

TED^xCharleston

x = independently organized **TED** event



April 23, 2025 | Charleston, SC
tedxcharleston.org

Back for its 12th Year TEDxCharleston 2025 - Thrive

Welcome to TEDxCharleston 2025!

This year's theme is **Thrive**.



We are in the midst of a new era of uncertainty, chaos and paradigm shifts. It's not for the faint of heart and standing still will leave you behind. Now is the time to Thrive! Our 2025 TEDx cohort talks about insurmountable challenges, incalculable risks, and the opportunities that come out of taking their mountains head on. Come to learn, leave inspired. And be prepared to thrive.

TEDx is a wonderful and impactful platform that's built on the foundation of incredible thoughts, experiences and hopes of the speakers you will see today. From this platform great things can emerge - or re-emerge - if you're willing to take the next step.

Enjoy the event, amplify what you hear, and be inspired to become a TEDx speaker and change agent yourself.

Mike Sottak
Organizer & Curator
TEDxCharleston

2025 Program at a Glance

12:00 pm	<i>Doors Open</i>
12:30 pm	<i>Session 1</i>
2:30 pm	<i>Break</i>
3:00 pm	<i>Session 2</i>
5:00 pm	<i>Reception at Share House</i>

A few reminders

- *Remember to set your phone to silent – but please feel free to share your experience on social media.*
- *No video recording is allowed in the theater.*
- *Only leave your seat during designated breaks and return to your seat promptly. Due to filming, if you are late, you will not be able to return to your seat until the session is finished.*



**Join the @TEDxCharleston
conversation #TEDxCharleston**





Zandrina Dunning
MC

Zandrina is a powerhouse vocalist, producer, and cultural advocate whose dynamic career spans over two decades. No stranger to Charleston music lovers, she is the Executive Artistic Director of The ZD Experience, a multifaceted platform that merges soulful performances with thought-provoking conversations. She hosts the live talk show and podcast on Ohm Radio (96.3FM), which has captivated audiences with its blend of music and meaningful dialogue.



Stephen Washington
MC

Stephen is a gifted pianist, producer, and visionary whose artistry transcends genres and connects people through music. A Charleston native, Stephen's musical journey began at age 5, leading to his first role as a church pianist by 11. Now an internationally recognized talent, Stephen draws from diverse influences, including Gospel, Country, Hip Hop, and '80s Rock, creating a rich and eclectic sound that resonates with audiences everywhere.



Jirah Perkins
Stage Artist

Jirah Perkins is a multidisciplinary artist born and raised in Charleston, SC. She has been creating ever since she was a child and now, through UJORII Fine Art, she experiments with a variety of different mediums creating pieces

that incorporate bold colors, textures, and her photography archive to generate a sensory experience. "Ujorii" originates from the combination of ujima, meaning collective work and responsibility, and satori, which means sudden enlightenment and understanding. Jirah believes that as a society, it is our duty to cultivate the world as a collective.

Session 1



Ashley Glinka - 12:45pm
The Hidden Skill That Will Transform Your Life: Situational Intelligence

Safety isn't just about locks and alarms—it's about awareness, instinct, and intelligent decision-making in everyday life. As a former Federal Air Marshal and security expert, Ashley Glinka will share how situational intelligence can help people navigate not only travel but also daily interactions, workplaces, and public spaces. By learning to read the room, identify exits, recognize subtle behavioral cues, and trust their instincts, individuals can proactively enhance their personal safety. Glinka's approach isn't about fear—it's about empowerment, confidence, and making informed choices no matter where life takes you.



Matthew Toresco - 12:55pm
Patient Advocacy: A Journey To Better Outcomes

To revolutionize healthcare, we must empower patients as central decision-makers. Through industry advocacy, we can bridge gaps between providers, patients, and policymakers to drive equitable, patient-centric care to address vital community needs. With two decades in health care dedicated to patient advocacy, Matt Toresco wants to drive a patient-centric revolution from the ground up, empowering patients, providers, and advocates to collaborate, creating a model for equitable care that can inspire broader change. Together, we can reshape healthcare.



Brenna Lawrence - 1:10pm
I Survived Domestic Violence, and Then I Shed the Shame

A study conducted across our state by the National Network to End Domestic Violence showed that 365 victims were reported in a 24-hour period. Brenna Lawrence, a domestic abuse survivor turned empowerment coach challenges us to shift the blame off victims and onto abusers, empowering both survivors and allies. Her talk will spark a vital conversation about how we can all help survivors drop the shame, reclaim dignity, and start the healing process.

