

# The Gear

Serving the 472 Members of the SWE-WI Section

Nov - 2024

## WE24 Chicago Recap

The Society of Women Engineers annual conference, WE24, took place October 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> at McCormick Place in Chicago, IL with over 20,000 in-person attendees making it the largest SWE conference to date.

The event kicked off with an excellent keynote by Sharon Hong, reflecting on how the ups and downs of life can be approximated by a sine wave as well as how being a woman engineer doesn't make us the minority, "it makes us the exception". Several SWE-WI members were able to enjoy the keynote together before embarking on a whirlwind day of sessions, networking, and enjoying the different conference activities. (continued on [page 2](#))



WE24 Opening  
Keynote Sharon Hong

SWE-WI members Michal Riege, Sam Biletteaux, Natalie Gamez, Heidi Balestrieri, and Allison Neuser attending WE24 Opening Keynote.



Karen Horting (SWE CEO), Susan Thomas Schlett, and Gretchen Hein at WE24 Awards Reception

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## Key Upcoming Events

- 2025 WE Local Milwaukee – Milwaukee, WI – 3/14-3/15

Stay up to date on all SWE-WI events at our [Google Calendar \(link\)](#)



## WE24 Chicago Recap (continued)

Over the next three days, attendees were able to attend various sessions within six different tracks:

- Advocacy & Collaboration
- Career Management & Development
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (DEIB)
- Self-Management & Development
- Strategic Leadership
- Technical Innovations

SWE-WI members were able to network and connect at different meals, in a large Wisconsin group photo Friday morning with both professional and collegiate SWE members, as well as at the WE24 APEX Awards Presentation and Awards Reception where several members were recognized (see pages [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#)). You can find official WE24 photos on [Flickr](#). After a successful annual conference, stay tuned for details about [WE25](#) which will be held in New Orleans October 23-25, 2025.



Michal Riege and Keena Spencer-Dobson



Betty Shanahan (previous SWE CEO), Susan Thomas Schlett, and Karen Horting (current SWE CEO).



Michelle Lei, Heidi Balestrieri, Kristen Seashore, Michele Dodez, Gina Janke, Andrea Falasco, Susan Thomas Schlett, and Valya Brady.



Wisconsin group photo with Professional and Collegiate SWE Members



# WE24 Award Recipients

*Gretchen Hein, Ph.D. – Distinguished Engineering Educator*

Gretchen Hein, Ph.D. was a recipient of the **Distinguished Engineering Educator** award at the WE24 Conference. She received this award for her fresh and engaging teaching methods; for consistent, outstanding scholarly research contributions to engineering education; and for inspirational mentoring of young women in SWE. Dr. Hein has served for over 25 years as a faculty member and SWE collegiate section advisor at Michigan Technological University.

Dr. Hein accepted her award at the WE24 APEX Awards program. You can read Dr. Hein's full story in the 2024 Conference edition of SWE Magazine, also found online here: [APEX Awards – Gretchen Hein, Ph.D.](#)

You can leave a message congratulating Dr. Hein on this outstanding achievement in the virtual [WE24 Awards Hall](#) online.



Gretchen Hein, Ph.D. receiving Distinguished Engineering Educator award from FY25 SWE President Karen Roth.



Gretchen Hein, Ph.D. speaking at the WE24 APEX Awards



SWE Wisconsin has been recognized for a FY24 Bronze Mission Award! Mission awards recognize SWE groups that embody SWE core values and demonstrate continuous improvement and growth as they work to achieve the Society's strategic goals. You can learn about all FY24 Mission and Multicultural Recipients in the 2024 Conference edition of SWE Magazine, also found online here: [FY24 Mission & Multicultural Recognition.](#)

# WE24 Award Recipients (continued)

## Susan Thomas Schlett – Fellow Grade

Susan Thomas Schlett was a recipient of the **Fellow Grade** award at the WE24 Conference. She received this award for long-term contributions to helicopter testing; for passionate advocacy of membership initiatives; and for steadfast support of SWE wherever she has lived and worked. Susan is a SWE life member and has served the Society for over 40 years, receiving SWE’s Distinguished Service award in 2017. She is a critical member of the SWE Wisconsin professional section and displays her passion for SWE in everything she does.

Susan accepted her award at the WE24 APEX Awards program. You can read Susan’s full story in the 2024 Conference edition of SWE Magazine, also found online here: [APEX Awards – Susan Schlett](#)

You can leave a message congratulating Susan on this outstanding achievement in the virtual [WE24 Awards Hall](#) online.



