

Benya Kraus calls home a fusion of Waseca, MN and Bangkok, Thailand. Searching for a pathway back to serve in her rural hometown after graduating from Tufts University in 2018, she realized that little infrastructure and cultural narrative existed to bring young talent back to small towns, rural, and economically distressed urban communities - particularly to engage in public service. She went on to co-found Lead for America, a national nonprofit that supports young talent in returning to their hometowns through two-year paid fellowships with the mission of catalyzing community renewal and strengthening our public institutions. Supported by the Bush and McKnight Foundations and ServeMN, Benya has returned home to Minnesota to launch Lead for Minnesota - the next state affiliate headquartered in her hometown of Waseca, where she supports home comers across 40 rural communities in Minnesota, and over 200 nationwide. In addition to Lead for America, Benya serves as the youngest member elected to the Amnesty USA Board of Directors, was appointed by Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan to the Minnesota Young Women's Cabinet and most recently the Governor's Workforce Development Board and is involved in her hometown community as a board member of the Waseca Area Foundation, Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, and is helping to develop a rural entrepreneurial ecosystem in southern Minnesota.