

RETIREE CENTER

# The Newsletter



*Hello Retirees,*

Happy Spring! It's been another busy semester for the Retiree Center. Please enjoy the photos below of some of our newest retirees from the April 7th Employee Recognition Ceremony. I always speak at this event to welcome the new retirees and tell them what makes our retiree community so special—your generosity, commitment, and engagement. You continue to stay invested in our shared mission, and I'm grateful to work with you. Please accept my sincere thanks for all you do!



We'll celebrate the Retiree Spring Luncheon on April 30th, welcoming 24 new WSU retirees. As of this writing, 136 people have RSVP'd—a record number! I look forward to seeing so many of you there.

A couple weeks after the luncheon, we will be heading to the Orpheum for a performance of *Harry Potter & The Cursed Child*. There are still a few tickets left if you're interested. We also have our Frank Capra and Shakespeare Senior U courses coming up this spring and summer. Our fall Senior U courses will be open for registration in May. You can get a sneak peek of the course line-up on page four of this newsletter. You'll see we have a fantastic roster of six courses on tap for you for Fall 2026!

As a reminder, my hours will decrease over the summer, with about ten hours per week in June and July, primarily Monday and Tuesday afternoons. I'll still check email regularly and can meet at other times by appointment. Some dates to save: the Fall Social is October 15th, Homecoming Week runs October 4–10, the Winter Social is December 3rd, and the Living History Premiere is December 8th.

Many thanks to Bill Meyer for his excellent guest column on Braedon Gilles, WSU's new Arborist—be sure to read it. I hope you enjoy the newsletter, and I look forward to seeing you soon! – Jess



Joyati Debnath & President Janz



Gary Castello, Diane McNally-Forsyth, President Janz, Terese Hemmingsen



President Janz & Stephanie Smidt

## RETIREE CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

*To support the mission of WSU and enrich the campus community as well as the lives of retired staff, faculty and administration by providing institutional connections between the University and retirees who may wish to continue their intellectual and social participation in collegial life and service to the University.*

# RETIREE NEWS AND NOTES

## Advisory Board

Brian Aldrich  
Nancy Amann  
Jean Bellman  
Michael Bowler  
Heather Diertman  
Diane Dingfelder  
Tracy Hale  
Jonathon Mauser  
Sandra McNab  
Ann Rethlefsen  
Paula Scheevel  
Judy Shepard  
Richard Shields

## Contact Us

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[Retiree@winona.edu](mailto:Retiree@winona.edu)

[winona.edu/retiree](http://winona.edu/retiree)

**Director:**  
Jessica Kauphusman

## JANE CARDUCCI

On Friday, February 27th, Jane Carducci gave a presentation at The Lake Superior Summit on the Teaching of Writing and ESL. This annual conference brings together teachers of writing and literacy from around the region. The conference was at the University of Wisconsin - Superior.

Jane's presentation was focused on Community Connections. She spoke mainly about her annual "Shakespeare in Performance" Senior University course. Jane has been teaching this course for Senior U for the past five years.

She called this experience the icing on her Shakespeare cake after teaching all these years!



## VICKI DECKER

On April 16th, Vicki Decker was celebrated for completing the Global Diplomacy & Peace Academy at Winona State University—a flagship program of WSU's Institute for Global Justice and Diplomacy dedicated to preparing thoughtful, globally engaged leaders.

Through this experience, members of the inaugural cohort explored the complexities of international relations, diplomacy, and peacebuilding while strengthening their ability to approach global challenges with insight and empathy. I was lucky enough to be a part of this cohort as well. Vicki and I would highly recommend the program and would encourage you to apply for future iterations. Vicki's accomplishment reflects not only her commitment to lifelong learning, but also her interest in contributing to a more just and peaceful world.



## 2026-2027 RETIREE PARKING PASSES ARE HERE!

The 2026-2027 retiree parking permits are now available! You may stop in at the Retiree Center (Somsen 102) to pick one up. Since we are a 1-person office, I would advise you to call before coming to the Center to ensure that I am available to help you. If you live 30+ miles from campus, please let me know, and I can get a permit mailed out to you. Retirees with parking permits can park in all gold lots on campus. This is a fantastic benefit for you, but you do need to make sure to get a new permit each year...you may be ticketed if your car is displaying an expired permit.

# A FEW SAVE THE DATES

## LEADING LOCAL EVENTS

From Engage Winona website

Leading Local is a collaboration between the Winona Post and Engage Winona designed to strengthen civic participation in Winona County and beyond. The initiative brings together trusted local journalism, practical civic learning, and community conversations to help people better understand and engage with their communities.

