

SPEAKER BIOS



DR. KEITH DELAPLANE

Dr. Keith Delaplane grew up on a grain and hog farm in Indiana. He was introduced to beekeeping when his parents bought him a beginners' beekeeping kit. He graduated from Purdue and Louisiana State Universities and is now Professor of Entomology and Director of the honey bee program at the University of Georgia. He is author of the books *First Lessons in Beekeeping* and *Crop Pollination by Bees* and was lead editor of the 2020 edition of *ABC and XYZ in Bee Culture*. Keith and his students study honey bee pollination, health management and social evolution. In 2014 he was inducted into the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his research and education efforts in honey bee health and management.

Charlie Agar Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, **Charlie Agar** has trod an unusual path to beekeeping. He once worked the fisheries of Alaska, ski-bummed in Colorado, taught English in Japan, and crisscrossed South and Southeast Asia for years, adventures that morphed into a career as a travel guidebook writer and later a newspaper reporter before life brought him to sunny New Braunfels, Texas. Charlie removes and rehomes nuisance bee colonies, coaches new beekeepers, leases honey bees for Ag valuation, and sells honey he calls "liquid sunshine" at the local farmer's market. His work is the subject of a reality TV series on PBS. Learn more at CharlieBee.com.

Chris Barnes began beekeeping in 2014 after his wife tricked him into attending a beekeeping school in Brenham. At the time, she only wanted 2 hives - today **Cornerstone Honey Bees** runs approximately 60 hives in Brazos County, offering services to sell bottled and comb honey, sell Nucleus hives, perform removals, and provide hives for Ag valuations. That same year he was the instigator to create the **Brazos Valley Beekeeping Association** in Bryan/College Station - the club today regularly draws 60 to 80 people to the monthly meetings. In 2015, BVBeeks (as they are locally known) began a Youth Beekeeping Program in an effort to help train the next generation of beekeepers, as well as provide scholarship money to those kids who complete the program and continue to be beekeepers through their high school graduation. Chris' current role in the club is as the Youth Program Director. To date, the Youth Program has had over 60 junior & high school kids complete the 2 year program, and awarded over \$7,000 in scholarship money to graduates.

Michelle Boerst started beekeeping with her son, Tim, as an FFA project in 2013. Tim was awarded a scholarship through the **Collin County Beekeepers Association**. Michelle went along for the lessons and they started beekeeping with two hives. Michelle, and a few other beekeepers founded the local beekeeping club, **Denton County Beekeepers Association** in 2015. She decided to take the first round of the **Texas Master Beekeeping Program (TMBP)** for fun and then just never stopped reaching for a higher level. She achieved Master Beekeeper in 2018 and is currently working on her last level, Master Craftsman while also serving on the **Board of the TMBP**. Michelle lives in Aubrey, Texas and owns **Bursting Bees** with her partner, Matt Clark. She has two grown children whom she hopes will someday join them in the apiary. Michelle gives presentations on bees and beekeeping, mentors beginner beekeepers and rehomes bees from all over the North Texas area. Sometimes they sell a little honey, too! She has volunteered for the **Collin County Beekeepers Association**, **Denton County Beekeeping Association**, and **The Texas Beekeepers Association**.

Tara Chapman is the founder of **Two Hives Honey** and a native of the tiny West Texas town of Smyer. After graduating from Duke University in 2003, Tara was offered a job with the Central Intelligence Agency, and she spent the next 10 years working for the federal government, visiting countries such as Afghanistan, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan. On a fateful day in Austin Texas, Tara took her first beekeeping class, and soon after quit her government job to work for **Bee Weaver** in Navasota, Texas, rearing queen bees. Soon after, she founded Two Hives Honey, beginning as a solopreneur with just the two backyard hives that gave the company its name. Since then, Two Hives Honey has grown to manage more than 300 hives in the Austin area, and offers

beekeeping education, a sustainable and socially conscious business vision, and, of course, the best damn honey Texas bees can make.

Cameron Crane started beekeeping in 2011. He is Secretary and a founding member of **Liberty County Beekeepers**. Cameron served 5 years as a Director and Board Member of **Texas Beekeepers Association**. Honey and hive products are sold under **Crane Meadows**. Cameron and Ron Bentley ventured into mead making with **Mystik Oak Mead** in 2015, they are organizers and are proud sponsors of the **Gulf Coast Mead Festival**.

