

# The Foundation Files



## THE FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024

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Dr. Brian Zeller

*\*Executive Committee*

*\*\*Ex-Officio; Voting*

*\*\*Ex-Officio; Non-Voting*

Luke Merchlewitz, *Interim Executive Director*



Foundation for WAPS Board of Directors  
Annual Meeting 2023

August 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

**FOUNDATION**  
for Winona Area Public Schools

## ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Milek Passes Executive Director Baton to Merchlewitz

After almost 12 years of service to the Foundation for Winona Area Public Schools, Shelley Milek will step down as Executive Director, effective August 31. Milek will "pass the baton" to current Foundation for WAPS board president and retired educator, Luke Merchlewitz, who will serve as Interim Executive Director effective September 1.

Under Milek's leadership, over 100 funds were created and numerous scholarships were awarded to fulfill the Foundation's mission of enriching and expanding educational opportunities at Winona Area Public Schools. While working alongside community volunteers and business partners, Milek helped to establish new programs and grant opportunities, leaving a legacy that will last for years to come. The Foundation for WAPS Board of Directors would like to thank Milek for her leadership and dedication.

Merchlewitz is completing his 40th year in education, with 36 years dedicated to Washington-Kosciusko Elementary School as an elementary teacher. His wife, Brenda, also served a lengthy and respectful teaching career with WAPS. Merchlewitz and his children are proud Winona Senior High School alumni. He has been involved and dedicated to the Foundation since joining the board in 2011.



Shelley Milek and Luke Merchlewitz

The Foundation for Winona Area Public Schools is an independent, non-profit, 501(c)3 organization established in 1991 and funded entirely by community and business supporters of education in Winona. The Leave a Legacy program allows donors to support the Foundation's mission by honoring a program or individual. **To create your legacy and help "pass the baton" by making a donation in honor of Milek or Merchlewitz, visit [www.foundationwaps.org](http://www.foundationwaps.org) or contact the Foundation at [support@foundationwaps.org](mailto:support@foundationwaps.org) or 507-494-1004.**

The Foundation is on  
Facebook & Instagram!



"Foundation for Winona  
Area Public Schools"

### VISIT US ONLINE!

Information on the Foundation for Winona Area Public Schools, its mission, Board of Directors, grants, and alumni connections can be found on our website at:

**[www.foundationwaps.org](http://www.foundationwaps.org)**

Also, a **LINK FOR ONLINE DONATIONS** is available 24/7 for gifts in honor or memory of a special person, program, or event.

## FOUNDATION MONEY AT WORK!



Early Childhood  
Puppet Theater



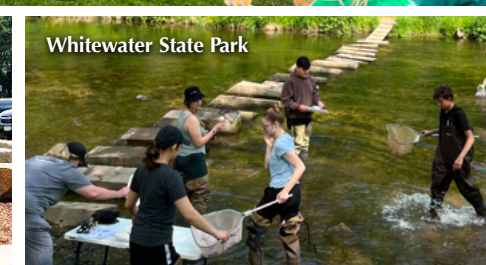
WMS Care Closet



Whitewater State Park



Dare to Dream  
Outdoor Classroom



Whitewater State Park

# FOUNDATION FOR WAPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS *Coming and Going...*

## *Going.....*

The Foundation for WAPS is so fortunate to have a dedicated board of directors that not only give back by volunteering countless hours, but they help to create rewarding educational opportunities for our students. Each member comes to the table with unique skills that help us make decisions to support and benefit our students and staff.

**These six Board of Directors have each spent six years on the Foundation Board and have completed two terms:**

**Ben Baratto** • Retired Education Representative

**Dan Bucknam** • Grants Committee

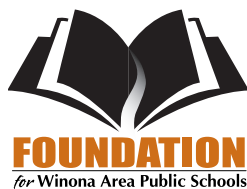
**Lisa Hawkinson** • Events Committee

**Luke Merchlewitz** • President & Events Committee Chair

**Gay Mortensen** • Marketing & Alumni Chair; Events Committee

**Steve Ringlien** • Grants Chair & Events Committee

*They will be truly missed!*



## *Coming.....*

Although it is always hard to see our Board of Director friends and contributors leave as they complete their terms, we are thrilled to welcome new Board of Directors and look forward to their enthusiasm, ideas, and new life they add to our many working projects.