In 2026-27, Leading Local will offer workshops on how to get involved and take action, in-depth reporting on local issues, and community forums where residents can learn, ask questions, and share perspectives. These efforts are meant to make local news and civic information easier to find and easier to use. All activities are nonpartisan and open to the public.

The goal of Leading Local is to build confidence among residents to get involved in their communities, increase access to reliable civic and community information, and raise awareness of local news as a trusted resource.

Mark your calendar for this year's events (all events held from 6:00-7:30 pm):

- Tues, May 12 – Government Transparency 101 - Lewiston City Hall - 75 Rice Street, Lewiston
- Tues, June 9 – Volunteerism and Mutual Aid Workshop - Winona County History Center
- Tues, June 23 – Community Power: How to Co-Create Solutions and Get Things Done in Your Community  
Sobieski Lodge - 965 E. 7th St., Winona



ENGAGEWINONA

## RETIREE BREAKFASTS

**WINONA**  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
*Retiree Center*  
28 Years: 2002-2025

**YOU ARE INVITED**

*2026 WSU*  
*Retiree Center Breakfasts*

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR  
GREAT CONVERSATION  
A LIGHT BREAKFAST  
AND ENGAGING SPEAKERS**

*Breakfast Dates*

- April 28: All-University Thank You Breakfast  
Kryzsko Ballroom  
9-10:30am
- May 12: Kryzsko Commons Solarium  
Speaker: Scott Ellinghuysen
- June 9: Kryzsko Commons Solarium  
Speaker: President Ken Janz
- July 14: Kryzsko Purple Rooms  
Speaker: Jennifer Flowers
- August 11: Kryzsko Commons Solarium  
Speaker: Kirk Carlson
- Sept. 9: Aboard the Col Fremling  
2 one-hour rides will be offered

May - August Breakfasts run from  
9 AM-11 AM - RSVP Required

# SENIOR UNIVERSITY FALL 2026 PREVIEW



Here is a look at the upcoming Senior University classes for Fall 2026.  
REGISTRATION will open soon!

<p>SENIOR U LITE: GARDENS OF PURPOSE AT THE WSU LANDSCAPE ARBORETUM</p>	<p>Nate Anderson</p>	<p>Wednesdays                  August 19, 26                  1:00-3:00 p.m.                  \$20.00                  Maxwell Hall, Room 158</p>
<p>THE CHANGING FACE OF THE UNITED STATES</p>	<p>Aurea Osgood                  Taught in a hybrid format</p>	<p>Wednesdays                  September 9, 16, 23, 30                  3:00-4:30 p.m.                  \$40.00                  Pasteur Hall, Room 133</p>
<p>PHOTO COMMUNICATION: IMAGES TO TELL YOUR STORY</p>	<p>Tom Grier</p>	<p>Mondays                  Sept. 21, 28 October 5, 12, 19                  1:00-3:00 p.m.                  \$40.00                  Maxwell Hall, Room 287</p>
<p>WHAT WERE WE THINKING?: GOD, NATURE, AND HUMAN NATURE IN AMERICAN THOUGHT</p>	<p>Greg Schmidt</p>	<p>Wednesdays                  October 14, 21, 28, Nov. 4, 18                  (no class on Veteran's Day 11/11)                  2:30-4:00 p.m.                  \$40.00                  Maxwell Hall, Room 272</p>
<p>ELECTION 2026: DEMOCRACY CHALLENGED</p>	<p>Jim Bromeland</p>	<p>Thursdays                  October 23, 30, November 6, 13                  2:30-4:30 p.m.                  \$40.00                  Pasteur Hall, Room 133</p>
<p>RELATIVITY, QUANTUM MECHANICS, &amp; THE STARS</p>	<p>Richard Shields</p>	<p>Tuesdays                  October 27, Nov. 3, 10, 17                  2:30-4:00                  \$40.00                  Pasteur Hall, Room 237</p>

# WSU COMMON BOOK 2026-27

Written by Andrew Higl

I am pleased to announce that the Winona State Common Book for 2026-2027 will be Dan Egan's *The Death and Life of the Great Lakes*. Egan has twice been nominated for the Pulitzer for his reporting on the Great Lakes in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Developing out of that reporting, Egan weaves together history, science, and storytelling to bring the Great Lakes to life and make clear why they matter so much to our region economically and ecologically.

Norton Publishing describes the book as a "compulsively readable portrait of an ecological catastrophe happening right before our eyes, blending the epic story of the lakes with an examination of the perils they face and the ways we can restore and preserve them for generations to come."