Les Crowder is a 55+ year veteran of the beekeeping world, and a widely recognized expert in natural beekeeping. Throughout his career as a beekeeper, he has always looked for ways to eliminate toxic inputs in the hive, starting with antibiotics and now miticides. He has been keeping bees in Langstroth and Top-Bar Hives his entire life, both as a hobby and as a business. Earlier in his career, he worked for a business with 4,000 hives in New Mexico, and was the President of the **New Mexico Beekeepers Association** multiple times. He was also a **honeybee inspector** there for 5 years. A true honey bee expert and whisperer, he has been teaching highly popular natural beekeeping classes domestically and abroad for over 35 years (both in English and Spanish), and has written the world-renowned book "**Top-Bar Beekeeping: Organic Practices for Honeybee Health**", which has sold and continues to be sold all over the world. Les has a degree in biology from the University of New Mexico.

James & Chari Elam Long time beekeepers and owners of **Blue Ribbon Honey Company** – they have held multiple board positions in both their local club and the **Texas Beekeepers Association** and are credited with developing a Mentor Program curriculum that has been emulated across Texas. Both James and Chari are exclusively **Texas Bee Supply** Instructors and Chari is Editor of **the Texas Bee Supply Monthly magazine**. They travel the state sharing their knowledge of beekeeping to bee clubs, seminars, conventions, and community events all while making it fun and educational!

Brittany Fetterman Brittany's mission is to help bees survive and thrive. She is dedicated to helping them coexist with society so they can continue their critical role as pollinators. She is focused on protecting and propagating bee lineages that can thrive amid the myriad of diseases, toxins, and pests that have become prevalent in recent decades.

As the owner of **Austin BeeLove**, her services include live bee rescues, removals, and swarm captures, agricultural exemptions, beginner beekeeper mentorships, professional consulting, hive management, educational presentations and locally raised, treatment-free queens. Brittany is on the board of the **Texas Honey Bee Education Association** and is the president of the **Austin Area Beekeepers**.

Stan Gore, Brenham Texas, Native Texan, Vietnam Vet

Stan's Grandad was a beekeeper with hives in Montana. Stan currently works over 100 hives in 4 different counties. He is the owner of **Texas Honey Bee Rescue** where he helps folks with their bee issues by rescuing bees and swarms while mentoring and training new beekeepers. Stan is on the Executive Board of **Central Texas Beekeepers** and **Hives For Heros**. He is also the Owner/Admin and Chief Goober of **Texas Friendly Beekeepers** with over 7,000 members. It's a safe friendly Facebook group to hang out and talk bees. Our goals are to educate, equip and encourage new and old beekeepers. Beekeeping for Stan, is his calling, and passion, not a hobby. Stan is a Disciple of Christ disguised as a Beekeeper.

Veronica Hawk has been a volunteer with the Boerne chapter of the **Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT)** since 2008. She helps to teach the **NPSOT Native Landscape Certification** program and helps the Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program. Since 2017, Veronica has maintained certification by the **Texas Master naturalist program**, Hill Country chapter. Prior to moving to Texas, she volunteered for the **Georgia Native Plant Society** as a plant rescue coordinator, 2000-2008, volunteered at the **Georgia Perimeter College Native Plant Garden** and graduated from the **Georgia Master Naturalist** program in 2006. Veronica is a gardener in Bulverde, Texas, where she's kept bees since 2018.

Dennis Herbert is a native central Texan. He attended Texas A&M and Stephen F. Austin where he graduated with a BS in Wildlife Biology. He was employed at Fort Hood for 33 years as **Chief of the Natural Resources Management Branch**. As a result of his accomplishments at Fort Hood, he received the **Lifetime Achievement Award** (2004) and inducted into the Hall of Fame (2020) of the National Military Fish and Wildlife Association, for his work in wildlife management for the Department of Defense. Also, he was the first civilian to be inducted into the **Fort Hood Garrison Hall of Fame** (2005) for his leadership in natural resource management. Dennis drafted the original legislation for the current bee law which assists small land owners to receive their agricultural valuation if they wish to raise bees on their property. He helped shepherd the bill through the legislature in 2011, it became law on January 1, 2012. He has been a beekeeper in Bell County for 15 years.

