

# UNITING AMERICA

Jean Kingston and the Sword & Spoon Foundation are convening a series of nonpartisan public conversations across Massachusetts to spotlight areas where the Commonwealth and the nation are in need of healing and restoration.

These events will address:

- Empowering Our Veterans
- Working for Racial Reconciliation
- Establishing Civility in Public Life
- Inspiring the Next Generation
- Easing the Foster Care & Adoption Crisis in America
- Supporting Our First Responders
- Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in America
- Providing Educational Opportunity for All
- Rethinking Mass Incarceration

National leaders will offer fresh insights into these challenges and Sword & Spoon's partner organizations will share their inspiring and effective work towards healing and restoration.

It is the humble spirit of President Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address that inspires this series:

“With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

## **Confirmed Speakers:**

### **EMPOWERING OUR VETERANS**

**Karen Vaughn**  
**March 21 — 6-8 p.m.**  
**Worcester Technical High School**  
**1 Skyline Drive**  
**Worcester, Massachusetts**

Karen Vaughn is the mother of fallen US Navy SEAL, Aaron Carson Vaughn (SEAL

Team VI). Aaron was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2011 when a chopper carrying thirty Americans was shot from the sky while rushing into battle. Losing Aaron changed everything and put Karen on a new path.

Over the past six years, Karen has emerged on the national scene as a powerful spokeswoman for not only our defenders still fighting on foreign soil and securing peace across the globe, but also as an advocate for a better, stronger, more resilient America.

<https://officialkarenavahn.com>

## **WORKING FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION**

**Ben Watson**

**April 6 — 7-9 p.m.**

**Bethel AME Church**

**Boston, Massachusetts**

Benjamin Watson is a tight end for the Baltimore Ravens. He was drafted in the first round of the 2004 NFL Draft by the New England Patriots, receiving a Super Bowl ring in his rookie season as well as another in 2007.

In 2010, he signed a three-year deal with the Cleveland Browns reuniting him with former Patriots assistant coach, Eric Mangini. In 2013, he agreed to a three-year contract with the New Orleans Saints and was named team captain for the 2015-2016 season. In his 12th year in the NFL, Watson had a career season where he had a career bests in receptions (74) and yards (825), and tied his career high in touchdowns (six).

Watson is the author of “Under Our Skin: Getting Real About Race – And Getting Free From the Fears and the Frustrations That Divide Us” and “Group Conversation Guide,” to help readers talk honestly about race, bias and justice.

<http://www.thebenjaminwatson.com>

## **ESTABLISHING CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**Lea Berman and Jeremy Bernard**

**May 18**

Lea Berman and Jeremy Bernard each served as White House social secretary for different administrations. Bernard worked for President Obama, Berman for President George W. Bush. They've collaborated on a new book that uses their White House experiences to draw out lessons in how to handle crises, defuse awkward moments and manage expectations. It's called *Treating People Well: The Extraordinary Power Of Civility At Work And In Life*.

The authors make a case for the importance of a return to treating people well in American political life, maintaining that democracy cannot be sustained without public civility.

<http://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Treating-People-Well/Lea-Berman/9781501157981>

## **INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION**

**Jean Kingston**  
**June TBA**

Jean Kingston is the author of “Animal Mash-Up,” an illustrated children’s book about a school of animals who discover they have more in common than they could have imagined.

Jean, along with her husband John, is a found of the Sword & Spoon Foundation, SixSeeds and Sword & Spoon Workshop. Jean double majored in Biological Basis of Behavior and Elementary Education at the University of Pennsylvania and also received a Masters from the School of Education at Penn. She’s mom to four children, two dogs, fourteen alpacas, three horses and six sheep.

<http://www.swordandspoongroup.com>

## **EASING THE FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION CRISIS IN AMERICA**

**Christina Meredith**  
**June 28**

Christina Meredith’s mission is to change the way America handles orphans and sexual abuse. She endured years of physical, emotional and sexual abuse before entering the foster care system. Passed from family to family, Christina finally landed in a home where she remained until she aged out of the system at 18.

After spending almost a year homeless and living in her car, she moved to California, took a series of odd jobs, eventually catching the eye of a pageant recruiter who suggested she compete in the Miss California pageant.

Christina won the title of Miss California in 2013 and has since dedicated herself to speaking out on behalf of abused girls and foster care children all over the country. She is currently in the process of launching the Christina Meredith Foundation that will provide tools and wrap-around support for foster care children trapped in between the welfare and prison system.

<https://www.christinameredith.org>

## **SUPPORTING OUR FIRST RESPONDERS**

**Dave Wurtzel**

**July TBA**

Dave Wurtzel is the founder and executive director of “The First Twenty,” a nonprofit dedicated to improving the health of the American firefighter. Our mission is to decrease Line of Duty Deaths due to heart attack in today’s fire service”, says Wurtzel

Wurtzel, a 20-year veteran volunteer firefighter, came across the statistic that heart attack is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths of firefighters, accounting for more than half, “I couldn’t just say I hope somebody else figures that out,” he says. “I felt compelled – something should be done.”

After learning that there was no nationally available wellness program geared to firefighters, he set out to develop one. With a team of experts, Wurtzel launched “The First Twenty” in 2012. Since then, thousands of firefighters across the country have enrolled in its three-pronged program. The program is also working with universities and hospitals to research the approach for even broader application to advance the wellness of the country’s 1.1 million firefighters.

<http://thefirsttwenty.org>

For updates on our speakers series please visit:

[UnitingAmerica.us](http://UnitingAmerica.us)