



*Town of Amherst Community Diversity  
Commission  
Short Bio of the Board Members*

***Mohan S. Devgun Ph.D., (Chair)***



Mohan S. Devgun retired in August 2022 from SUNY- BUFFALO STATE where he has been chairperson and professor, teaching in the areas of materials, manufacturing and quality control since 1990. His broad international experience includes working in academia and industries in England, Venezuela and the USA. His qualifications include a P.E. license in Manufacturing Engineering (State of Iowa), M.S. and Ph.D. in Metallurgical Engineering from Birmingham University (England), and an M.B.A. from SUNY at Buffalo, New York. Before coming to Buffalo State College, Dr. Devgun had about 10 years experience working in the automotive and aerospace industries in England, followed by about two years period as Rolls Royce Research Fellow in the area of investment castings. From 1977 to 1983, Professor Devgun served as a consultant to the National Council of Scientific and Technological Research (CONICIT) of Venezuela where he was responsible for developing graduate programs in metal forming and manufacturing engineering. Dr. Devgun is also a principle in MMQ Technical Services, an organization specifically established to enhance productivity and competitiveness of manufacturing industry within the Western New York area. Additionally, Dr. Devgun served as member of School Board – Williamsville Central School District for six years.

Dr. Devgun is Secretary of the Sikh Cultural & Educational Society of Western New York and has served in the past its President, Trustee, as well as its Treasurer. He is married and lives in Williamsville area. He is fluent in Spanish, and has SIX SIGMA BLACK BELT certification.

***Pam Bos Kefi (Vice Chair)***



Pam is the Executive Director of Deaf Access Services (an affiliate of People Inc.) and an Associate Vice President at People Inc. where she leads the AmeriCorps program and provides guidance on cultural competency and language access throughout the agency. She initiated the battered immigrant women's program and human trafficking victim services at the International Institute where she was previously the Executive Director, and developed the Center for Survivors of Torture at Jewish Family Service. Her experience includes working at the US Embassy in Haiti for USAID, serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tunisia, conducting cultural competency assessments and training for non-profits, and assisting international families with relocation to WNY.

She served on the board of RAHAMA, an organization in Buffalo that serves Muslim survivors of family violence. She served on the board The Union School in Haiti, and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of WNY.

***Gul A. Rahman (Secretary)***



Gul A. Rahman, a Pakistani Muslim is married with two children. She is a Pharmacist by profession with her Bachelor's from University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. She has served initially in Indiana then Ohio and finally moved to Buffalo NY in 2008 to settle for good. Gul has been working for Walmart Pharmacy since 2010 and is dedicated to her volunteer work as well. She is an active Board Member of Islamic Society of Niagara Frontier, Getzville, NY. She also has been associated with WNY Muslim. Represents Cancer Care Hospital and Research center in Pakistan as an Ambassador for past 5 years. She likes to participate in fundraising drives for refugees and other nonprofit, charitable organizations. Enjoys writing poetry and short

essay as a hobby. Journey with Town of Amherst Diversity Commission as a secretary is only one year old but looking forward to explore every option to serve the community in possible way.

***Joseph Sahr Sankoh, Ph.D., MAIS., MA.***

Associate Professor of Political Science & Director of Africa Initiative, Immigrant & Refugee Studies, and African/Black Studies at Daemen College; with expertise in studies of the developing world & African/Black Studies. Former President of the US. Fulbright Chapter of Western New York & Northwestern PA, and US Fulbright Scholar to India & Rwanda. US President People to People Ambassadors to China, and several other awards locally, nationally, and internationally. Dr. Sankoh is a resident of Amherst for many years, and served on several boards of directors in the Town & Western New York; including former Town of Amherst Museum, and former Diversity Coalition of the Town of Amherst in which he was the Committee Chair of the 1st Dr. King's Holiday Celebration in the Town. Dr. Sankoh's research focuses on global genocide since World War II, Immigrant & refugee Studies, global comparative political studies, and African/Black studies. His scholarly works have been published in various reputable journals including, Oxford University Forum on Public Policy, Third World Studies; National Association of African American, Hispanics, and Asian Studies; among others.

***Tom Lucia***



Tom Lucia, a 50 year resident of the Town of Amherst is a retired Williamsville Central Schools middle school teacher of math/social studies. He taught for 43 years and according to him, really enjoyed the spirit of the students and the support of his fellow teachers and administration during those years. He has served on many town youth committees while he was teaching. He was on the Village of Williamsville Youth and Recreation Committee and helped start many annual events including the Halloween parade, Winterfest, Fishing Derby, and Bicycle Rodeo. He spent 12 years on the Town of Amherst Youth Board serving as Chairman many years. He was Chairman of the first 24 hour relay challenge for Amherst youth which continued for many years. Tom was on the Diversity Committee for the Williamsville schools in the late 1980's. The committees work led to the calendar with most religious holidays distributed even today. A diversity booklet for all teachers to refer to which highlights the major beliefs, history, holidays, food restrictions of 40 + religious affiliations and a contact person for each was developed. This

is still available online today. He was instrumental in organizing an in-service speaker series for all teachers and the recommendations for added diversity resources in the libraries of all the schools. His continued interest in diversity includes his travels to 30+ countries and his work on the Board of Ten Thousand Villages/Buffalo and also on the National Board Council of TTV., a nonprofit which helps artisans in developing countries market and sell their handicrafts in the US

### ***Anne Rohrer***

Anne has been a resident of Amherst for 40 years. She has served for the past 12 years, and continues to serve as the Drug Free Communities Coalition Coordinator. She is a former 15 year past member and 6 year president on the Williamsville Board of Education. Anne was involved in writing and instituting the Diversity Policy in the Williamsville School District and has been a presenter at regional and national conferences to support healthy youth and healthy community. She has a Degree in Education and worked at United Cerebral Palsy as a pre-school teacher. Anne is a current member of the Women's Committee at her temple and volunteers when needed. She has worked to promote diversity throughout her career.

