

Library Trustees Biographies



Ellyse Berg and her husband Phil have been Nyack residents for over forty years.

Ellyse holds a Master of Science in Education, and is retired from a thirty-two year career in teaching children with special needs at the middle school level in The Bronx. While teaching, she served as Chapter Leader of the United Federation of Teachers as well as on the District Mentoring Committee.

For the past fifteen years, Ellyse has been an active volunteer with the Friends of the Nyack Library and has helped manage the semi-annual Book Sale fundraiser and the ongoing Nyack Library Book Nook.

Ellyse has been on the Board of Trustees since 2016. She is Vice President, Chair of the Personnel and Friends of the Nyack Library Liaison Committees and also serves on the Development and Nomination Committees.



Steven Cea has lived in Nyack since 1992 with his wife and two children. Steve retired in 2018, after 25 years as a School Business Administrator/Board Secretary for various New Jersey public school districts. Since retirement, he has focused on climate and sustainability issues as a member of the Nyack Tree and Sustainability Committees. He is an Energy Navigator volunteer trained by Cornell Cooperative Extension to assist residents in reducing their energy consumption and accessing state incentive programs. Steve has prior experience as a member of the Nyack Center and Edward Hopper Museum Boards. His education includes a Master of Business Administration from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University.



Diane Christian- Diane has lived in Nyack for over 15 years, and has been a frequent visitor to the Nyack Library, often doing work there when she needed a quiet, welcoming space. Diane teaches English at the Dwight Englewood School, where she has been employed for over 30 years. She has a passion for literature and books.

EDUCATION: Diane graduated with a BA degree in education from New England College in Henniker, N.H. and she has a MA in English from Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. Diane also has credits toward her doctoral degree in English from Teacher's College, Columbia University.

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Jeremiah Conway and his family moved to South Nyack in the summer in 2017, and has loved every minute of it. He and his family are active members of the community, and can often be found at Franklin Park, Oratamin pool, the Rock Shop, or just walking around with Josie the sheepadoodle.

Jeremiah has been teaching high school English for the past fifteen years, both in New York City and Nyack, although primarily in the City. His work with new American students has informed his passion for inclusive literature and instruction, and his belief in looking further than what is simply told in the classroom. Jeremiah is also proud to represent his colleagues as the Chapter Leader of the UFT at his school, as organized labor benefits all workers, everywhere. The library is Jeremiah's favorite thing about Nyack, and he is thrilled for the chance to be on the Board and help guide its future.



Tracy Dressner I have been a big fan and prolific user of libraries since childhood. I grew up across the street from a library and it became my home away from home. I instilled in my children a love of reading which included weekly trips to the library. I have continued this tradition since moving to Nyack eight years ago. Given my love of libraries and my appreciation for the role they can play in shaping lives and communities, I was delighted when I read about an opening on the Nyack Library Board of Trustees. I believe my background would be an asset to the Board. For the past 26 years I have been a criminal defense appellate attorney with a solo practice substantially devoted to death

penalty litigation in California. Although I feel reasonably certain the Board would never need my direct legal services, my work does involve a heavy dose of analytical reasoning, substantial and detailed writing, and persuasive oral advocacy, all skills that would serve me well on the Board. In addition, I served as the Financial Secretary and member of the Executive Board of my synagogue for many years. It would be an honor to provide a fresh perspective and to work with the Board to keep this library a vibrant, meaningful, and integral part of the wonderful Nyack community.



Dr. Tamara Jhashi has resided in Upper Grandview for nearly eight years and loves the mission of public libraries. For more than twenty-five years Dr. Jhashi has worn many hats in higher education, including her most beloved role as tenured Professor of Art History. As an art historian, she studies early twentieth century modernism with a focus on Russian art. Since 2006, Dr. Jhashi has served in several administrative capacities across three institutions: Associate Provost and Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Oakland University (Detroit metro area); Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Mercy College (Westchester), and, most recently, Provost and Senior Vice President at New Jersey City University, where she had led the division of Academic Affairs, overseeing all the university's academic programs, as well as the Frank Guarini Library, Global Initiatives, Research Grants and Sponsored Programs, and On Line Learning. Tamara is a strong advocate for access and equity in education and supports the

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democratizing work of public libraries. Tamara was the daughter of immigrants and a first-generation college student and some of her earliest memories are making trips to her local library as a child that fostered a love of reading and learning. Dr. Jhashi first joined the Nyack Library Board in 2019 and served a three-year term until 2022. She served as chair of the Personnel Committee and served on the Library Policy Development and Long-Range Planning Committee. Since leaving NJCU in fall 2022 and taking up a different career pace as a consultant for AGB Executive Search, she looks forward to returning to the Library Board with more time and energy.



