

Games for Change Reveals 2026 Festival Speakers as Global Leaders Gather to Reimagine Play

The 23rd Annual Festival Takes Place July 21-22 at The Glasshouse (NYC)

New speakers from UNICEF, thatgamecompany, ESRB, and Annapurna join a cross-industry lineup exploring how games are driving innovation far beyond entertainment

NEW YORK, July 16, 2026 – [Games for Change](#) (G4C), the largest nonprofit championing games and immersive media for social impact, today announced more speakers who will headline the 23rd annual Festival, taking place July 21-22, 2026, at The Glasshouse in New York City.

These speakers join a lineup built around the theme "Reimagining Play" – shaping how we experience the world, connect, and drive real-world impact by bringing global humanitarian response, player wellbeing, and purpose-driven studios into the same conversation.

Newly announced speakers include:

- Amelia "Cara" Avery, Senior Manager, Global Inclusion & Impact, Zynga Games/ Take Two Interactive
- Ahmed Best, Co-Founder, AfroRithm Futures Group
- Nicholas Fortugno, Director of Digital Game Development, City College of New York
- Kristoffer Gandrup Marino, Senior Advisor, Innovation, Solutions, UNICEF
- Danny Marti, Head of Public Affairs and Global Policy, Tencent
- Jeanny Pak, Interim President & CEO, NYCEDC
- Jesse Mahler, Futures Without Violence and co-author, Manosphere Rewired
- Lisa Pak, Head of Operations, Playing for the Planet
- Darko Petrovic, Business Development Lead (Gaming, Sport, Media, Entertainment), UN World Food Programme
- Martina Santoro, Executive Producer New Media, Annapurna
- Cristina Shapiro, Chief Strategy Officer and President, UNICEF USA
- Robert Steen, The Remarkable Life of Ibelin
- Patricia Vance, President, Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)
- Risa Ward, SVP Operations, Crisis Textline
- SJ Xue, Head of Corporate Development, ThatGameCompany

These speakers join previously announced panels and keynotes with **PBS KIDS' Sara DeWitt** on the future of children's media, **Schell Games CEO Jesse Schell** on game innovation, **Dr. Rachel Kowert** on healthy play, and leaders from **EA, Neopets, SYBO**, and **BBC R&D** exploring what's next for interactive experiences.

"The breadth of voices coming together at this year's Festival reflects how rapidly games are being recognized as a powerful platform for impact," said Games for Change President Susanna Pollack. "We're seeing leaders from across industries embrace play not as a niche activity, but as a catalyst for innovation and meaningful change. This year's program is designed to spark the collaborations and ideas that will shape what's next."

The Festival program runs across several formats beyond talks and panels. The Playtest Lab, new this year, connects creators of early-stage games and immersive works with review panels that give structured feedback on accessibility and inclusive design. Topic Tables return for small-group discussions on current issues in the field, and the G4C Arcade lets attendees play featured titles across both days. The Games for Change Awards ceremony will take place on July 21 at 6:30 PM with recognition for the year's standout games and immersive projects. The main stage of the event, plus the Awards will be streamed live on the [Games for Change Twitch channel](#).

Tickets are available until July 21, 2026, with discounts offered for nonprofits, educators, and students. View the full Festival lineup and register at festival.gamesforchange.org.

###

About Games for Change

Since 2004, Games for Change (G4C) has empowered game creators and innovators to drive real-world change, using games and immersive media that help people learn, improve their communities, and contribute to making the world a better place. G4C partners with technology and gaming companies, nonprofits, foundations, and government agencies to run world-class events, public arcades, design challenges, and youth programs. G4C supports a global community of game developers using games to tackle real-world challenges, from humanitarian conflicts to climate change and education. To learn more, visit: <https://www.gamesforchange.org>

For more information, contact:
g4c_team@zebrapartners.net

Games for Change Press Kit:
[Press Kit](#)