Susan Thomas Schlett receiving Fellow Grade award from FY25 SWE President Karen Roth.



WE24 APEX Awards program Fellow Grade recipients Heather Doty, Allison Goodman, Kerrie Greenfelder, Dayna Johnson, Sandra Mandawe Paglieroni, Susan Thomas Schlett, Tuyet-Hahn Schnell, and FY25 SWE President Karen Roth. (Not pictured Patricia Walker)



2025 WE Local Registration has opened including details on conference schedule, registration rates, and volunteer sign-up. Learn more [here](#).



- **San Jose** – February 28 – March 1, 2025
- **Cherry Hill** – March 7 – 8, 2025
- **Milwaukee** – March 14 – 15, 2025



# WE24 Award Recipients (continued)

## Shradhdha Sarvaiya – Trailblazer Award

Shradhdha Sarvaiya was a recipient of the **Trailblazer Award** at the WE24 Conference. This award recognizes those who identify as women and have made significant contributions for five to 10 years in engineering, engineering management, engineering education, engineering technology, or science related to engineering. The recipients have demonstrated a variety of outstanding career leadership activities in a technical field and in professional organizations and the community.

Shradhdha accepted her award at WE24. You can read more about all ASCENT Award recipients in the 2024 Conference edition of SWE Magazine, also found online here: [ASCENT Awards](#)

You can leave a message congratulating Shradhdha on this outstanding achievement in the virtual [WE24 Awards Hall](#) online.



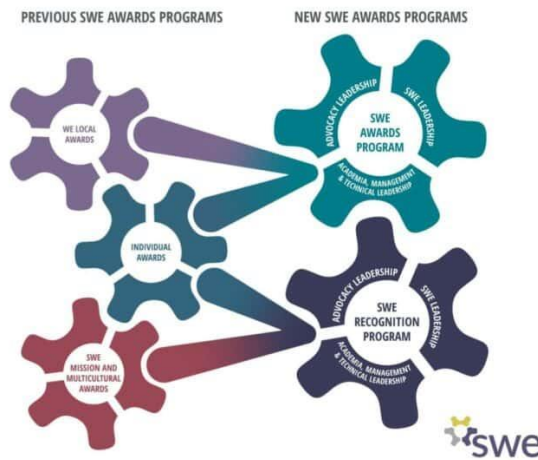
Shradhdha Sarvaiya receiving her Trailblazer Award at WE24.

SWE'S NEW AWARDS AND RECOGNITION PROGRAM

### Awards & Recognition Program Structure

There are no changes to **Collegiate Competitions** and **SWENext Awards** under the new awards structure.

These competitions and awards will still take place at Annual and WE Local conferences.



You can learn more about the SWE Awards and Recognition program on the [SWE Awards Program](#) page.

## SWE-WI Virtual Discussions

Join these virtual calls during lunch every other month to learn from other SWE members on specific topics. Contact Andrea ([awfalasco@gmail.com](mailto:awfalasco@gmail.com)) if you would like the Zoom call info. Upcoming topics and dates:  
12/13/24 – Hybrid Workplace | 2/7/25 – Making Short- and Long-Term Goals |  
4/11/25 – Traveling for Work | 6/13/25 – Parenting Tips and Tricks

# SWE-WI Tour at Sentry Equipment

## *Event Recap by Heidi Balestrieri*

On October 4th, seven members of SWE-WI had the fantastic opportunity to tour Sentry Equipment in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Our tour guide, Heidi Balestrieri, a fellow SWE-WI member and Sentry employee, provided an insightful look into the operations on the shop floor. We were impressed by the range of products and industries Sentry serves.

Thank you to our guide and Sentry for hosting us! It was a great experience that showcased the facility and the incredible work being done in Manufacturing. This tour was part of Sentry's Manufacturing Day Open House and Celebration.



Pictured left to right: Michel Dodez, Ann Krieger, Michal Riege, Heidi Balestrieri, Susan Schlett, Natalie Gamez, Deanna Dickerson, and Leighann Coates.