When reviewing the book, the Common Book committee noted how Egan had the power to make the invasion of species like the sea lampreys a thrilling narrative! The story Egan tells is an important one for our region, and he tells the story in a way that will have you on the edge of your seat.

We want this book to be a common read next year, shared by students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. We have a series of events we are working on in the fall, including an author visit tentatively scheduled for October 21st. We're planning a film series connected to the book for the spring.

If you are an instructor, we hope you choose to adopt the book in your classroom. I am happy to recommend excerpts if an entire book is too much to add to your plans. If you are not an instructor, I encourage you to be an engaged reader. This is your opportunity to join a giant university-wide book club!

Finally, we plan to get copies of the book into as many hands as possible, so I am working with Norton to get copies of the book to campus this spring. If you want a copy, please let me know, and I will put your name down for a copy once they arrive.

I am on sabbatical this term, but if you have any questions about the Common Book program or plans for next year's events and programming, please let me know, and I will do my best to get back to you soon. Happy spring and happy reading!

Andrew Higl, PhD  
Professor of English - Director of the Common Book Program  
[ahigl@winona.edu](mailto:ahigl@winona.edu)  
507-457-5527

# RETIREE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## BECOME A WSU SCHOLARSHIP REVIEWER

As many of you know, the university has introduced a new blind scholarship review process this year—an important step toward ensuring a more equitable and consistent evaluation of student applications. In this model, identifying information is removed, allowing reviewers to focus solely on each applicant's achievements, experiences, and potential. This helps reduce unconscious bias and promotes a fairer, more inclusive selection process for all students.

Although Jen Jonsgaard has recently transitioned to the Admissions Office, she continues to play a role in guiding the implementation of this new review system. She is currently seeking volunteers to serve as scholarship reviewers—and the need is significant.

With more than 1,500 applicants this year, and a goal of having each application reviewed twice, there are still approximately 2,000 reviews remaining. The process is designed to be manageable and flexible: reviewers can choose how many applications they would like to evaluate, and all volunteers are provided with training materials and a clear scoring rubric to guide their work. Serving as a reviewer is a meaningful way to support students and contribute to a process that prioritizes fairness and thoughtful decision-making. It also offers a unique window into the experiences, goals, and accomplishments of our students!

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer, please consider signing up using the following link: [WSU Scholarship Reviews](#)

Your time and expertise will make a direct and lasting impact—and will help ensure the success of this new process.

## JOIN THE WSU WELCOME CREW THIS FALL!

If you want to help welcome new students to WSU residence halls in the fall, please consider signing up for Welcome Crew.

Welcome crew is a group of students, faculty, staff and retirees that help our first-year students move into the residence halls. They do a variety of jobs; traffic control, directions, helping families move in (moving boxes) and dumpster duty. Move-in day for Fall 2026 is Thursday, August 20th!

Volunteers will be able to preference the building they want to work in, but may be moved if needed in other areas on campus. If you have a group or team that wants to work together, please make sure you put that on the form, and the move-in team will make sure you work together.

Sign up for Welcome Crew [here](#).

Volunteer Benefits:

- Opportunity to meet and welcome new students and their families
- Receive a free Welcome Crew T-Shirt
- Free lunch or dinner on the day you volunteer
- That warm fuzzy feeling you get when you help!

Once you are signed up, more information will come over the summer as the date approaches. Thank you for considering this opportunity to welcome our new students and their families to campus!



# UPCOMING RETIREE CENTER DAY TRIPS

The WSU Retiree Center is offering another day trip opportunity to see a fantastic musical in the Twin Cities. On Wednesday, October 28th, we will be heading to the Chanhassen Dinner Theater in Chanhassen, MN to see a matinee performance of *Annie*!



## About *Annie*:

Based on the popular comic strip, *Annie* tells the story of a spunky little orphan full of optimism who shines through the most difficult situations.

Unlike the other children at the dreary orphanage, Annie believes that her parents will one day return to claim her. In a stroke of luck, she ends up in the lap of luxury with Depression-era billionaire Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks. When Warbucks offers to adopt her, she asks for help. Warbucks’ whopping reward for Annie’s parents attracts the attention of con artists who hatch a plot to kidnap Annie and take the reward. But no worries! This splashy family musical has a happy ending for Annie, Sandy, Daddy Warbucks and the whole gang.

Winner of seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical, *Annie* features hit songs including: “Tomorrow,” “N.Y.C.,” “It’s the Hard Knock Life,” “You’re Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile” and “Maybe.” *Annie* is perfect for audiences of all ages. Bring your kids and grandkids!

