

## Staff

Sari Waxler, Executive Director [Email](#)

-(Master's Degree from Southwest Texas State University)

Sari brings over thirty years of experience in education to the Seedling Foundation. Prior to joining the Seedling Foundation in August of 2006, Mrs. Waxler directed the Austin Independent School District's highly successful GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) project, a \$15 million federal grant funded initiative dedicated to increasing college participation rates of first generation students. A former teacher, counselor, crisis responder, high school program specialist in Guidance and Counseling, and grant manager, Sari has extensive experience at all levels of public education. Her contributions in the development of counseling and school to work curriculum and programming have been shared with colleagues at local, state and national levels and as a result of her leadership, hundreds of AISD students have visited college and university campuses throughout the state while their parents learned about college admissions and financial aid through the GEAR UP initiative, "Parent University," now supported by AISD.

Mother of two, and married for thirty-three years to Mel Waxler, Sari brings her educational experience, executive capability and empathy for children to serve the Seedling Foundation.

Nanette Lukasik, Mentor Program Administrator [Email](#)

-(B.S. from St. Edward's University)

Nanette Lukasik earned her Bachelor's Degree at St. Edward's University in Austin. Nanette is both an educator and social worker at heart, bringing over 13 years of experience serving youth in the Austin Independent School District. Drawing on her experiences as a Project Manager with Communities in Schools, a Project Facilitator with GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), and Director of College Readiness with Breakthrough, this "Valley Girl" takes her work with underrepresented youth seriously. She believes that adults play a key role in the lives of young people, and is looking forward to supporting community members who want to do just that.

Nanette is married to Ernest Lukasik, and enjoys her weekends with his son Spencer. They also care for 2 Jack Russells: Nico and Mancha on a full-time basis.

## SCHOOL SUPPORT

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Brooke Elementary - AISD

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Govalle Elementary - AISD

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Oak Springs Elementary - AISD

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St. Elmo Elementary - AISD

Joyce Baker, Mentor Director [Email](#)

-(B.S. from Kansas State University and M. Ed. from Southwest Texas State University)

Joyce comes to the Seedling Foundation with thirty years of experience in public education. Her interest in serving children with socioeconomic disadvantages developed following college graduation in her role as co-director of a federally funded program promoting nutritional education in urban neighborhoods. Through this moving experience, she discovered early the importance of authenticity and trusting relationships. After beginning her teaching career in North Kansas City, Missouri, she continued as an elementary and middle school teacher in Round Rock ISD. During this tenure, she became certified as a New Jersey Writing Project in Texas trainer and taught 10 writing institutes for teachers in Central Texas. She also presented at state conferences and was named a judge/evaluator for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards at the University of Pittsburg and in Chicago, Illinois.

Upon completion of her master's degree, she served six years as an assistant principal in AISD. In this position, her eyes and heart were opened again to the specific needs of disadvantaged students. As a Region X educational consultant, she imparted "best practices" to support at-risk students and in the summer of 2008, she joined Breakthrough Austin. This experience cemented her desire to be actively involved in a mentoring program that provides resources and assistance for children to reach their full potential. She found such a program in the Seedling Foundation

and is excited to be a member of its talented team.

Joyce has a son and a daughter who are happily married to their soul mates and is the grandmother of two precious little boys.

#### SCHOOL SUPPORT

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Campbell Elementary - AISD

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Fulmore Middle School - AISD

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Hart Elementary - AISD

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Pickle Elementary - AISD

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Pillow Elementary - AISD

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Sanchez Elementary - AISD

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Webb Middle School - AISD

Sally Firestone, Mentor Director [Email](#)

- (B.S. from the University of Texas at Austin and M.Ed. from Southwest Texas State University)

Sally Firestone joins the Seedling Foundation with thirty three years of experience in the field of education and is licensed by the State of Texas as a Professional Counselor. She began her career in the Austin Independent School District as an elementary teacher and school counselor. She worked in the Round Rock Independent School District for 15 years as an elementary counselor. Her extensive experiences at the elementary level prepared her to guide elementary counselors at 74 schools in Austin ISD for five years as the Elementary Guidance Program Specialist. Her lifelong love of learning led her to a 400 hour course study with Region XIII on Positive Behavior Support. From 2004-2008 she served as the Positive Behavior Support Coach in Austin ISD at eleven schools until her retirement in June 2008. This experience taught her how powerful mentoring is in the life of a child.

Sally's lifelong devotion of supporting school age children with positive interventions has led her to the Seedling doorstep. Her vast experiences as a teacher, counselor, guidance specialist, and behavior coach, in addition to her knowledge of school cultures, brings a seasoned trainer, facilitator, and consultant to the foundation. During the 2008-2009 school year, Sally is honored to join such a worthwhile community effort for kids. She has one son who graduated in 2004 with a degree in Economics and currently works for the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. She is the caretaker of her elderly father and resides in Austin with her precious dachshunds, Ray and Lily, who teach her daily about the power of their gentle spirits.

#### SCHOOL SUPPORT

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Blackshear Elementary - AISD

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Kealing Middle School - AISD

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Metz Elementary - AISD

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Norman Elementary - AISD

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Ortega Elementary - AISD

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Sims Elementary - AISD

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Travis Heights Elementary - AISD

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Zavala Elementary - AISD

Falba Turner, Mentor Director Email

- (B.A. from the University of Dallas and M.Ed. from University of Texas at Austin)

Falba is an education project manager with over thirty years' experience in public and private schools, PK-12. She began her career with the Austin Independent School District and served nine years in varied roles such as language arts teacher for middle school and high school in north and east Austin, educator on loan to Region XIII ESC to help implement the 1980 desegregation order, and sole instructor for the 1983 Senate Page School. She has been the principal of two high-profile Catholic elementary/middle schools in Austin for a total of 18 years, including a school that she was asked to plan and launch within a year's time. During five years as a Senior Assessment Consultant with ACT, Inc., Falba traveled over five states working with schools, districts, and state agencies on school improvement initiatives and training hundreds of teachers and administrators in curriculum alignment and assessment. She has a B.A. in Education from the University of Dallas and an M.Ed. from UT.

This "go-to gal" feels honored to join the Seedling Foundation, where she can combine her knowledge of children's developmental stages, vast experience in school culture and operations, expertise in organizational facilitation, and deep training in school emergency management to serve children with such a specific, unique, and compelling need. Her reputation for dedication to mission comes from her belief that while it may be okay to never sweat the small stuff, when it comes to serving children, there is no small stuff. Falba lives in Southwest Austin with her husband Paul, an Austin ISD central administrator. Their daughter Emily and her family live in Memphis, TN.

## SCHOOL SUPPORT

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Allison Elementary - AISD

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Bedichek Middle School - AISD

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Dobie Middle School - AISD

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Linder Elementary - AISD

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Martin Middle School - AISD

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Pleasant Hill Elementary - AISD

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Rodriguez Elementary - AISD