Shawn Beier



Brad Berzinski



Dave Jensen



Jessica Richards



Katrina Scoville



Judy Yess



Dr. Brian Zeller



Brooke Cherny  
Student  
Representative



Our student representative, Nathaniel Dennis, completed his two-year term and will be off to Luther College!

*Thank you and  
Good Luck, Nate!*

## TEACHER & STAFF PAYROLL DEDUCTION PARTICIPANTS 2022-2023

Our WAPS teachers and staff once again spent the 2022-2023 school year working hard for our students. Not only did they meet the student's educational needs, they also continued to keep the students in mind by donating personally to the Foundation for Winona Area Public Schools through our payroll deduction program. Please take note of the staff members who participated in the Foundation's Payroll Deduction Program benefiting the Winona Area Public Schools. **Their support provided nearly \$12,000 for our student's education.** We are humbled by these gifts and this grand support.

Gloria Alatorre  
Kelly Allington  
Andrew Althoff  
Amber Barnard  
Pat Beckman  
Jerry Benedict  
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Mary Lewis-Hyde  
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Kathleen Welch  
Karen Whitney-Throne



# Going MODERN

## RAISES OVER \$86,000 FOR SMART BOARDS

### The Foundation for WAPS "Goes Modern" for SMART Boards and raises over \$86,000!!!

As Foundation for Winona Area Public Schools guests entered Visions Event Center on February 25th, they were dazzled with a clean streamlined architectural style, neutral black and white color palette, and geometric shapes and asymmetry all to raise money for SMART Boards for our schools. Those attending got in the modern spirit dressing and took the minimalistic look to the maximum with a monochromatic black and white look, which added to the entertainment.

A sea of white bid cards floated through the room as auctioneers, Tim Gleason and Luke Merchlewitz, worked hard to get bids for our schools. With the help of our lead sponsors, **Merchants Bank and WNB Financial**, along with many corporate sponsors, auction donors, and community donors, we were thrilled to raise over \$86,000 for new generation SMART Boards for our schools.

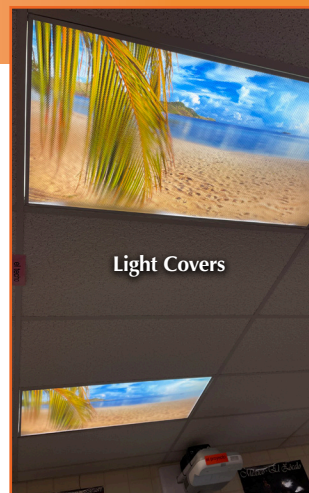
Eleven years ago, the Foundation for WAPS assisted our schools with the purchase of SMART Boards. Since that time, they have become obsolete or no longer functioning. With budget constraints and the current allotment to the technology budget, it would take 10 years to supply SMART Boards to all classrooms. The Foundation is thrilled to play a part in assisting with this need and getting the tools into our students' hands faster.

The community of volunteers it takes to make this event a success is beyond amazing! **For more information on the Foundation for Winona Area Public Schools, contact [luke.merchlewitz@winona.k12.mn.us](mailto:luke.merchlewitz@winona.k12.mn.us) or call 507-494-1004.**



## PAYROLL DEDUCTION AWARDS

The Foundation awarded two \$250 grants from the pool of staff candidates who provided payroll deduction donations to the Foundation. **This year's grant winners were Terri Spartz and Samantha McCormick.** The grant money was used to purchase items that will enhance and enrich education for our WAPS students. Terri Spartz ordered two light covers. They are essentially large posters but designed to cover lights so the students are able to see the SMART Board better and their papers. Students also like the brief distraction of looking at the warm beach, especially in January. Samantha McCormick was so excited and grateful for the grant as well. Samantha bought therapy lights. She used them with students during sessions together, offering some much needed sunlight boost that helped get them through the long winter. In addition, the therapy lights were loaned out for the students to use. It is another educational tool in helping students with their mental health and different avenues of self-care! Congrats Terri and Samantha and thank you for donation to our payroll deduction program.