Here is our itinerary:

8:15am – Board bus at Elks Parking Lot (4540 Service Drive, Winona)

10:45am – Arrive at Chanhassen Dinner Theater

11:00-12:45 – lunch at the theater (included in the cost of the trip)

1:00pm - Showtime

3:00-3:15 - Board the bus for Winona

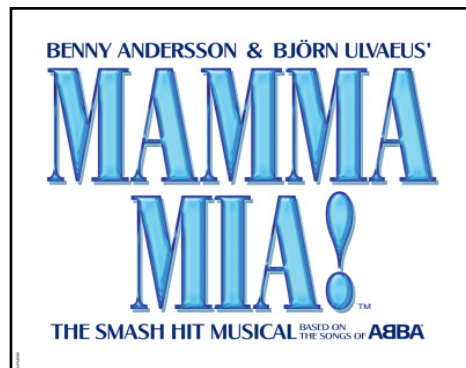
5:45-6:00pm – Arrive at the Elks Parking Lot

The cost of the trip is \$140/person and includes your ticket to the play, lunch at the Chanhassen, and the bus ride.

Registration for this trip will open in late May. Be on the lookout for an email from me with all of the details!



Fall 2026



September 20, 2026



Fall 2026

Watch for emails from me with details about these upcoming trips! I have also secured tickets for *The Outsiders* at the Orpheum in Spring 2027!

# GUEST COLUMNIST - BILL MEYER

## WSU'S NEW ARBORIST - BRAEDON GILLES

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to spend part of the day with WSU's new Arborist, Braedon Gilles. We drove together to Minneapolis to pick up several new Magnolia trees that will soon be added to WSU's Campus of Trees. As we drove up Highway 61 I had a chance to observe our scenic Mississippi with flocks of migrating birds taking a break on their journey back home.

Speaking of journeys, Braedon shared the events of his journey that brought him to Winona. He related how he grew up in central Wisconsin and later attended UW-Stevens Point, where he graduated in 2024 with a B.S. in Urban Forestry and Forest Recreation. During his summer months at the University, Braedon had the chance to work as a forestry intern for both the city of Middleton and Stevens Point, where he learned the fundamentals of real life urban forestry.

Before coming to WSU, Braedon broadened his training working at Trees Today Nursery in Onalaska, WI. There he had exposure to both homeowner and commercial landscaping projects.

In 2025, Braedon joined the staff at the WSU Landscape Arboretum and soon was making tree recommendations for the campus grounds and participating in Arbor Day activities. Arbor Day has been celebrated at WSU each year by planting a tree on campus with the assistance of a class of Winona elementary school students. Braedon coordinated these efforts last year and will do so again this year.

I asked Braedon about some of his selections of trees for this year. Two of his recommendations piqued my interest. One of his picks is the Snakebark Maple. As it implies, the Snakebark Maple has a very distinctive bark that is said to resemble the stripes on a snake having hints of purple and red. Years ago we had this unusual tree on campus. The Snakebark Maple is native to Taiwan.

The idea of the Pawpaw tree selection was born out of curiosity. It normally can be found in the eastern United States and slightly south of here. Braedon would like to test the hardiness of this small tree on our campus. As the climate changes, new tree choices need to be considered in order to see what survives and flourishes in the warmer environment. The Pawpaw produces the largest edible fruit indigenous to the U.S which is said to taste like a mixture of mango and banana with a texture similar to custard.

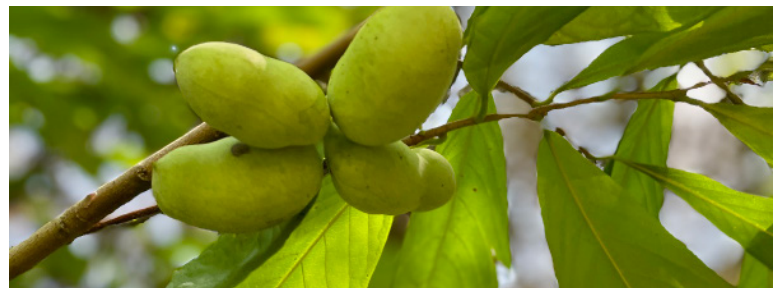
Braedon sees his role as WSU's Arborist as one where he continually expands the Landscape Arboretum's collection of tree species. He notes that maintaining a large, diverse group of trees on a college campus gives the trees an advantage in protecting themselves better against insect or disease problems.

A diverse Arboretum can also allow visitors to have the opportunity to walk through the campus grounds, observe trees that they would like to incorporate into their backyards, and make a better decision on those choices.