Cade Houston is originally from the Flatwoods of South Georgia, but now this Baxley, Ga. native lives in College Station, Texas where he aids beekeepers in colony health monitoring and surveillance. Cade received his **B.S. in Agriculture from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College** in 2020. While at ABAC, he founded the **Abraham Baldwin Beekeeper's Association** to teach other college

students, faculty, and the community about the importance of bees and beekeeping in the state and nationwide. He began keeping honeybees at the age of 14 and has been “addicted” ever since. Before coming to the **Bee Informed Partnership**, Cade worked for two commercial operations in Georgia: **Gardner Apiaries** and **Georgia Bee Supply**. He also worked for **University of Georgia Tifton Campus Entomology Department** assisting in bioassays and management of Diamondback Moth and Silverleaf Whitefly colonies. He looks forward to expanding his expertise in honey bee genetics, queen trials, and helping to produce a more resistant honey bee.”

Lynne Jones is a small-scale beekeeper in Sealy and owner of **Brazos River Honey**. She serves as the Secretary-Treasurer of the **Fort Bend Beekeepers Association** and is a member of the **Harris County** and **Central Texas Beekeepers Associations**. She is an original member of the **Real Texas Honey** program and is currently at the Advanced level of the Texas Master Beekeeper program.

Andy Knight has been an IT Technologist and change advocate within the oil and gas industry for the past 27 years. Andy is also a beekeeper with 18 hives over 3 apiaries. What started as keeping bees for agriculture valuation has evolved over the past 8 years into a passion for keeping bees and helping others keep bees. He is the **Owner of Knight’s Family Honey Farm** and **Magnolia Bee & Supply**. Currently Andy serve as leader for 3 Texas clubs: **Montgomery County Beekeepers**, **San Jacinto County Beekeepers**, and the **Magnolia SWARM Beekeepers**.

Charlie McMaster, an **Army veteran** of more than 30 years, serving in Communications, Information Technology/Security and Program Management. His final military assignment was as the Director of the Central Technical Support Facility, Fort Hood. A Beekeeper for the past 6+ years in Copperas Cove, Texas. He now devotes his time to and serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the **Texas Beekeepers Association** and the Director for Connections of **Hives For Heroes**, a Veterans Service Organization. Charlie is a graduate of the University of Vermont, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts, Shippensburg University, Master of Public Administration and the Army War College, Master of Strategic Studies.

Chris Moore Chris started Moore Honey in 1999. He is passionate about the honey industry and fighting the fraud that exists among it. Chris has led Moore Honey for 22 years, as the Owner of **Moore Honey Farm**. Chris is a Texas beekeepers who produces **Real Texas Honey**, and even began that program while serving on the **Texas Beekeepers Association**. The Moore family maintain about 2500 of their own colonies located in over 40 locations from Houston to Beaumont, TX. In a market saturated with dishonest, fraudulent honey, Chis has made it his goal and passion to provide an honest, local product.

Joe Morris is a native Austinite, and a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin. Following a brief career in the oil and gas industry, he set his goal to become a lobbyist and began a career in state government. Employed 20 years in the **Texas Senate**, he served as committee director of the **Senate Committee on Natural Resources** and as chief of staff for State Senator Jeff Wentworth. Following his retirement from state service in 2010, he signed his first lobby client and has added a few since. Joe represents clients in the water, agriculture, and economic development industries. Joe is married, has two fur children, and enjoys hunting, fishing, and working on his hay farm in Oatmeal, Texas. He is also a huge fan of comb honey.

Megan Mahoney has been fascinated by honey bees ever since being fortuitously introduced to beekeeping through Dr. Marla Spivak’s lab in 2003. Her enthusiasm for bees, beekeepers, and bee breeding has grown over time, and has inspired her to build up a repertoire of beekeeping experiences and skills across the U.S. She has invested more than a decade of work inside the commercial bee industry, with past experience working for queen producers in Northern California, leading a tech- transfer team for the **Bee Informed Partnership in Texas**, and working as a technician for the varroa sensitive hygiene (VSH) breeding program on Hawaii, Big Island. In 2019, she and her partner (Ross Klett), founded “**MAHONEY BEES & QUEENS**,” a company specializing in instrumental insemination, breeder queens, and cell production. They currently manage a migratory, Carniolan- based breeding population in addition to helping maintain about 2,000 colonies. They travel (with the bees) between South East Texas and Central North Dakota.