# GRANT DOLLARS AT WORK...

The Foundation for WAPS is proud to support our students and schools by adding enriching educational enhancements with grants.

## APUSH Books

WSHS social studies teacher Sarah Gruett Fowler applied for a grant for AMSCO Advanced Placement books to prepare her students all year for the APUSH exam in May. Sarah stated, "Students are able to use the books to read quality content that has short practice tests, short and long answer questions, and document based questions in every unit to prepare them! This book is an improvement to our APUSH curriculum because it **prepares the students from September until they take the test in May!**" We are happy to help Sarah!



## WMS Improving Mental Health Through Coloring

A grant awarded to Cristen Schultz's WMS Health class, **improved student's mental health through coloring**. The goal of the life-size coloring posters is to allow students an outlet when they need to relax and reduce their anxiety and also provides a means for mindfulness.



## W-K Sensory Room

Teacher, Mackenzie Carter, was thrilled to be awarded a grant from the Foundation for WAPS for the W-K Sensory Room. Mackenzie explains, "Firstly, it **provides students with a space to receive the sensory input they need in order to regulate**. They are able to interact with different textures and materials they otherwise would not have access to. The sensory room also allows students a safe space to work on their gross and fine motor skills. Lastly, students are able to play in the sensory room which gives us a wonderful opportunity to practice their social skills." The Foundation is happy to enrich education for all of our WAPS students.



## Green Reading Awards

Goodview Teacher, Britta Browne, thanks the Foundation for the grant that encourages the **Goodview students to read at home on a daily basis**. For extra motivation, the students are given different prize awards when they hit certain milestone reading minutes. The Goodview students below are rocking their new t-shirts!





## WALC Rec Center Grant

Because the WALC building does not have gym space, physical education teacher, Jennifer Miller, thanks the Foundation for the WALC Rec Center grant. Miller states, **"Being able to go to the East Rec Center allows our students to have opportunities for those larger group games like basketball, volleyball, soccer, or to walk or run laps."** The Foundation appreciates providing physical education opportunities for our students.



## Unified Physical Education

The **Unified Physical Education** class is a new class at the Winona Middle School that brings students with and without disabilities together, as equals, in a physical education setting where all students are engaged and able to learn with their peers. Here the WMS students took a field trip sponsored by the Foundation for WAPS to the Winona State Climbing Wall and Westgate Bowl.



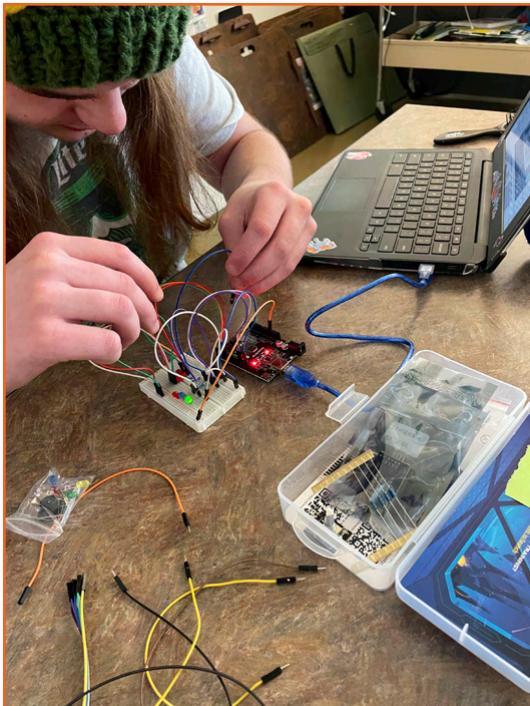
## Elementary Walkthrough Day

The Foundation for WAPS was proud to provide a grant to pay for buses to take WAPS seniors to each elementary school for a walkthrough so elementary staff and students could support and congratulate them. This brought a sense of Winhawk Pride and celebration into our schools. The senior students were able to reflect on where their journey began, and all they accomplished, and our youngest Winkawks had an opportunity to dream about their graduation day. **Congratulations 2023 WAPS graduates!!**



## 30 Days Lost in Space Grant

As part of elective coursework at the ALC, the teachers work hard to incorporate student interests into their project and activities. **Here a student who is interested in video games, computers, and electronics is working on a coding program called "30 Days Lost in Space."** This was possible by a Foundation for WAPS grant.