Braedon currently calls his home Fountain City where he lives with his fiance, Paige. At dinnertime, he can be found in the kitchen preparing a healthy, protein packed meal. Braedon and Paige share a love for running and can be found pounding the pavement in either Fountain City or Winona.



Snakebark Maple



Pawpaw tree

# CALENDAR

## May

### SCOTT ELLINGHUYSEN RETIREMENT PARTY

Monday, May 11, 2026  
2:00-4:00 p.m.  
Kryzsko Commons Solarium



### AROE CHARTING THE JOURNEY TO A FULFILLING RETIREMENT WEBINAR SERIES

Cultivating Social Connections and Support Systems in Retirement

Wednesday, May 6 - 2PM-3:15PM



### RETIREE BREAKFAST

Tuesday, May 12, 2026  
9:00-11:00 a.m.  
Speaker: Scott Ellinghuysen  
Kryzsko Commons - Solarium



### RETIREE CENTER TRAVEL

Utah's Mighty Five & The Rockies  
May 18-27, 2026

### RETIREE CENTER DAY TRIP

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child  
Orpheum Theater  
Thursday, May 14, 2026  
5 tickets left!

## June



Begins June 24, 2026  
For more info: <https://www.grsf.org/>

We still have spaces available in Jane Carducci's Shakespeare in Performance Senior U course. Register [here!](#)

### WINONA STEAMBOAT DAYS

June 17-21, 2026



ROCHESTER HONKERS GAME  
Tuesday, June 10, 6:30 p.m.  
Alumni Event  
[Register here](#)



### RETIREE BREAKFAST

Tuesday, June 9, 2026  
9:00-11:00 a.m.  
Speaker: WSU President Ken Janz.  
Kryzsko Solarium



JUNE 28- JULY 19, 2026

For more info: <https://www.mnbeethovenfestival.org/>

## JUNETEENTH

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2026

RETIREE CENTER CLOSED

# CALENDAR

## July

TIME TO ENJOY  
SUMMER IN MINNESOTA!



### RETIREE BREAKFAST

Tuesday, July 14, 2026  
9:00-11:00 a.m.

Speaker: Jennifer Flowers  
Kryzsko Purple Rooms

### SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE SENIOR UNIVERSITY COURSE

Sundays; July 12 & 26, 2026  
Class will meet for 2 hours prior to performances and for 1 hour afterwards  
Taught by Jane Carducci  
GRSF Guest speakers each week

### BUSINESS & IMMIGRANT STORIES OF WINONA

Merchant's Bank  
with Greg Evans  
Part of the Sandbar  
Storytelling Festival  
July 16, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.  
Winona History Center  
Free and open to the public



### WSU NIGHT AT CANTERBURY DOWNS

Alumni Event  
Thursday, July 23rd - Races start at 5PM

## August and Beyond



### RETIREE BREAKFAST

Tuesday, August 11, 2026  
9:00-11:00 a.m.  
Speaker: Kirk Carlson

### RETIREE CENTER EVENTS - SAVE THE DATES!

FALL SOCIAL - THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

WINTER SOCIAL - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

LIVING HISTORY PREMIERE - TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

### RETIREE CENTER TRAVEL

European Christmas Markets - November 2026  
France Magnifique - April 1-12, 2027  
Southern Charm Holiday - Dec. 7-13, 2027



### WSU FIRST DAY OF CLASSES

August 24, 2026

### WSU HOMECOMING

October 6-10, 2026



### RETIREE BREAKFAST

Tuesday, September 8th  
Aboard the Cal Fremling!



# IN MEMORIAM



*Calvin Winbush  
Student Life & Development  
December, 15, 2025*

## IN REMEMBRANCE

*We honor and mourn our  
University colleagues who  
have recently died.  
We recognize the richness of each life,  
the gifts these members have brought  
to many and the loss felt by family  
and friends.*



*Sally Nasstrom  
Spouse of Roy Nasstrom  
February 2, 2026*



*Roy Nasstrom  
Education Leadership  
February 25, 2026*



*Arline Yolkmann  
Math & Statistics  
March 1, 2026*



*Phyllis Fick  
Spouse of Don Fick  
March 15, 2026*



*Michael Murray  
Finance & Economics  
March 16, 2026*

# THE PERKS OF BEING A WSU RETIREE

- Athletic Events: Free admission to regular scheduled campus athletic events
- Teaching, Learning and Technology Services: Free campus offered classes when space available
- WSU Fitness Center access at employee rate
- ID card for all retirees
- Free parking pass for all lots, must renew each year
- Printer, scanner and copy access at the Retiree Center (up to 10 pages)
- Notary Public Services available at no charge
- WSU Library privileges (Retiree ID card serves as library card)

