



For Immediate Release

First Sun EAP Alliance, Inc. Announces the Retirement of Maria Lund

COLUMBIA, SC, March 8, 2023 — First Sun EAP announces the retirement of one of its co-founders, Maria Lund. She will retire on April 1, 2023. Maria’s leadership built First Sun EAP into the top-tier Employee Assistance Program (EAP) it is today. A wholly owned subsidiary of BlueChoice® HealthPlan of South Carolina, First Sun is recognized as the leading EAP in South Carolina and voted “Best in Class” by the Employee Assistance Professional Association (EAPA).

Stephanie Heckart, chief officer of clinical operations, BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina, director of EAP Alliance, Inc. and president of Companion Benefit Alternatives (CBA) said, “I wish her well as she moves into her next chapter and thank her for her many years of commitment. Maria has been instrumental in shaping the evolution of the EAP industry throughout her career. Her tireless dedication to the mission to support employees and employers is applauded and admired. I have personally learned much from Maria through the years and have appreciated her dedication and commitment to excellence in the employee assistance field.”

A prolific writer, editor of the Journal of Employee Assistance, and active thought leader in the EAP and behavioral health industries, Lund looks forward to spending more time with her grandchildren, consulting, and working with her husband Lyndon Harris, an international motivational speaker and forgiveness coach.

Lund will be missed. “Maria Lund has been an inspiring leader for First Sun, and her many years of service will leave a long-standing mark on the company and help to shape its future,” said April Richardson, M.D., vice president and chief operating officer, of CBA.

New Roles for Our Leaders

Stepping into leadership is Nancy Grunnet, a 26-year veteran at First Sun. Formally the vice president of corporate consulting, Grunnet has been a key driver behind First Sun’s current organizational restructuring and development of a 5-year business plan designed to innovate programs and services. “I am honored to step in as leader of such a life-changing, premiere EAP,” Grunnet said. “First Sun impacts individuals and the world of work, making people and workplace culture better every day. I am eager to work alongside a truly talented leadership team and dedicated staff to further our mission of helping people be better at work.”

First Sun’s new leadership team will feature Shannon Lake (with 23 years of service at First Sun and the daughter-in-law of founder Don Lake), and Lisa Hardy. Hardy is a substance abuse professional (SAP) with 30 years of EAP industry leadership experience.

Innovation Ahead

First Sun faces a marketplace with an increased demand for mental health care, yet one challenged by an exodus of counselors to retirement or virtual-only modalities. In addition, workplaces First Sun serves are reeling from the tumultuous years of the great resignation and quiet quitting. The threat of an upcoming recession further fuels the anxieties of both workers and business leaders.

In response, First Sun has been revamping direct service operations into a best-practice powerhouse. “We’ve partnered to offer our clients broader options of care. Our service offerings now include virtual treatment programs to combat burnout, anxiety, and depression, a new same-day spiritual care service, and individual and family coaching for those struggling with substance-related concerns,” Grunnet said.

First Sun has become known for its creative programs. From providing grant-funded services to all of the South Carolina farming industry to population programs covering members of associations to extending EAP to all non-profit businesses in South Carolina, First Sun has found a way to reach populations without previous access to EAP. Innovation remains the theme, with plans to launch organizational well-being lines of business such as leadership coaching, training, and organizational consultation. Training offerings target the soft skills leaders need to be successful in remote and hybrid workplaces. Topics such as Trauma-informed Leadership, Understanding and Managing Workplace Conflict, and Communication Strategies for Leaders are presented with practical tools and easy takeaways.

Excited About the Future of First Sun

“We are excited about the new roles our leaders will take to shape our future,” Grunnet continued. “We recognize that First Sun’s X factor has always been its staff. Each team member brings unique and complementary skill sets aligning around common service values.” Engaged and focused on tackling the challenges employees face, First Sun EAP is set to launch. Exciting possibilities await the workplaces they serve.

About First Sun EAP

First Sun EAP is a leading provider of well-being solutions for work, home, and life. We collaborate with enterprises and groups to cover their entire population through our comprehensive well-being services: top-tier EAP, population programs, training and development, and disruptive event management. Our integrated approach to well-being reduces the overwhelming challenges people face daily and supports leaders with tools to create success. For more information or to get a [quote](#), visit www.firstsuneap.com.

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