Dr. Leslie Kirsch and her husband relocated to Nyack in 2021 from Washington DC, after running out of space in their home for more bookshelves. Since moving to Nyack, Leslie has been a frequent visitor to the library, attending concerts, crafting with the knitting circle, acquiring vegetable seeds, or borrowing books, movies, and video games. Leslie spent 17 years as a forensic accountant and data scientist for the U.S. GAO and accounting firms, focusing on fraud investigations at nonprofit and government clients. She currently leads the open research data program for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research and is an advisory board member at several nonprofits. She is honored for an opportunity to serve the Nyack community.

Dr. Kirsch holds bachelors degrees in Accounting and Finance from the University of Maryland, a masters degree in Cybersecurity from UMGC, and a doctorate in Human and Organization Learning from the George Washington University. She is a Certified Fraud Examiner, Certified Internal Auditor, and Certified Information Systems Auditor.



Brian Murrell has a background in financial accounting, reporting, and risk management. He is a partner with a global consultancy firm, where he leads Digital Transformation services for the U.S. Energy, Resources, & Industrials risk advisory practice. Brian also advises companies transacting in global commodity markets.

Originally from the Houston, Texas area, Brian lived internationally for four years in the Netherlands and United Kingdom before moving to New York. He has been a resident of the Nyacks since 2006.

Brian is married and has three sons (two of whom are in the Nyack Public School system, and his eldest is a student at the University of Chicago).

He has a strong sense of duty and responsibility to family and service to the local community, including a passion for fair and equitable treatment of others. Brian is an active member of Grace Episcopal Church in Nyack. He also serves on the Board of Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSO; www.gosonyc.org), an organization dedicated to reducing recidivism in New York City. Brian additionally chairs GOSO's Audit & Finance committee.

He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in Accounting from Texas A&M University, and is a Certified Public Accountant, licensed in New York, New Jersey, and Texas. Brian joined the Board of Trustees in 2017 and currently serves as Treasurer and on the Audit and Finance Committees.

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Moriah Olsen was a special education teacher for ten years before becoming a labor relations specialist (LRS) for New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). As an LRS, she had the privilege to work with the Nyack Library staff in their organizing efforts, which led to their certification as a union in 2017. Following the successful union campaign, Moriah served as the LRS assigned to the Nyack Library Staff Association until mid-2022. It was her work with the library staff that led Moriah to seek a position as a Trustee of the Nyack Library Board.

Moriah has been a Central Nyack resident for over 25 years. She and her husband, Keith, have two adult children that graduated from the Nyack Public Schools. In the community, she has been an active member of Grace Episcopal Church, where she served as youth group leader for several years, was a member of the YMCA Board and is on a Sunday Supper team.



Michael A. Penn – with the IBM Corporation for over 40 years- serving in various Management, Sales and Leadership positions.

Current Assignment – Contract & Negotiations Executive. Granted two IBM Patents.

EDUCATION Bachelor of Science – Accounting
Fairleigh Dickenson University – two years – Madison NJ
University of the District of Columbia (UDC) – Washington DC;

COMMUNITY SERVICE

West Street Child Care Learning Center, Spring Valley, NY: Consulting Accounting Advisory Services
Fairmount Baptist Church, Haverstraw, NY: Accounting Services Tax services to Senior Citizens throughout Rockland County.



Daniel Wolff has lived in Upper Nyack for over forty years. He's been president of the board of Head Start of Rockland and president of the board of the Legal Aid Society of Rockland County. He's published half a dozen non-fiction books and four volumes of poetry and received the 2013 Literary Artist award of Rockland County. He lives with his wife, choreographer and film maker Marta Renzi, and is a long-time patron and fan of the Nyack Library.