



MEDIA CONTACT

Abigail Gross

404-405-7122

agross@gaappleseed.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

R. Michael Waller Selected as Executive Director of Georgia Appleseed

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, May 11, 2020 – The Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice is very pleased to announce the selection of R. Michael Waller, M.A., M.T.S, J.D. as Executive Director effective May 1, 2020. This selection continues the organization’s rich history of finding passionate and visionary leaders to guide the organization.

“The Board of Directors is proud of the meaningful work Georgia Appleseed is accomplishing on behalf of Georgia’s children and families, and we are confident that Michael’s dedicated and earnest leadership ensures that the organization will continue to increase justice for those most vulnerable across our state at this critical time,” said Mary Benton, Georgia Appleseed Board Chair and Pro Bono Partner with law firm Alston & Bird.

Georgia Appleseed seeks and advocates for solutions to complex policy challenges which disproportionately impact vulnerable and historically marginalized populations, often with tragic consequences. Michael will ably lead the organization in its current priorities--to keep youth and children in school and out of the criminal justice system; promote supports for students with behavior and learning challenges, and ensure children and their families have safe and healthy housing.

Michael came to Georgia Appleseed in October 2018 as the Director of Projects, where he made an immediate impact by analyzing and organizing complex social challenges and developing clear campaigns for change. Michael approaches leadership with clarity of vision, a commitment to collaborative goal-setting and execution, and a proven track-record for developing comprehensive change strategies with measurable results. Like all of the Georgia Appleseed team, Michael believes that justice is not possible without listening to those closest to the injustice and raising the voices of those who suffer the most. He has earned the deep respect of the Board, staff, colleagues, policy partners, legislators, and most importantly, individuals impacted by the work of Georgia Appleseed.

Michael explains Georgia Appleseed’s mission in this way: “Our role as advocates is to offer our expertise, labors, and passion in support of those communities we want to empower. Our role is not to speak for them but to listen and amplify their voice, increase their access to centers of power, and advocate tirelessly. Our efforts must center on both the injustices and solutions identified by the community—otherwise we risk advocating only for ourselves.”

Michael brings a rich history of experience of advocacy for vulnerable communities in Atlanta, nationally, and internationally. He started his public interest career at Georgia Legal Aid Society in 2007, and subsequently worked as a Consumer Protection Attorney for the Federal Trade Commission in its domestic Enforcement Division and International Affairs Division from 2010 until joining the Georgia Appleseed team. In these roles, he honed his skills as an advocate for systemic improvements in policy and regulatory systems to protect vulnerable communities.

Michael also supports his community outside of work, and is active with his church, Cub Scouts, and the Child Protection and Advocacy Section of the State Bar of Georgia. Commitment to others runs deeply in Michael’s family, as his wife, Amy, is the Executive Director of Motherhood Beyond Bars. They have three beautiful children and live in a multi-generational household with a perfect child to adult ratio of 3:3.

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Georgia Appleseed (dba Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2005. Its mission is to increase justice in Georgia through law and policy reform and community engagement. With a staff of six, it is able to tackle major, systemic issues by leveraging hundreds of pro bono volunteer hours annually. Its current programmatic focus is on keeping kids in the classroom and in healthy housing for their optimum success in life. Learn more at www.GaAppleseed.org or at facebook.com/GeorgiaAppleseed.