

## UASSP Mid-Winter Conference Keynote Speaker Bios



### **Dr. Molly Hart**

Dr. Molly Hart has worked in education for over 25 years. She has been a substitute teacher, paraprofessional, teacher, assistant principal, principal, and Executive Director in multiple states at all levels from elementary to college. She was elected to the Utah State Board of Education in 2020 and re-elected in 2024. She was recently appointed as the Utah Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Dr. Hart is a graduate of Michigan State University, where she received a degree in Family Community Services. She loves learning and also has degrees in middle grades education/reading, elementary education, and a doctorate in educational leadership from Valdosta State University.

Dr. Hart's accolades include recognition for her community service, leadership, and education including Vocational Teacher of the Year, the Utah PTA Outstanding School Administrator Award and Canyons District Elected Official of the Year.

Together with her husband, Robert, Dr. Hart is the proud parent of two children in college. Outside of her professional pursuits, she enjoys quilting, reading, golfing and live music of all genres.



### **Elizabeth Smart**

Elizabeth Smart is a renowned American activist, advocate, and public speaker, best known for surviving a harrowing nine-month abduction at the age of 14. She has transformed her personal trauma into a powerful platform for social change. Elizabeth was abducted from her home in 2002 by Brian David Mitchell and his wife, Wanda Barzee, in a case that captivated the world. During her captivity, Elizabeth endured horrific sexual, physical and emotional abuse but demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of adversity.

After her dramatic rescue in March 2003, Elizabeth became an outspoken advocate for the rights and protection of all survivors, but especially children.

In 2011, Elizabeth published her memoir, *My Story*, which recounts her experiences of abduction, survival, and recovery. The book became a bestseller and helped further her mission to give voice to survivors. Elizabeth's story is a testament to courage, resilience, and the power of hope.

Elizabeth is also the founder of the Elizabeth Smart Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to spreading awareness and providing resources. In addition to her advocacy work, Elizabeth has appeared on numerous media platforms, including television shows, news interviews, and speaking engagements, where she continues to inspire others with her strength, resilience, and unwavering commitment to making the world a safer place for children.

Elizabeth Smart remains a beacon of hope, reminding the world that, despite unimaginable hardship, it is possible to heal, rebuild, and make a profound difference in the lives of others.





## **Kirby Heyborne**

Kirby is an Emmy and Grammy nominated actor, narrator, musician, comedian, and host, celebrated for his remarkable range of talents and heartfelt storytelling. He received critical acclaim for his starring role in the WWII drama *Saints and Soldiers*, which was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award. He also gained widespread recognition for his performances in *The Sons of Provo*, *The Singles Ward*, *The Best Two Years*, *Faith of Angels*, and The Farrelly Brothers' *The Three Stooges* opposite Sean Hayes and Sofia Vergara. Kirby was a series regular on the hit FOX sitcom *Free Ride* and has appeared in numerous national commercial campaigns.

He hosts the Emmy-nominated TV series *Making Good* and the global RootsTech conference, where his interviews with stars like Kristin Chenoweth and Sean Astin have reached millions. With over 2,000 audiobooks to his name—including *Charlotte's Web* with Meryl Streep—Kirby is one of the most beloved voices in the industry.

Above all, Kirby loves being a husband and father. His greatest accomplishment is his family, and he finds joy in spending time hiking, biking, camping, singing, and laughing with his wife and three children.



## **Brad Snyder**

Brad Snyder began his professional career as an Ensign in the US Navy. Through his distinction as the swim team captain during his final year, he earned an assignment as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Officer. Brad deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2008 and deployed again two years later to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. After six months of assault operations, Brad was severely injured by the explosion of a nearby improvised explosive device (IED).

The explosion resulted in complete vision loss for Brad. He returned to the pool as part of his rehabilitation process, very quickly realizing that the pool was his "safe space." Within a few months of training, Brad earned a spot on the US Paralympic National Team for swimming and went on to compete in seven events at the 2012 Paralympics (London) where he earned two gold medals and one silver medal. His victory in the 400-meter freestyle in London occurred exactly one year from the day he suffered his vision loss.

At the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, he competed in five events, earning three gold medals, one silver medal, and broke a 30-year-old World Record. After Rio, Brad decided to switch sports to triathlon for a new challenge and won gold for Team USA at the 2020 Tokyo Games. He currently owns six gold medals, two silver medals and one world record.

Brad is pursuing a Ph.D. in Public Policy with the intention of becoming a professor. He also serves as an athlete representative on the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee's Board of Directors and is the advisory board chair for the Navy Special Operations Foundation.

Brad is married to his soulmate Sara, and the two live in Maryland with their daughter, Rooney.