Session 1



Dr Yulia Gavrilova - 1:20pm
Transforming Burn Recovery Through Mental Health

About half of all people hospitalized for burn injuries are at risk for developing depression and/or PTSD. Dr. Gavrilova maintains that specialized mental health care screening and treatment are essential for all burn patients. By addressing the emotional scars of burn injuries along with the physical ones, she says, more patients can move beyond their trauma and live meaningful lives..



Nameless Numberhead
1:30pm
Developing Charleston

From training at the world-renowned comedy institutions of Chicago (The Second City, iO, and The Annoyance), to performing Off-Broadway, or even touring nationally; Nameless Numberhead has developed a highly acclaimed comedy brand in the southeast. They draw upon years of experience to cultivate the best creative projects using the teachings and philosophy of Chicago style improvisation.



Shaquira Langley - 1:40pm
Unmute the experts: Elevating Teachers

Teachers are the building blocks of our nation, yet overworked and underpaid, their voices are often silenced while policymakers make decisions on their behalf. Shaquira Langley inspires us to support teachers on the front lines of education by amplifying their voices and sparking conversations to build a better future for teachers, students, and the nation.



Joshua Shumak - 1:50pm
Discovering Native Americans of the Lowcountry

South Carolina's Native American tribes, including the Was-samasaw of Charleston, have contributed substantially to the state's rich history. But few are aware of their existence, much less their continuing struggle to maintain their traditions, language and identity, Shumak says. He aims to inspire us all to acknowledge and support the tribes' critical role in shaping the state's current and future identity.

Session 1



Dr Samuel (Kaipo) Sotelo - 2:00pm

The Difference Between Staying Alive and Living Your Life

To understand the secret of life is the secret to understanding how to keep moving. As a physical therapist it Kaipo's life's mission to teach ways for people to move better and move more for the life they deserve. A native of Guam, the passing of his mother at only 45 years of age has prompted Kaipo to dedicate his career to helping people understand the importance of movement and the effect it has on your quality of life. He is adamant about educating us all on the importance of movement. Working with all walks of people (see what we did there?) from regular folks to athletes has demonstrated the benefits and rewards of movement in our lives.



Ann Caldwell - 2:15pm

Over My Head

As a solo artist, ensemble vocalist, and music producer, Ann Caldwell is Charleston's "first lady of jazz." Performing locally for decades, Caldwell is a jazz and blues singer, and is greatly influenced by the past. She has performed a series of centennial concerts devoted to the music of Duke Ellington and formed the Magnolia Singers to perform the spirituals of times past. She is a master of accents, accurately recreating the tonalities of speech which are important to both jazz and blues.

> Intermission Break: 2:30 - 3:00 pm

In-Kind Sponsors



Publix



TRADER JOE'S

Session 2



Alli Stovall - 3:00pm
The Gen Z Perspective

Traditionally, vital life skills such as self-advocacy, emotional intelligence, and goal-setting were taught at the family dinner table. But with shifting family dynamics—such as single-parent households and caretakers working multiple jobs—many young people are missing out on these essential lessons. Alli Stovall will reveal how these overlooked gaps are holding Gen Z back and why creating access to foundational life skills is key to empowering the next generation.



Carolyn Murray - 3:15pm
A Journalist's Journey to Resilience

Reporting the news is key to Carolyn Murray's life in which she reaches a large South Carolina audience anchoring the news on WCBT-TV every weeknight. Included in that journey is her battle with life-threatening diseases of neurofibromatosis and neurosarcooidosis starting in 2020. Carolyn's calling to be a meaningful journalist started 1989 when she walked into a TV station with the desire to be just that. Her journey is not just one of the ambition and desire to do what you love, but the resilience to come back from life-threatening and life-altering adversity and most importantly: to keep going.



Dr Melinda Edwards - 3:30pm
The Gift of Autism

What if autism isn't a disorder to be fixed, but an expression of profound openness and sensitivity? Dr. Melinda Edwards challenges the common belief that

autistic individuals are disconnected, revealing how traits like sensory sensitivity, lack of eye contact, and 'meltdowns' often reflect a deep connection rather than detachment. As a mother of an autistic child and a physician providing psychiatric care to underserved patients, Dr. Edwards invites us to see autism in a new light—one that teaches us to let go of psychological defenses and embrace our natural state of openness, authenticity, and interconnection.

