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*Contact:*

Madison Wolters

Media & Communications Manager

[madison.wolters@communityrowing.org](mailto:madison.wolters@communityrowing.org)

(857) 321-1878

**Community Rowing Announces New Board Members and New Executive Roles**

BOSTON, MA [June 1, 2021]—Today Community Rowing Inc (CRI) announced the appointment of three newly elected members and three new officers to its Board of Directors.

“We are grateful to have Michael Cookson, Stephanie Monteiro-Merritt, and Kiz Syed joining us,” said Ted Benford, Executive Director of CRI. “The Board of Directors sets the strategic vision of CRI. These new members join us with unique skills and insights that will build upon our goals of inclusion and accessibility in the sport of rowing.”

In addition to new members, CRI has three new officers to the Board: Christina Wood Baker, President; Fran Tracy, Treasurer; and Dan O'Connor, Clerk.

“We are tremendously grateful to our past officers, Kevin Dutt, Denis Holler, and Erin McKenna who advanced CRI with tireless energy, creativity, and passion,” said Christina Wood Baker, President of CRI’s Board of Directors. “We are looking forward to supporting CRI’s strategic plan and continuing our work to further diversity, equity, and inclusion for our sport and within our program.”

*New Member Bios*

After giving a local community learn-to-row program a try at St. Catharines Rowing Club, **Michael Cookson** went on to compete in high school, club, college, and national-level programs, as well as coach afterward. Drawn back into the sport by his daughter’s similar experience, he became an active parent volunteer and Board member. Michael and his family have a long history of involvement in community-supported rowing and regattas. He is an enthusiastic advocate for expanding access to the sport, sharing the experience of rowing, while promoting the benefits of teamwork, fitness, technique, and discipline.

Michael holds a BSc in Finance from Northeastern University, where he rowed as Varsity Captain, and an MBA from the University of Bath, England. For more than 18 years, he served in global, national, and executive roles at KPMG and Korn Ferry International. He has over 25 years of global financial, program management, information technology, and regulatory advisory experience.

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**Stephanie Monteiro-Merritt** is the Chief Organization Officer of The BASE, Inc., a national organization that is shifting mindsets and re-imagining pathways to success for urban youth through sports and educational opportunities. Prior to joining The BASE, Stephanie was the Director of Community Partnerships for Cathedral High School in Boston, where she is also an alum. She is a passionate leader committed to community change and ensuring that access and opportunity for urban youth is a right, not a privilege. Over the past 23 years, she has worked in the youth development, non-profit, and for-profit sectors.

In 2018, she received the Chica Project Community Partnership Award; City of Boston City Council Citation for service and commitment to young women; and United States Senate Citation for her dedication and leadership to Boston's youth. She is also a proud 2020 alum of the Institute for Nonprofit Practice.

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**Kiz Syed** is an associate on the commercial real estate development team at WS Development where he works on projects in metro-Boston communities. While he has a deep background in the investments and asset management industry, he spent the first half of his career in public service working on covert action, counterterrorism, and counterintelligence issues. His focus has always been on project leadership, people leadership, and storytelling– how to convert technical information into actionable results through collaboration.

Kiz also serves as a project manager for Community Consulting Teams, an organization that amplifies the impact of Boston-area nonprofits through pro bono management consulting projects led by experienced MBAs from top business schools. In this capacity he has worked on inclusion-based market growth opportunities in the continuing education and clinical trials spaces. He also serves as a business career fellow at Wesleyan College where he advises undergraduates, particularly underrepresented groups, on career outcomes.

While Kiz was rowing before he got to CRI, he learned how to row under the encouragement of Coach Ellen, the patience of Jon Smith, and the persistence of John Sisk. He was drawn to CRI because of its enduring mission of "Rowing for All." As a first-generation, low-income immigrant, who grew up down the street from CRI, Kiz hopes to leverage this mission in support of CRI's commitment to welcome all members of the community.

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Learn more about CRI and its Board of Directors here:

<https://communityrowing.org/about/meet-the-cri-team/board-of-directors>.

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*Community Rowing Inc. (CRI) was founded in 1985 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the belief that the sport of rowing provides unique opportunities to promote personal and community growth through teamwork, discipline, and physical fitness. We invite individuals of all backgrounds, abilities and experience to grow through rowing.*