## **SWE-WI Advertisement Information**

Are you a company looking to show your support of SWE-WI, advertise on our website or in our newsletter, or post a job opening? If so, we want to hear from you! If you are interested, please find additional details and fill out the contact form on our corporate involvement page of the SWE-WI website:

<https://wisconsin.swe.org/corporate-involvement/>

# sySTEMnow Conference 2024

## *Event Recap by Maureen Duthie*

SWE-WI VP's Heidi, Natalie, and Maureen attended the 21st Annual sySTEMnow Conference in Milwaukee hosting a panel "Soaring in STEM - A Woman's Perspective." During the panel they shared their engineering experiences to a group of K-12 educators and industry partners answering questions about how they decided to pursue engineering, what keeps them engaged as engineers, how they are supported in their careers, and shared SWE resources for K-12, colleges, community colleges, and professionals. Thank you for you being great role models and representing SWE-WI!

See more info and photos from the conference here: <https://www.stemforward.org/systemnow-conference>



Pictured left to right: Maureen Duthie, Natalie Gamez, and Heidi Balestrieri.



SWE Wisconsin is on the 'Gram! Follow the new SWE Wisconsin Instagram account to keep up with the latest happenings throughout the section, and share your SWE Wisconsin news on social media!

[@swe\\_wisconsin](https://www.instagram.com/swe_wisconsin)



# SWE-WI Outreach Opportunities

*Be That Engineer!*

Engineering Role Model Volunteers needed for two opportunities:

Glen Hills Middle School STEAM Fair Saturday, December 14 from 9am-1pm SWE-WI would like to have a booth, we need volunteers to make it happen. If you are interested and can volunteer, please contact [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org)

Sheboygan area Girl Scout troop reached out and would like SWE-WI engineers to come and talk to their troop. Exact dates and times to be decided with the first people to volunteer. This would be a great way to celebrate Engineer's Week in February! Contact [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org) for more details.

Coming Soon: [Certificate of Merit](#) program open to all High Schools in Wisconsin & UP Michigan.

## Upcoming Outreach Events:

- January 18, 2025 – Future City Judges (8am-12pm) – Check next e-blast for sign-up
- May 2, 2025 – Contract Judging in Milwaukee (9am -12pm)
- May 9, 2025 - Contract Judging in Waukesha (9am -12pm)

Contact [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org) if you are interested in volunteering for either of these events!

**SWENext  
Membership**



SWENext is a way to become part of SWE as a student through the age of 18. Joining is free, any student 13 or older can become a SWENext on their own, for those younger than 13, a parent will need to be the primary contact. When registering for SWENext use event code: **Wisconsin**

Learn more about SWENext visit: <https://swe.org/k-12-outreach/swenext-2/>  
For any SWENext questions, contact: [outreach@swe.org](mailto:outreach@swe.org)



# SWE-WI Outreach Policies

## *Outreach Volunteer Notice*

SWE has implemented a Youth Protection Policy. This year to be a volunteer at a SWE-WI sponsored event you must have completed the Youth Protection course and provide a SWE Certificate to the organizer.

Please consider taking the youth protection course early and sending SWE-WI a digital copy of your certificate. This course will need to be taken every three years. To access the course, or for more information please visit <https://swe.org/youthprotection/>

## *Outreach Involvement*

If you have been involved in an outreach event and are a SWE member, send information about the event to Heidi Balestrieri at [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org) so we can report the information in the SWE outreach tool.

Information needed for the report: event name, date, all SWE sections that were involved, description of event, breakdown of girls and boys who participated, age of students, number of adult guests, number of SWE member volunteers, number of other volunteers, any partner organizations involved, or any other information to share.

## *Girl Scout STEM Badges*

Would you be interested in working with a Girl Scout Troop and introducing a girl to engineering? The Girl Scouts have introduced new engineering and STEM badges and troops are looking for engineers who would be willing to help them earn these badges. For information on how to be involved, project ideas, and how to find a troop contact [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org)



