

Jess Conard

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she/they

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CURRENT

Founder + Executive Director

RAIL WATCH, REMOTE — JANUARY 2026 - PRESENT

Founded a national non-profit to prevent train derailments. Obtained fiscal sponsorship, selected board members, created media and social media. Created a fellowship program.

Senior Fellow/Digital Campaign Fellow - Halt the Harm

NETCENTRIC CAMPAIGNS, REMOTE/WASHINGTON, DC — APRIL 2025 - PRESENT

Launched a community rail safety initiative. Cultivated grant writing skills, technical, policy and organizing skills by working collaboratively with experienced professionals. Created pilot program at www.railwatch.net

Inspirational Speaker on Plastics and Health

PHYSICIANS AND SCIENTIST NETWORK ADDRESSING PLASTICS AND HEALTH, REMOTE— APRIL 2025 - PRESENT

Speak to medical providers, patients, lawmakers, the press, healthcare institutions, and academic institutions. Assisted with grant writing.

Advocate for Environmental Health

ENVIRONMENTAL NON-PROFIT SPONSORSHIPS— MAY 2023 - PRESENT

Utilized grant writing skills to develop relationships and obtain funding for environmental advocacy initiatives. State and federal advocate for public health, policy, rail and chemical safety.

EXPERIENCE

Appalachia Director

BEYOND PLASTICS, REMOTE— AUGUST 2023 - FEBRUARY 2026

Grassroots campaign leader to oppose plastic pollution, promote common-sense policy, multi-project management, grant management.

- Lead/support 8-12 local campaigns in multiple states
- Local legislative campaigns, five passed in first year of employment
- Campaign success, preventing pollution harms from nine proposals

Community Outreach Manager

PERFECTED CLAIMS, OHIO— MARCH 2023 - MAY 2023

Supervise a team of six, celebrity event planning, public speaking, media

- Signed thousands of clients in 3 months
- Advocated alongside well known sports figures and advocates

Skilled Inpatient Care Coordinator

NAVIHEALTH/OPTUM, REMOTE— NOVEMBER 2021 - MARCH 2023

Post-acute care utilization review for Medicare/Managed Care plans

Career Highlights

Environmental Defense Fund,

June 2026, featured in publication, The Work, "Chemicals are forever"

"Rail safety legislation finally moves through Congress 3 years after East Palestine derailment" May 2026, featured in article by Pittsburgh Post Gazette

Reconnect America podcast with Solutionary Rail, Feb 2026, "When Communities Speak Up"

A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy submission accepted for peer review, Jan 2026 "Better Addressing Chemical Disasters"

The Hill Opinion Editorial Published December 2025 "Without railway reform your town could be the next East Palestine"

National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine Nov 2025 "State of the Science and the Future of Cumulative Impact Assessment"

LA+ Environment (Interdisciplinary Journal of Landscape Architecture) Fall

- Appointed Employee Engagement Leader
- Weekly case presentations, interdisciplinary collaboration

Director of Speech Therapy

SELECT SPECIALTY HOSPITAL, OHIO— MAY 2020 - NOVEMBER 2021

Promotion from staff speech therapist to director. Evaluate and treat highly complex cases for critical illness recovery. Complete staff training and audits, manage schedules and cross-department collaborations.

- Chair allied staff instruction for patient safety initiatives

Business Owner + Instructor

BALA HOUSE YOGA, LLC, OHIO— JAN 2019 - MAR 2020

Manage staff, events, finances and maintain daily operations

- Karma Yoga Project Leader for post-trauma/addiction recovery

EDUCATION

Master of Arts

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY— 2008-2009

Graduated Magna Cum Laude. One of two selected from 25 for a highly complex medical externship at an acute rehabilitation hospital

Research Assistant Scholarship

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY—2007-2008

Developed tools for state of the art evaluations and publications.

Bachelor of Arts

SPEECH AND HEARING SCIENCE, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY— 2003 - 2007

Ohio Minority Affairs Scholarship recipient

VOLUNTARY AFFILIATIONS + MEMBERSHIPS

Appalachia Coalition Member

PEOPLE OVER PETRO COALITION — FEBRUARY 2026- PRESENT

- Work collaboratively within a coalition to support the region and protect the environment from the harms of petrochemical pollution

Railroad Safety Advocate/Member

THE BREATHE PROJECT — APRIL 2025- PRESENT

- Leader for community rail safety initiatives in SW Pennsylvania

Community Advisory Board Member

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY - HEALTH TRACKING STUDY— 2024 - May 2026

- Granted \$10m for continued health research under Dr. Erin Haynes. Provided expertise to guide the conduct of the East Palestine Train Derailment Health Research Program

Contributing Author, Community Researcher

PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS, CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY— 2024 - PRESENT

- Co-authored a recently accepted submission for peer review Jan 2025

2025 feature “In Conversation with Jess Conard”

Mother Jones Magazine, November 2024. Interview and feature photos

TIME Magazine, February 2024, Interview and feature photos by Rebecca Kiger

New York Times, November 2023. Front page feature interview by Erica Green

News Item Opinion Editorial Published November 2023 “Forward Thinking: Chemical Recycling is a Fairytale Facade”

Break Free From Plastic-Toxic Tours October 2023 Delivered a global speech translated into five languages

News Nation, On Balance with Leland Vittert, July 2023. National live in-studio interview for public health

Newsweek Opinion Editorial Published July 2023 “President Biden, Come to East Palestine and Bring FEMA With You.”

Bloomberg Investigates Season 1 Episode 5, May 24, 2023 East Palestine Community Advocate

NPR 1A with Jen White, April 5, 2023 East Palestine Community Advocate

Moms Clean Air Force, March 9, 2023 Invited to US Senate Committee EPW hearing, multiple live news interviews and senator meetings

CNN Town Hall with Jake Tapper, February 2023. National live interview panelist

Community + Tribal Liaison, Selected Peer Reviewer

NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING AND MEDICINE (NASEM)— JUNE 2024 - OCT 2025

- Developed cumulative impacts assessment with frontline leaders from across the nation.
- Selected from 36 peers, as one of two liaisons to be a peer reviewer.

External Partnerships Lead

UNITY COUNCIL FOR THE EAST PALESTINE TRAIN DERAILMENT — JUNE - AUGUST 2023

Health Advocate

MOM'S CLEAN AIR FORCE, WASHINGTON, DC— JUNE - AUG 2023

Appointed Board Member

EAST PALESTINE PARK BOARD, OHIO— 2019 - 2020, one term

Appointed Mission Committee Chair

EAST PALESTINE CHURCH OF CHRIST, OHIO— 2017 - 2020

- Managed program budget and dispersed funds.

Elected Treasurer, Board Member + Coach

EAST PALESTINE YOUTH SPORTS ASSOCIATION— 2019 - 2022, two terms

- Managed organizational budget, purchasing, donations and all aspects of finances.

regarding train derailment in Ohio

Additional highlights at www.jessconard.com

Skills

Organizing environmental justice communities

Project management

Presentations + Public speaking

Detail organization

Conflict management

Microsoft office, G-suite, slack, asana, zoom, teams, epic, action network

Personal Interests

Authentic self-care, community activism, recreation + travel

Formal letters of recommendation or references available upon request.