

MEET THE 2019 CANDIDATES FOR
SECA President-Elect



Voting begins August 31, 2018

**SOUTHERN EARLY
CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION**

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Floyd Creech

1. What excites you about the future of SECA?

Early Education in diverse forms - child care, HeadStart, public preschool, religious affiliated child care, federally and state funded family services - is larger and in greater demand than ever before in the Southern US. This explosion means that there are more educators and service providers to become members of SECA and benefit from its services. SECA has more potential than ever before.

2. SECA Membership is no longer automatic or tied to any other organization in our dual affiliate states. What might you propose to address possible loss of membership and changes in affiliate relationships?

SECA Membership should be something that is sought by individuals because they are attracted to the services provided and feel a personal relationship with its current membership. The governing board and the current membership should find ways to connect potential members to the themselves and services of SECA. Then SECA will have a vibrant membership.

3. Share with us your understanding of SECA's current position as an organization. Please list three (3) situations SECA is facing. Explain how you would deal with these three situations.

SECA is an organization that ties together the local early childhood organization boards of southern states. SECA provides an annual conference around issues of interest to the membership. It is recognized as being a professional organization for early educators at all levels on the career ladder.

Conference - The current conference generally serves about 400 people plus leadership and presenters. It no longer makes an income for the organization. Conference needs to change. The conference needs to become a professional seminar that travels to the various states to meet the needs of the membership. It could become a part of pre-conferences of state conferences or be offered in localized areas where there is identified need.

Diversity - I see diversity as a local phenomenon. Because of some work I have done with Montessori teacher education in the Plano, TX area, I noticed that there is a burgeoning Indian population seeking quality Montessori programs for their children. How can SECA help these professionals working with the 5000+ families? SECA does not have to become the Montessori expert on the ground, but could offer a local seminar on developmentally appropriate education with the local SECA organization. In my local area, there is a need for professionals to learn new ways to engage parents in the basic needs of their children - nutrition, sleep, movement, routine. Offering a local seminar to teachers would meet a specific need and create a genuine connection to SECA and the value of being a SECA member.

Child Care Workforce - Child care centers rely on high school graduates to enter the workforce while they are attending training at local technical colleges and universities in early childhood education. SECA needs to create vision among these young professionals. Using the data bases of states, local organizations, and soliciting by state organizations, SECA could begin to offer services such as a weekly news brief, teaching tips, etc. via Instagram, email, etc. These professionals are not members at this point, but they do look after children and need our help.



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Debbie Ferguson

1. What excites you about the future of SECA?

I believe that SECA has an amazing opportunity before us to re-create the ways we serve the early childhood community in the South. As changes within the structure of our association take place we can re-invent, re-define and re-commit our efforts to serve our membership in more meaningful ways. We can move forward without asking for permission regarding our procedures. The uncoupling with NAEYC offers unlimited possibilities. If chosen for this prestigious role, I will look forward to working alongside every board member to make lasting changes to grow and sustain this association.

2. SECA Membership is no longer automatic or tied to any other organization in our dual affiliate states. What might you propose to address possible loss of membership and changes in affiliate relationships?

I think you must understand what educators need day to day to achieve their goals for children and families. I would propose creating opportunities to hear what is valued and how services for members can be enhanced. We simply need to ask, "how can we serve you?". I firmly believe if we reach out through a membership campaign that is aimed to meet their needs we can create a buzz in the education community. As I served as vice president for the Tennessee Association for Children's Early Education one of my responsibilities was to grow membership. The membership numbers in one of our small affiliates in the West was in jeopardy of dissolution since their membership numbers had dropped below the required 50 members. As I studied our membership roster I began making phone calls to members or lapsed members that had a history with TACEE. I shared on those calls how much we needed each other to strengthen our voice for children. I quickly realized through my calls that lack of leadership was a main factor in the demise of this affiliate. One member stood out...she had been a member for 20 years. I called her to ask if she would be willing to step up as a leader and partner with the state to revitalize this area. Her name was Cathy Waggoner and she worked tirelessly to increase the membership to over 120 members! We must identify leaders, develop relationships with our members and work together to understand their needs.

3. Share with us your understanding of SECA's current position as an organization. Please list three (3) situations SECA is facing. Explain how you would deal with these three situations.

Financial Concerns – My current role of treasurer for TACEE has offered me insight to the growing concerns of loss of income primarily due to declined membership. I see the resolution for this concern to focus on growing members as mentioned above. I also firmly believe in creating and adhering to a budget. This will require discipline and working with the board of directors and Executive Director to stay on task to meet our projections.

Affiliate Structure – Our structure is complex and can be confusing to members. I appreciate the road that led us to this place as decisions were made independently for each SECA state. SECA created this system by offering extreme inclusion and that should be honored. However, it could be time to begin discussions of how we can best align some practices to bring us to ONE association. These conversations would have to be conducted with open minds and strong leadership focused upon similar goals.

Nation-wide Recognition – SECA is unlike any other association I know, and we do many things great! I would like to see SECA become a resource for ALL educators and not just in our southern states. Developing partnerships with like associations, publishing position statements, and seeking presentation opportunities (within budgetary limitations) would place SECA on a National stage while staying grounded in our southern roots.



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Maria Rutherford

1. What excites you about the future of SECA

I have watched SECA stand in the shadow of NAEYC for many years. Yet, when I attended a SECA Conference for the first time, I felt as though I was in the midst of early childhood giants who were confident in their professional knowledge and yet comfortable in their story. It was their stories and passion that won me. I felt like I became part of the education world in the midst of early childhood giants.