Jeff Murray is co-owner and mead maker at WildFlyer Mead Company. Jeff started homebrewing in 2011. After first starting to keep bees in 2014, he made the transition from making beer to making mead. WildFlyer opened in 2019 and their full size tasting room and production facility opened February 2020, located on the BeeWeaver Honey Farm in Navasota. The goal for starting WildFlyer was to make the farm a unique destination for guests to experience honey bees, taste honey, and mead.

Cyrus Nasr and **Sandi Murray** own and operate **Hive Bee Farm**, a local producer of Honeycomb and Honey in the Houston area. They specialize in treatment free colonies in partnership with organic farms to create high quality honey products for our communities and local restaurants. Hive Bee Farm started in 2016 with 2 hives in the Garden Oaks backyard and has expanded to 150 colonies over ten locations. Passionate about the health of our communities and honey bees, we provide Apitherapy coaching and Beekeeping Workshops to those looking to deepen their experience in apiculture. They also sell honey directly to restaurants, at the Farmers markets, and offer agricultural property tax services.

Ron Randig is the owner of **Randig Insurance Agency**, which is an independent agency specializing in auto, home, commercial, and crop insurance. The agency was established in January 2002. This past April, Ron attended the Central Beekeeper Conference and found a passion for beekeeping. In fact, he has four successful hives. He will be discussing the importance of insuring hives during droughts. This particular insurance has been backed by the USDA since 2008. Without rain, beekeepers suffer significant economic loss. Ron can take the sting out of these costs!

Ashley Ralph owns **Prime Bees Apiary** in College Station along with her husband Justin. They manage a growing bee business focused on honey production, pollination, bee removals and bee sales. Ashley has a passion for educating the public and beekeepers about bees and is an active participant in the **Texas Master Beekeeping Program**. She is the current President of the **Texas Beekeepers Association** and an active member in her home club, the **Brazos Valley Beekeepers**, where she helps teach the 2nd year youth program.

Taylor Reams is a PhD candidate at the Rangel Honey Bee Lab at Texas A&M. Taylor's family has worked with honey bees for many years and she is a fourth generation beekeeper. Taylor earned her Master's in biology at the University of North Carolina Greensboro where she studied the Varroa mite and how it behaves within the hive. She is continuing similar work at A&M.

Justin Russell owns **Prime Bees Apiary** in College Station where he raises bees for pollination, honey production and nucleus sales. He is in the **Texas Master Beekeeping Program** and is continually learning better beekeeping practices. As the apiary grows, Justin stays focused on sustainable beekeeping practices that will ensure healthy, thriving colonies.

Dr. Tonya F. Shepherd received her B.S. from the University of Evansville (2009) in biochemistry and received her Ph.D. in Medical Science from Texas A&M University (2016), College of Medicine, Microbial Pathogenesis and Immunology department. In 2017, she joined Dr. Juliana Rangel's Honey Bee Lab in the Department of Entomology, Texas A&M University, as a Senior Research Associate. Her duties include managing the molecular lab, providing training, and helping students on their research projects. Tonya is also an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Entomology where she teaches Honey Bee Biology (Ento 320) online and in person. Additionally, Tonya is a part-time lecturer at Blinn College where she teaches Biology and Microbiology.

Blake Shook started his beekeeping journey 20 years ago at 12 years old as a small scale hobby beekeeper. Over the past 2 decades, the business has grown significantly with the help of an incredible team. It is now a migratory commercial beekeeping operation with 10,000 hives, a bulk bee supply company, **Desert Creek Bulk Bees**, a honey packing company **Desert Creek Honey**, a chain of hobby beekeeping stores, **Texas Bee Supply** and a commercial bee supply store **Commercial Bee Supply**. Blake married his high school sweetheart in 2011, and has two beautiful daughters. He also serves on the National Honey Board and on the board of the American Beekeeping Federation.