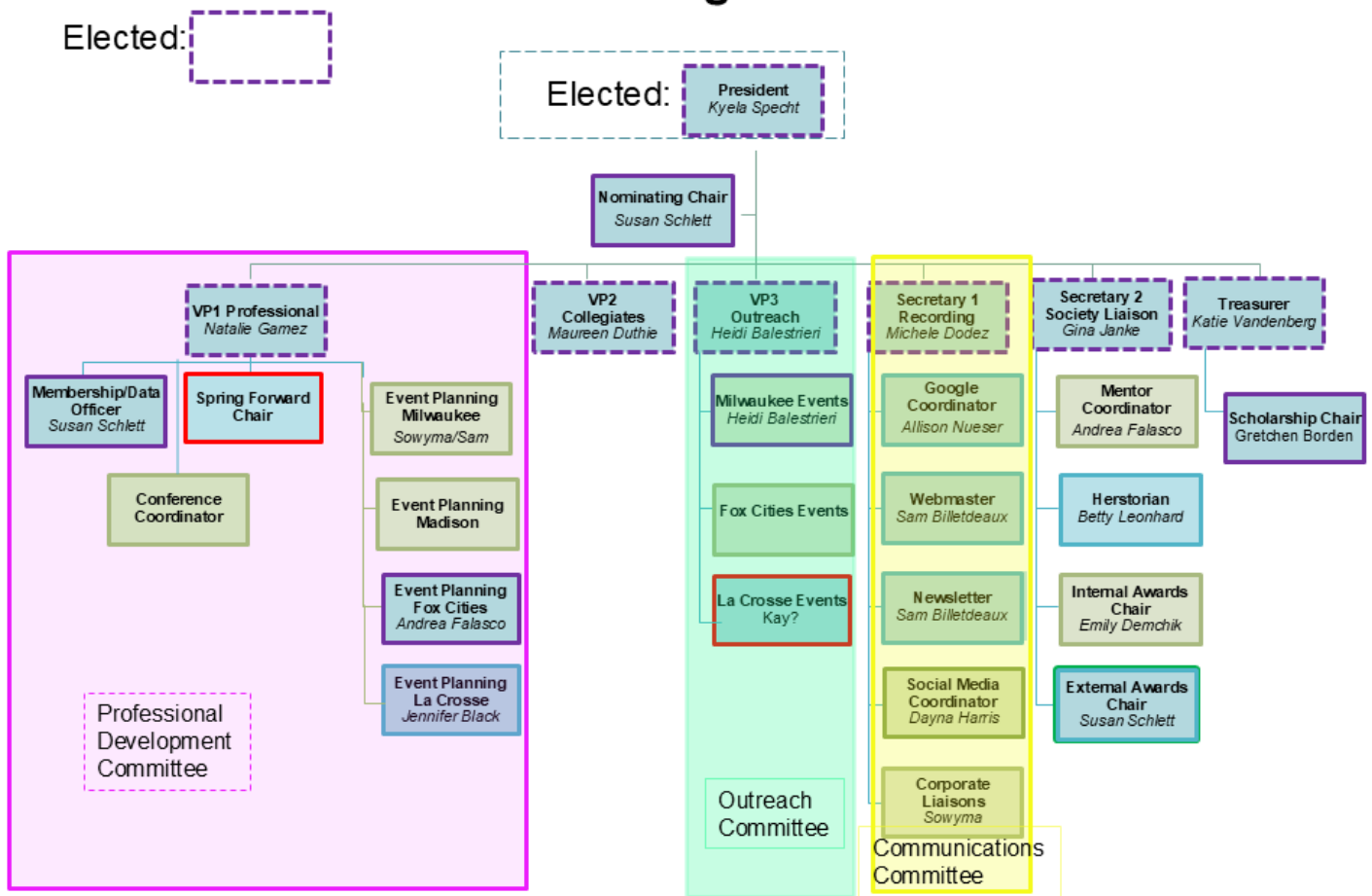
Follow the SWE Wisconsin Facebook page to keep up with the latest happenings throughout the section, and share your SWE Wisconsin news on social media!

**SWE-Wisconsin**

# SWE-WI Org Chart

See the recently updated FY25 SWE Wisconsin Org Chart below as well as on the [About SWE Wisconsin](#) page on our website. Reach out to [Kyela Specht](#) if you are interested in any open positions, learning more about the different roles, or to just get more involved in supporting SWE-WI events!

## FY25 SWE-WI Organizational Chart



Join the SWE Wisconsin LinkedIn Group to keep up with the latest happenings throughout the section, and share your SWE Wisconsin news on social media!



[Society of Women Engineers - Wisconsin](#)



# SWE Resource Spotlight

Don't miss this engaging panel discussion on Tuesday, Nov. 19, at 2 p.m. ET, spotlighting key highlights from the Society of Women Engineers' 2024 [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging \(DEI&B\) report](#). Learn how SWE is working to foster a more inclusive and equitable engineering and technology community. The panel of SWE experts delves into the broader journey of embedding DEI&B within the organization and shares the initiatives, changes, cross-departmental collaboration, and the challenges encountered along the way. In this free webinar, you'll:

- Gain insights into the key highlights and initiatives from SWE's 2024 DEI&B report.
- Discuss the systemic changes implemented by SWE and the challenges faced during the DEI&B integration process.
- Acquire actionable strategies for fostering a more inclusive and equitable engineering community within your organization.

