

# United Planet welcomes five new members to its Board of Directors

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The new year is off to a strong start! Five new members joined [United Planet](#)'s Board of Directors. United Planet's Board of Directors is a group of highly qualified and experienced individuals who serve as trusted strategic advisors and fiduciaries to the organization.

The Chair of the Board, John Seker, is optimistic about the new board members: "I'm very pleased to welcome such a distinguished group of individuals onto the Board of United Planet. Our new members have illustrious professional backgrounds and possess core values aligned with those of our organization. Each of them brings unique expertise that will help us more effectively execute our mission of spreading hope and multicultural understanding among the world's youth."

Each of the new board members comes with their own expertise and knowledge. Here is an overview of our new members:

## Ritchie Geisel

A graduate of Princeton University, who then earned an MBA from Stanford Business School, Ritchie Geisel has served in executive, fundraising, and consulting roles in the education, human services, and animal welfare fields, including 28 years as CEO of 5 nonprofit service



organizations. AbilityFirst, which Geisel led from 1998 to 2004, was profiled in a half-hour PBS documentary in 2001 as part of the Visionary series. In 2013, he received one of 4 Nonprofit Leadership Impact awards from the Los Angeles Center for Nonprofit Management. Geisel also served as volunteer Board Chair and chief executive officer of Heaven on Earth Society for Animals from 2004-2019.

Now semi-retired, Geisel currently serves on two nonprofit boards, (International Veterinary Outreach as well as United Planet, and is an executive partner with the William & Mary Mason School of Business.

## Elif Gürtekin

Elif Gürtekin is a global HR leader with a track record of working with blue-chip organizations to help them identify, attract, recruit and retain talent, holding multiple roles in leading their organizational transformation. Elif operated in global environments in the past decade giving her great exposure and experience with leading cross-cultural teams. She joined Meta in 2022 as Leadership Recruiting Director to drive their recruiting strategy across EMEA and APAC.

Elif has been part of NGOs from a young age and helped establish United Planet's first program in Turkey back in 2006. She's super excited to be re-joining UP as a board member and continue to serve its mission to unite the world through cross-cultural understanding she deeply believes and cares about.

Elif holds a Master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Middle East Technical University and has a double major in sociology and psychology. She also continues to use her voice for gender equality on multiple platforms and is raising her 7-year-old boy to be a feminist.

## Tracey Lesetar-Smith

Tracey Lesetar-Smith is a longtime senior sports, entertainment, and government affairs executive with over 20 years of experience. She is the former General Counsel and Senior Vice President of NASCAR, having overseen all legal operations for the league and its many subsidiaries during its historic merger, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unprecedented and critical growth in the sport's diversity, equity, and inclusion.

During her years at NASCAR, she also helmed the company's Government Affairs team, which was responsible for shepherding NASCAR's critical relationships with public officials at the local, state, and federal levels in all areas where NASCAR holds races and was a critical part of returning NASCAR to racing during the global pandemic.

Prior to NASCAR, she was General Counsel and Vice President of Business and Legal Affairs for Bellator MMA. Lesetar-Smith was the first and only woman to ever serve as General Counsel for a mixed martial arts promoter in the history of the sport and shepherded the league through its critical growth phase and global expansion.

## Stacey Politi

Stacey Politi is the Senior Vice President of Marketing at STARZ, a Lionsgate Company. Stacey leads a team of 90 marketers and creatives through strategy development, effective execution, and post-mortem analysis.

Stacey has an extensive background in marketing at various media companies. Most recently she served as the Senior Vice President/Head of Marketing at First Look Media where Stacey set the overarching marketing strategy and efforts across the for-profit and non-profit operations.

Stacey is a first-generation American and the proud daughter of a HIAS refugee.

## Michael Steinberg

Michael Steinberg retired at the end of 2018 as the Executive Vice President and Director of Academic Programs at IES Abroad, a leading national consortium in international education for undergraduate students after a career of 41 years in International Education.

At IES Abroad, he took the lead in establishing new study Centers at more than 30 sites across the world. He was honored for his work in international Education by the Forum for Education Abroad with the Peter Wollitzer Advocacy Award where he served as a founding member of the Forum's Council, and by NAFSA with the Education Abroad Leadership Award.

Since retirement, he has been a Board member of a number of not-for-profit organizations. He is also active as a consultant with the Forum on Education Abroad, and as a volunteer consultant at the Council of International Programs in Chicago.

## ABOUT UNITED PLANET

United Planet is a non-profit organization with a mission to create a global community, one relationship at a time. Established in 2001, United Planet offers personalized, immersive, service-learning, project-based learning, and experiential learning programs, including [volunteer abroad](#), [virtual internships](#), internships abroad, gap year volunteering, and global virtual classroom exchange in more than 30 countries. Volunteers and interns have helped address important global issues—such as health, children and education, and environmental sustainability while

developing leadership and other 21st-century skills, building bridges across divides, and forging cohesive and productive cross-border relationships both in-person and online.

Learn more about United Planet here <https://www.unitedplanet.org>.

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