I dream SECA will step out of the shadow and into the spotlight. I dream THE GIANTS will sit down with the early childhood providers and pass our history down. I dream the early childhood providers in the grass roots will be memorized by the heritage SECA empowers.

The future of SECA is exciting because now, SECA has an opportunity to step out of the shadow and into the spotlight. SECA's greatest asset in this ballgame is their sweet tea and hospitality. What does that mean? It means, all the sweetness and genuine care SECA provides to early childhood professionals will be the attributes the grass roots are looking for and need. SECA has a rich history of genuine hospitality and strong leadership. I believe this is SECA's greatest moment to shine.

However, dreams come true with a lot of work.

"The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on your mother, the ecology, or the president. You realize that you control your own destiny."

– Albert Ellis

2. SECA Membership is no longer automatic or tied to any other organization in our dual affiliate states. What might you propose to address possible loss of membership and changes in affiliate relationships?

I believe SECA is the members, the early childhood providers who nurture and care for our children daily. I believe SECA should repeat history of being the early childhood giant that mentors and advocates for early childhood professionals. As many giants mentored me, I advocate to mentor young leaders in our field. I believe this is the purest form of the vision and mission of SECA.

As SECA President, I believe in empowerment of the Executive Board. I believe an Executive Board should govern with transparency and ethical behavior. The Executive Board should employ to become a visionary board, a board who considers the members, chapters, and state affiliate boards to flow together.

My first campaign will be to deploy a vertical Membership Campaign. Membership is the heart of SECA, State Affiliate and local chapter income. Ongoing revenue is essential to SECA's, State Affiliate's survive. I will seek to unite with one voice, one campaign. We, all SECA members, will change our own destiny.

It is my sincere belief that a President empowers a board. I do not believe in micromanagement leadership but servant leadership. I believe the job of the President is equal to any other position on the board. However, I do expect board members to work. In my humble opinion, they are not rewarded for only making decisions but for empowering decisions.

SECA has a unique vision and mission. Therefore, in dual states, SECA should become the voice of the grasslands. The early childhood provider is a vital part of SECA. SECA has always appealed to the pay scale of the early childhood provider. Now, SECA should strive to appeal to the young provider and director while using SECA Giants to mentor. The quest for now is to provide enriching modes of communication to reach them (examples: Tweeting from the President's, Video Streaming Messages from the Presidents, Board Members, and Executive Director).

SECA has to reach the young generation, the utopia.



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Maria Rutherford (Continued...)

3. Share with us your understanding of SECA's current position as an organization. Please list three (3) situations SECA is facing. Explain how you would deal with these three situations.

Affiliate Knowledge of 501c3 Organizational Leadership and Business Affairs:

- Communication is a two-way street. However, as a State President, I don't have any communication from the Executive Board. While the SECA Board Representative brings vital information to the board. Often times, the President has their own needs. However, in the last year, as President, I needed more than updates. I needed help. I needed communication. I needed to know how to run a 501c3 Organization and Board in the proper legal manner. I needed business help. I needed SECA to be present, not just through a State Rep. My quest is to change the communication style.
- Therefore, as SECA President, I will suggest that State President's be on the board or have quarterly meetings with the Executive Director and SECA President. The President's will discuss state business affairs and have checklists to ensure the affiliate is being properly managed and governed.
- I will also lobby that all State Presidents go through what I will call SECA Leadership Academy as President Elect before taking their oath. The former SECA President will be in charge of this Leadership Academy as part of their contribution. This academy will teach and instruct how to operate a 501c3 organization and board.
- The Fossils need a presence on the Executive Board. If history is not to be repeated, we have to have history reminding us. Fossils are important because they are the blueprints of our history.

Affiliate Survival

- With the membership declining, lack of revenue to pay bills will become an issue for many affiliates. Affiliate State Presidents are going to have to become business minded.
- Therefore, as SECA President, I will lobby to have each affiliate send forth a yearly budget and business plan to up their monthly revenue and savings. Again, it is imperative that open and honest communication be an integral part of the enhanced SECA.
- I will also propose that a SECA Membership Campaign is launched. This campaign will be mission minded and unified between SECA to each affiliate and throughout the southern states. Through our unity, SECA will become a force with a common vision and mission served with sweetness and genuine care SECA provides to early childhood professionals will be the attributes the grass roots are looking for and need. SECA has a rich history of genuine hospitality and strong leadership. I believe this is SECA's greatest moment to shine.
- SECA's leadership will enhance and provide new millennials to join the organization and step into leadership roles. SECA should embrace the opportunity to build leaders from within and seek leaders who are desiring to be used. I was one of those. and Terry Green and Jaesook Gilbert found me. So, here I am.and, one day, I will be a Fossil. Smiles.

Technology

- SECA is on the backside of technology. All affiliates should have a Facebook Page. These Facebook pages should be linked to SECA in such a way that as SECA tweets. the tweet goes directly to the State Facebook page. Imagine how many people SECA would touch with one tweet.
- The SECA Office needs an updated computer program which keeps up with membership fees, etc. The program may even pay the state affiliates and chapters separately saving a step for the affiliates.
- Technology should be viewed as machine power to save manpower. SECA is a volunteer job. Therefore, SECA needs to remember, volunteer's only have so many hours in a day and / or a week. Great Technology will empower volunteers and provide the tools they need to do their job without spending their own resources
- The days of old fashion mail are history. We need email addresses. We need access to email blast members. Our providers need daily early childhood devotions to read on their break.



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