

**Berkshire Leadership Program
Leadership Session – Speaker Bios**

Shirley Ann Session Edgerton is a Community Activist, Cultural Competency Trainer and Cyclist.

Ms. Edgerton was raised in Mount Vernon, New York where she attended local schools. She graduated from Herbert Lehman College (City University of New York) with a B.A., attended Atlanta University School of Social Work and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts where she completed an M.Ed.

She began her trek in community work while exposing and involving her now three adult children in community activities. She is the founder of the Women of Color Giving Circle, the Rites of Passage and Empowerment program and founding Director of Youth Alive performing Arts group. She retired from the Department of Developmental Services as the Director of Berkshire County State Operated Homes for adults with Mental Retardation in January 2015.

After 25 years of services in the department she decided to focus her attentions on other passions. Youth development has been a driving force in her life. Ms. Edgerton credits the women in her life starting with her grandmother as the motivators that incited the fire that drives her to mentor youth. Youth Alive is over twenty years old, this performance arts group has supported hundreds of youth in developing life skills, leadership and team building skills and improving on their self-esteem and aspiring to obtain a college degree. The members have participated in cultural and academic programming. YA is proud of its alums, the very low rates of teenage pregnancy and high school dropout over the years. Many are college educated young professionals within the Berkshires and beyond.

The Rites of Passage program was born out of a need for girls in YA to focus on developing their voices. It is six years old, targets junior and high school girls. This holistic program celebrates girls' entry into womanhood and provides them with skills and knowledge to be successful and independent women. For the last six years 100% of the participants graduated from high school and the last five years 90-100% of the girls entered college. ROPE collaborates with numerous organizations such as the Colonial, Barrington Stage, Flying Cloud Institute Girls STEM after school project.

In 2014, ROPE initiated the International Service Learning Project. Members along with mentors travelled to Ghana, West Africa the summer of 2014 and shared with girls in the Ghana Educational Collaborative program. The second service-learning journey took the group to Illovo and Durban, South Africa. They were assigned to a variety of tasks at an orphanage and participated in workshops and exchanges with the adolescent girls living at the orphanage.

Ms. Edgerton enjoys engaging youth and the community, she is grateful for the women that were role models in her life, so she is paying it forward. Recently, the girls returned from the annual multicultural and Historical Black Colleges and Universities tours primarily in the South. In March 2017 they were

featured on the show, "Connecting Point" on a New York television station after joining other women in Pittsfield on the Women's March in Washington, D.C. in March 2017.

Ms. Edgerton joined the Pittsfield Public Schools as the first Cultural Proficiency Coach. In 2015, her part-time position includes recruitment, organizing Cultural Competence trainings and initiating diverse mentoring programs for students.

Kristen Huss - Pittsfield Suns General Manager

Kristen began her career in baseball working for the Hudson Valley Renegades as a seasonal part-time employee in 2001, selling programs. She continued to do this throughout college while also working for the New York Mets in their Fan Fest Area. Kristen graduated from Fairfield University in May of 2006 with a Bachelors Degree in Marketing. That summer she entered the Renegade Front Office as a Ticket Office Intern, which quickly led to a full time position in the ticket office in the fall of 2006.

Kristen has worn many hats throughout her career at the Renegades. She held the position of Account Executive; Director of Customer Service; and Director of Ticket Sales and Operations. In January of 2013 she was promoted to Assistant General Manager for the Renegades. In December of 2013 and 2015, she was named the New York-Penn League Woman Executive of the Year and was named one of Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce "Forty Under 40" in 2015.

In the fall of 2015, Kristen was promoted to General Manager of the Pittsfield Suns. As GM, she oversees all day-to-day operations of the organization.

While living in the Hudson Valley she served on many board of directors and community committees including; board member of Rebuilding Together Dutchess County; an associate board member to Dutchess County Chamber of Commerce Chamber Foundation, a 2014 Leadership Dutchess graduate, a member of the Hudson Valley Young Professionals Advisory Committee, an United Way Loaned Executive, and a member of the Dutchess County Tourism Committee.

Kristen is a native of Suffern New York. Her hobbies include skiing; traveling; and of course her passion is baseball.