Monica Siwiak is currently busy completing her **Welsh Honey Judge** certification. She helped judge the **Texas Beekeepers Association's Honey Show** this past November, and this January 2022 she won 4 national titles at the **American Honey Show**. National titles include 1st place in Light Amber Honey, 1st in Creamed Honey, 1st in Gift basket, and 1st in Ross Round comb. Monica is also on the **TBA Board**.

Dodie Stillman In 2011 Dodie started attending the **Austin Area Beekeepers Association (AABA)** and the **Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association** meetings. Still searching for more information she jumped into the inaugural class of the **Texas Master Beekeepers Program (TMBP)** and became one of the first Master Beekeepers in Texas and now serves on the **TMBP Board**. She is a former Director and currently the Vice President of the **Texas Beekeepers Association (TBA)** and the past president of AABA. Dodie's volunteer efforts are numerous, from helping at TBA and AABA Seminars to the last couple of years working on the TBA Honey Shows. In 2017, she served as the **TBA Honey Show Secretary**. She can be found most weekends teaching a beekeeping class or playing with her bees.

John (Skip) Talbert retired from the US Army in 2014 and has specialized in Project Management and Administration in Pharmacy before becoming Operations Manager at **Sabine Creek Honey Farm**. He is a graduate of Northwestern State University in Louisiana with an AD and BS in Business Administration. Skip is married to Amber, with 4 children and 1 grandchild. He currently is serving his 2nd term as **Collin County Hobby Beekeepers Association President**, serves on the CCHBA Youth Scholarship Committee, served as Co-Vice President of CCHBA, served as a board member for **Real Texas Honey**, and serves as a Director (1st year) for the **Texas Honey Bee Education Association**. Skip assists his father, John J. Talbert, with the **State Fair of Texas Honey Booth** for the Texas Beekeepers Association.

Art Thomas started keeping bees with his father and grandfather when he was 7 years old, and except for a short stint working construction, has been keeping bees for 65 years. Art semi-retired to Rockdale, Texas to be closer to his children and grandchildren and realized he missed having bees to worry about. Art Sr has 400 nucs or 800 nuc sides and 60 colonies and an excess of honey so

it looks like he is **AT IT AGAIN!!!** Art raises queens from breeder queens purchased out of state, favoring Italian-Cordovans from Northern California. Art sells wintered nucs available around the 15th of February thru September.

Lauren Ward is the owner and sole operator of **A Bar Beekeeping**, providing hive management services, beekeeping lessons, and professional presentations. Lauren has had a lifelong interest in insects and agriculture, culminating in a Master's degree in Entomology in 2014 and Board Certification in Entomology in 2015. After graduation she became the **Texas A&M Apiary Manager** under Dr. Juliana Rangel and served as instructor for the **Honey Bee Biology** online course. Later, working for **BeeWeaver Honey Farm** in a variety of roles rounded out her beekeeping experience with daily hands-on, large-scale work in the apiary and queen rearing operation. Since its launch in 2019, A Bar Beekeeping has grown to service more than 500 hives across Central Texas.

Richard Willson is Huffington-Woestemeyer Professor of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering and Biochemistry at the University of Houston. His research interests include medical diagnostics and the purification of biopharmaceuticals, including DNA and RNA to be used as drugs and vaccines. He served on the Research Committee of the UH Borders, Trade and Immigration institute where he became involved in efforts to combat the problem of honey source mis-identification, including honey from which the pollen has been removed.

Danessa Yaschuk, known by many as 'Nes' is a sidelinier beekeeper and the owner of **SweetNes Honey Apiaries & Beetique** located in Damon, Texas. She and her husband Brent manage about 300+ honeybee colonies in many apiaries spread out over multiple counties, primarily in Fort Bend and Brazoria counties. She has served as the **Vice President for the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association** from 2019-Present. She is a board member for the **Real Texas Honey** program as well. Her passion for honeybees began at a very young age, little did she know that she would turn that passion into a full-time beekeeping career as a Texas Honey producer and Beetique owner. She and her husband are elbow deep in bees and honey and work hard to provide pure, high-quality products from their hives to their community.