### ***Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre***



Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre is a lifelong resident of the town of Amherst. She currently works in an outreach capacity for a local non-profit organization, serving older adults. Heidi previously served as Assistant Director for Amberleigh Retirement Community, worked for Town of Amherst Libraries, was an Independent Contractor for The Pampered Chef and worked for the YMCA of Greater Buffalo. Heidi's community leadership includes active membership with First Church of Christ, Scientist Buffalo-Kenmore, Network of Religious Communities-Youth Alliance Committee, Northwest Amherst Community Center and Town of Amherst Community Diversity Commission, where she co-chaired the Juneteenth Festival.

*Cynthia R. Bass*



Cynthia R. Bass joined Erie County Medical Center in 2011 as a Benefits Analyst in the Human Resources Department, where she served as the central liaison and administrator of benefits programs for the more than 3,000 employees of the hospital. In 2015, Cynthia expanded her role by accepting a promotion to the position of Human Resources Business Partner. During her tenure she developed relationship management strategies to resolve complex employee relations issues in the Nursing and Behavioral Health departments. While serving in this role, Cynthia came to understand the need for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion initiatives to be embedded into the culture of ECMC, while also becoming more involved in the strategic initiatives that would lead to her second promotion. To further her knowledge in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Cynthia attended the American Hospital Association Fellowship Program and received a certificate in Diversity Management in Healthcare (CDM). In May 2017, Cynthia accepted the position of Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, reporting directly to ECMC's President and CEO. Her primary duties include developing and implementing a strategic plan that prioritizes and communicates the importance of diversity in a community-based, safety net hospital setting; serving as a resource on how to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into ECMC programs, policies and procedures; collaborating with all levels of management and Executive Leadership to develop diversity and inclusion competencies; and to represent the institution at community events. As a result of Cynthia's successes in her various responsibilities and endeavors, she was recently appointed Chief Diversity Officer for ECMC Corporation. The internal organizational knowledge and development of key relationships serve her well as she seeks to strengthen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as part of ECMC's unique culture. Cynthia's positioning will ensure that as changes that shape the healthcare delivery systems continue to evolve, so too will ECMC dynamically evolve in response to the needs of patients and staff. Before serving at several other area corporations in a Benefits Analyst capacity, Cynthia received her Bachelor of Science degree in Human Resources in 2002 from Medaille College, where she went on to earn a Master of Business Administration with a focus on Organizational Leadership. Cynthia is also profoundly rooted in her community's Servant Leadership. Her work includes multiple leadership positions at Gospel Temple Life Changing Ministries, including serving as Assistant Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Church Administrator, and President of the Women's Ministry. Additionally, Cynthia holds membership with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership Diversity Council and represents ECMC on several Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Councils across New York State. Among other honors, Cynthia was nominated by the Buffalo

Niagara Human Resources Association for her service to the field of Human Resources as the “2012 HR Professional of the Year”, honored as a “2021 Black Achievers Awardee” and recognized by the National Diversity Council as one of the “2022 Top Diversity Officer in Healthcare”

*Zhen Liu*



Zhen Liu came to Amherst, NY to teach at UB in 2008 as a visiting assistant professor, after he received a Ph.D. in Economics at SUNY at Stony Brook and taught at a private college in Ohio. His research papers in game theory and microeconomics were published in academic journals such as the Journal of Mathematical Economics. He and his family have lived in East Amherst since 2013. In 2017-2019, he served as the President of the Chinese Club of Western New York, the leading organization of the local Chinese community. He is currently a board member of the organization. This experience motivates him to reach out more in the town he deems his second hometown.

Other than teaching, he works in the field of FinTech, including building investment/trading strategies with computational models, and developing a software that facilitates trust on social media about investment/trading. To increase the access of young students to the rising FinTech industry, he teaches a course called Computational Investment at UB. He enjoys reading, topics including history, psychology, and cultural evolution. Fitness and music keep him fresh and calm.

*Melissa Abel*



**Melissa Abel is the** Executive Director of Amherst Center for Senior Services. She has been with the Center since 2001. She has a Bachelor of Health and Human Services Degree from University at Buffalo where she majored in Geriatrics. Melissa serves on the Live Well Erie Committee, Amherst Central Park Task Force, Amherst Generations Foundation (Ex-Officio), and is the Resource Person for the Center's Advisory Board. She enjoys travelling, reading, gardening and volunteering.

*Dr. Muhammad Asghar Khan*

*Prachee Samant*