Session 2



Elise Testone - 3:40pm

***I Will Not Break
Until I Fly***

Elise Testone is a powerhouse vocalist whose incredible stage presence and vocal maturity rank with the best. Hers is the perfect combination of soul, rock, attitude and restraint. Equally as impressive and at ease belting James Brown style vocals over a relentless funk groove as she is resting her voice gently over a ballad, this former American Idol finalist's range of influences and vocal capacity know few limits.



Sol Rashidi - 3:50pm

***From Rust to Resilience:
Thriving in the AI-Powered
Workforce***

The real threat of AI isn't job loss—it's intellectual atrophy. Sol Rashidi warns against over-relying on technology at the expense of human critical thinking and creativity. Drawing on her groundbreaking work with IBM Watson and leadership at companies like Estee Lauder and Sony Music, Sol will challenge you to rethink your relationship with technology, while embracing habits that foster cognitive resilience and amplify your potential.



Marisa Zeppieri - 4:00pm

***When Illness is Invisible, Let
Curiosity Lead***

As a journalist, Marisa wants to share a journey of invisible illnesses – chronic diseases that you may not see but are very real, and how that affects that sufferer's

treatment by others. There are those among us who appear healthy, but are not. Working towards developing more empathy and understanding is the goal of this young woman who has Lupus – a terrifying and debilitating disease that is often not readily detectable. Having a deeper understanding of the complexities of invisible illnesses and learning and embracing the power of empathy is the goal here to create a more inclusive society and a better understanding.

Session 2



Dr Joseph Scalea - 4:15pm
Four Reasons to Live

Patients with organ failure face death without transplant surgery. Of course they want to keep living, but why? Dr. Scalea has performed more than 1,000 transplants and has been asking patients that very question. He'll share unexpected learnings, share some of their surprising stories, and explain how patients given one more shot at life can teach us all how to find our own ... reason to live.



Solae' ENT - 4:30pm
Sound & Movement of the Gullah Geechee People

Solae' ENT, blends traditional West African dance with a modern twist, accompanied by energetic drumming and instruments. The show includes Gullah storytelling, call-and-response chants, Gullah history, insights into Swahili and Gullah Geechee, and uplifting Gospel spirituals, offering an engaging and educational cultural experience.

Chilenia Jamison
Leroy Jamison
Lillian Richburg
Jaden Larkin
Justin Rivers
Zauditu Chambers
Regina Sowell-Hollingshell
Rhonda Richardson
Jeremiah Boone
Daniel Green
Jerryd Burton

Photo Credit: Banyan Headshots

After-Party: 5:00 - 7:00



Sponsors

We are extremely grateful for our generous sponsors who make TEDxCharleston a success. None of this is possible without the people and organizations who commit their expertise, support and resources. When you partner with TEDxCharleston, you become part of a global force that delivers transformative ideas and inspired actions.

If you would like to learn more about **becoming a sponsor** for the next TEDxCharleston, please visit our website at: tedxcharleston.org

Presenting Sponsor



Empowered Sponsors



The Bank of South Carolina

The Post and Courier
Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

WIRED  ISLAND
INTERNATIONAL

Sewell & Renee Kahn



J. MUSSELMAN
CONSTRUCTION

F&B Partners



BEAUTIFUL
SOUTH



BROWN-FORMAN

Costa*

BRASSERIE
La Banque
ONE BROAD ST

Félix



Legami
CHS SC



Production Partners



CHARLESTON
MUSIC HALL



TURN90



Supporting Partners



Charleston Digital
Where Tech Thrives

charleston
magazine



NICOLE
LABRECQUE



iWrite
words that count



2025 Leadership

Organizer & Curator

Mike Sottak

Marketing & Branding

Deb Mohnssen

Production

Greg Magnuson

Speaker Selection

Louise Heikes

Performer Selection

Zandrina Dunning

Speaker Coaching

Sewell Kahn

Sponsorship

Toni Sottak

After Party

Leslie MacDowell

Volunteer Coordinators

Melissa Stewart

Finance

Jenna Piper



X-Teams

Marketing & Branding

Deborah Mohnssen
Nicole Labrecque
Marty Demerest
Cheryl Irwin
Chris Vestal
Becky Brown

