mission with confidence—and always with a perfectly timed headset cue.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of SMEF, bringing dedication, generosity, and joy that make every event possible. They could be sipping cocktails poolside, but we deeply appreciate their choice to give time and talent to SMEF. **Legacy Volunteers** — including **Val Johnson, Stephanie Thomas, Rita Gonzalez, Belinda Ramirez, J Hursh, Michelle Babbitz,** and **Robin Trigg (our volunteer coordinator)**, provide dedication, generosity, and spirit, ensuring every SMEF event shines brighter and goals are achieved. And just like in music, when a larger ensemble is needed, SMEF is grateful for additional volunteers who join in, lending their voices and hands to amplify our impact.



CONTACT US

INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY,
EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION

Organization: Sunset Music & Education Foundation (SMEF)
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Status: 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Public Charity

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Community Outreach Liaison:

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Like Tina Turner said—you're simply the best! On behalf of our Dream Team—our rockstar producers, passionate volunteers, and our incredible Board of Directors—thank you for your consideration!



For more info visit
www.sunsetmusic.org