We make every effort to ensure donors are listed. If we missed you, we apologize and will put your name in the next newsletter!

## GENERAL FUND DONORS

Carolyn Ayers  
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Keith & Marie Holmquist

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# Leave A Legacy...

## THROUGH THE FOUNDATION'S LOWELL NELSON SOCIETY

In 1997, the Foundation Board of Directors established the Lowell Nelson Society in honor of former District 861 Superintendent Lowell Nelson. Membership in the Society is accorded to those who help build the Foundation's endowment by naming the Foundation as a beneficiary in their wills, qualified pension plans (including IRAs, 401ks, Keoghs, etc.), insurance policies, trusts, or other types of planned gifts.



LEAVE A LEGACY®  
Winona

Please consider the Foundation when you are updating your will or developing your estate and retirement plans. Our office is here to help you make a difference in the lives that follow.

### SOCIETY MEMBERS INCLUDE:

Judy Bodway  
Susan & John Eddy  
Gayle Goetzman  
Mark Godsey  
Norma Grausnick\*  
Harriet Green  
Carmen & Scott Hannon  
Shannon\* & Jim Hanzel  
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Shelley & John Milek  
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### Bob Johnson Instrument Rental Fund

Howard & Betsy Tobak

### ECFE PTA Fund

ECFE PTA

### Miller Mentoring Program/Summer Programs

WM. Miller Scrap Iron & Metal Co.

### Miller Mentoring

Hugh Miller & RTP Company  
Anonymous

### Miller Mentoring Program in memory of

Margery Charles Leisy

Gregory & Charissa Eaton

### Miller Mentoring Program in memory of

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Donna Losinski

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Bluff Country Co-op

### SLIPA

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Katie Seipel Anderson  
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Fastenal  
FOE No 1243 Gambling Fund  
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VFW Post 1287-Gambling Account  
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Shannon Doberstein  
Paperbacks and Pieces  
Jeff & Mindy Reinardy  
Kayla Spalding

### STEM Program

PhRMA

### Student Donation-Community Donation

Bluff Country Co-op

### WAPS Foundation Sports

Mary Jo Stiever in memory of Allan Bestul

### W-K Bob Hogenson Fund

Ursula Hogenson in memory of Ron Buermann  
Ursula Hogenson in memory of Mary Lou Hazelton  
Ursula Hogenson in memory of Gene Stanek  
Luke & Brenda Merchlewitz in memory of Jane Knothe  
Chris Steffen  
Mary Steffen  
Marina Steffen  
Paul Steffen

### WMS

Anonymous

### WMS Outdoor Classroom

Timothy Allington  
Sarah Hedin & WMS Staff

### WSHS Business/Economics Dept.

Helen Imm Trust

### WSHS First Robotics Team #3090

Watlow Electronic Manufacturing Co.

### WSHS Touchdown Club

Winona Touchdown Club

## MEMORIALS

### John (Jack) Ambuhl

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Walter & Virginia Bennick  
Dr. Scott & Carmen Hannon  
G. Nancy O'Reilly

### Eric & Cathy Bartleson

Don & Sandra Curtin

### Ron Buermann

Ursula Hogenson

### Cheri Eddy Crigler

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Margaret Lambert  
Jerry & Mary Lowery  
Sandra Suchla

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G. Nancy O'Reilly  
Dennis & Kimberly Wirt

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Tim & Kim Firstbrook ~ Fred Fletcher ~ Shelley Smith-Fletcher

## EVENT 2023 SPONSORS *cont.*

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Tim Gleason  
Luke Merchlewitz

### **Photographer**

Mollee Bjerke

### **Venue Sponsor**

Visions Event Center

### **Signage Sponsor**

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### **Raffle Sponsors**

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### **Video Creation & Support**

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## EVENT 2023 AUCTION DONORS

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Dr. Brian & Susan Zeller

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*\*Donations received to date prior to the event*

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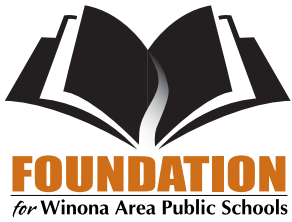
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