This event is free and open to all. [Register Today](#).

WEBINAR | TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19 | 2PM ET

**EMBEDDING DEI&B IN ALL WE DO**

Society of Women Engineers' Journey, Highlights, and Challenges

**Tiffany Swanigan, CAE**  
Vice President, Operations  
Society of Women Engineers

**Roberta Rincon, PhD**  
Director, Research and Impact  
Society of Women Engineers

**Emily Burnett**  
Associate Director, Global Programs  
Society of Women Engineers

**Nicola Mohan**  
Senior Manager, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging  
Society of Women Engineers

Sponsored by **SWE** & **360 LIVE MEDIA**

**CESE**  
Connecting SWE Society Professionals

## SWE's Advance Learning Center

Did you know that your SWE membership gets you premier access to SWE's Advance Learning Center? This includes free and discounted content on a wide variety of topics including DEIB, technical innovations, career management & development, CEU/PDH courses, and more!

Check out [SWE's Advance Learning Center](#) today with your SWE login.

# Plan a SWE Wisconsin Event

Reach out to [Kyela Specht](#) or [Natalie Gamez](#) if interested in planning a SWE Wisconsin event!

## PLAN A SOCIAL OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENT!

IS THERE A FUN PLACE AROUND WHERE YOU LIVE THAT WOULD BE A GREAT SWE-WI SOCIAL EVENT? IS THERE A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPIC YOU ARE INTERESTED IN?

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SWE-WI is looking for members who are interested in planning an event in their local areas! The event can be a happy hour, a dinner, a meetup at an event – anything and everything!

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If this is something that interests you, reach out to **Kyela Specht** and **Natalie Gamez**

[kyelaspecht@gmail.com](mailto:kyelaspecht@gmail.com)

[natalie.m.gamez@gmail.com](mailto:natalie.m.gamez@gmail.com)



# FIRST Volunteer Opportunities

Did you know that SWE has been a [Strategic Alliance Partner](#) of [FIRST](#) since 2008? This partnership has helped both organizations promote STEM to young people and promote diversity and inclusion in STEM fields.

There are many FIRST event volunteer opportunities throughout the state! To volunteer at any of these events, follow the [FIRST Volunteer Registration Guide](#).

## FIRST LEGO League Explore

- 11/12/24 – Elm Grove, WI
- 11/16 – 11/17/24 – Cleveland, WI
- 12/21/24 – Waukesha, WI
- 1/19/25 – Waukesha, WI
- 2/1/25 – Brookfield, WI
- 3/15/25 – Milwaukee, WI
- 3/22/25 – La Crosse, WI
- 4/12/25 – Wauwatosa, WI

## FIRST Tech Challenge

- 11/23/24 – Sheboygan, WI
- 12/7/24 – Greenfield, WI
- 12/14- 12/15/24 – St. Francis, WI
- 12/21/24 – Manitowoc, WI
- 1/11/25 – Green Bay, WI
- 1/25/25 – Madison, WI
- 2/1 – 2/2/25 – Brookfield, WI
- 2/8/25 – La Crosse, WI

## FIRST LEGO League Challenge

- 11/16/24 – Cleveland, WI
- 11/16/24 – Mukwonago, WI
- 11/17/24 – Cleveland, WI
- 11/17/24 – Madison, WI
- 11/23 – 11/24/24 – Milwaukee, WI
- 12/7/24 – Green Bay, WI
- 12/8/24 – Whitewater, WI
- 12/10/24 – Milwaukee, WI
- 12/14/24 – Oak Creek, WI
- 12/14/24 – Mukwonago, WI
- 12/21/24 – Waukesha, WI
- 1/19/25 – Waukesha, WI

## FIRST Robotics Competition

- 3/19 – 3/22/25 – La Crosse, WI
- 3/27 – 3/29/25 – Mukwonago, WI
- 4/3 – 4/6/25 – West Allis, WI



For more information about FIRST opportunities in the state, check out the [FIRST Wisconsin website](#).

## SWE-WI Newsletter Entries

Send us your stories! We want to see what our professional SWE-WI and affiliated collegiate SWE members are up to! We are looking for events that SWE has hosted, member milestones, interesting articles/books to share, and more! If you have something you want to see in the newsletter, please fill out the following Publicity Request Form and check 'The Gear Newsletter'.

SWE-WI Publicity Request Form: <https://forms.ale/CztavtTXYQB2hK6JA>