Production

Sandy Morckel
Greg Magnuson
Chris Rucker
Zandrina Dunning
Celeste Middleton
Craig Gangloff
Kris Davis
Alex Martin
Kerry Mohnssen
Curt Thomas

Speaker Selection

Louise Heikes
Marty Howley
Renee Kahn
Michael Schmidt
Sewell Kahn
Austin Fitzhenry
Stephanie Mackara
Steven Rosensweig
Jared Bramblett
Herb Frazier
Amber Ludeman
Julie Walker
Lia Collabello

Speaker Coaching

Kenya Dunn
Yolanda Harris
Renee Kahn
Liz McCool
Michael Schmidt
Sewell Kahn
Austin Fitzhenry
Jessica Vernon

Volunteers

Michelle Barnes
Jenny Bergmann
Tonya Dickerson
Darragh Dunleavy
Jayson Dunmore
Kate Everingham
Mary Garvin
Tim Jordan
Jenna Piper
Mary Moravek
Cosandra Moten
Evelyn Putnam
Lawrence Richard
Eli Stewart
Melissa Stewart
Kathy Vonesh
Serena Zea
Hallie Matzner
Emma Savoie
Mandy Townsend
Toni Sottak
Rebecca Renner
Amanda Serfozo



Ways to THRIVE

Get Social

Be part of the TEDxCharleston community and add #TEDxCharleston to all your social media posts from the day. Share selfies, impressions, favorite quotes and doodles with us by tagging @TEDxCharleston - your photo might get re-shared!

Meet our Speakers

Get one-on-one time with the day's speakers at break and at the After Party. Ask them what you can do to help spread their ideas far and wide.

Commit to Action

As an attendee, we hope you will take an active role in sharing the ideas worth spreading from today. Tell others about the talks and performances you heard today and what inspired you. When videos are online, please share them with others.

Apply to Present

Do you have an idea worth sharing or know someone who does? Help us spread the word when the Call for Ideas goes live later this year at tedxcharleston.org.

A Special Thanks



CHARLESTON
MUSIC HALL



The Teams at Charleston Music Hall and The Sharehouse. Edith Howle, who started this whole journey 10 years ago. Chris Rucker and his crew, and our great all-volunteer team!

About TEDxCharleston

As uncertainty permeates seemingly every aspect of our lives, we continue to find ourselves in new and unexplored realities. Distilling truth becomes more challenging in our increasingly uber connected world, while the prospect of artificial intelligence entices and threatens us at the same time. But beacons of hope, honesty and humanity give us hope for the future, a confidence that we will be able to navigate what seem like uncharted waters.

- **Electrify** ideas that inspire creativity, education and engagement within our community and world beyond.
- **Influence** change that connects and understands the many layers of Charleston's people, history and culture for a future of good.
- **Encourage** innovation and new perspectives in the fields of technology, art, business and health that seek positive awareness and exposure.

**Learn more about
TEDxCharleston events at
tedxcharleston.org.**

About TEDx

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TED Talks video and live speakers combine to spark deep discussion and connection. These local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x = independently organized TED event. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events are self-organized. (Subject to certain rules and regulations.)

About TED

TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or fewer) delivered by today's leading thinkers and doers. Many of these talks are given at TED's annual conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, and made available, free, on TED.com. TED speakers have included Bill Gates, Jane Goodall, Elizabeth Gilbert, Sir Richard Branson, Nandan Nilekani, Philippe Starck, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Sal Khan and Daniel Kahneman.

TED's open and free initiatives for spreading ideas include TED.com, where new TED Talk videos are posted daily; the TED Translators Program, which provides subtitles and interactive transcripts as well as translations from thousands of volunteers worldwide; the educational initiative TED-Ed; the annual million-dollar TED Prize, which funds exceptional individuals with a "wish," or idea, to create change in the world; TEDx, which provides licenses to thousands of individuals and groups who host local, self-organized TED-style events around the world; and the TED Fellows program, which selects innovators from around the globe to amplify the impact of their remarkable projects and activities.

Follow TED on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/TED-Talks>, or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TED>.

TED^xCharleston

x = independently organized **TED** event



www.tedxcharleston.org