

# The Gear

Serving the 425 Members of the SWE-WI Section

Nov - 2025

## Sentry Factory Tour

SWE-WI members and families got to take part in the 100 years of Sentry celebration, touring the Oconomowoc facility. Attendees learned about the different processes utilized to deliver customized solutions to Sentry's end users. Special thanks to Heidi Balestrieri for coordinating the tour and being our tour guide!



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## Key Upcoming Events

- 2026 WE Locals – Various Cities – Feb-April '26
- Spring Forward with SWE-WI – Stevens Point – 4/11/26

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

# Coffee & Chat Recap

*Tessa Machado and Emily Demchik*

SWE members from across the SWE-WI region got together this fall to meet new faces and get to know collegiate members at local coffee shops. Special thanks to Emily for coordinating the dates and locations!

SWE-WI members in the La Crosse area met up for coffee on September 13th at the Grounded Patio Cafe. It was a beautiful morning in downtown La Crosse, so we were able to sit together in a large group outside. There was a large turnout of 11 SWE-WI members and a surprise appearance of a future female engineer. We grabbed drinks and had wonderful conversations to get to know each other better. Thanks to everyone who were able to attend! – *Tessa Machado*



La Crosse Coffee & Chat at Grounded Patio Cafe

SWE-WI and UWSP SWE members got to know each other at the Starry Night Cat Cafe during the Stevens Point Coffee & Chat! – *Emily Demchik*



La Crosse Coffee & Chat at Grounded Patio Cafe



Stevens Point Coffee & Chat at Starry Night Cat Cafe

## 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.gle/CztqytTXYQB2hK6JA>

# WE25 Recap

*Susan Schlett*

Day 1 – Wednesday 10/22

I began the day flying from Milwaukee to New Orleans. It was nice going from 32 to 82 degree weather! After settling in at my hotel, I joined LCR (Late Career/Retiree Affinity Group) members Vicki Johnson, Carol Raburn, Wendy Jenkins, Lara Bartholomew, & Mary-Jane Green for a wonderful dinner at Drago's Seafood Restaurant at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside (top right). Walking back from dinner it was fun to take in the sights such as this cool mural (middle right).



Day 2 – Thursday 10/23

This morning I was pleasantly surprised to be greeted by New Orleans musicians and no line at SWE conference registration! In fact, there were minimal lines, including at the restrooms, all through the conference. I found this venue easy to navigate and would highly recommend it for future SWE events. At registration I met Jo Day and three other young ladies from Louisiana Tech who were experiencing their very first SWE conference. I happened to see our SWE CEO Karen Horting and I asked the college students if they would like a photo with Karen. Everyone enthusiastically posed for the photo (below).



A trip to conference is never complete without a trip to the SWE boutique. Here I reconnected with University of North Dakota SWE Counselor, Samantha (Sam) Krostue, and their current SWE president, Isabella (Izzy) Plagens (lower right). I served as SWE

Counselor to UND prior to Sam, despite living in Wisconsin!



**Registration  
Open!**

Registration is now OPEN for 2026 WE Locals! Register at [welocal.swe.org](https://welocal.swe.org)

- Austin, TX – February 20 – 21, 2026
- Portland, OR – February 27 – 28, 2026
- Columbus, OH – March 13 – 14, 2026
- Bengaluru, India – April 9 – 10, 2026
- Dublin, Ireland – April 23 – 24, 2026

# WE25 Recap (continued)

*Susan Schlett*

I traversed the career fair and met several new SWE-WI members for the first time. I really like connecting names with faces. Our SWE-WI section sets up meeting times for its members to meet at conferences. This year our new section VP for Professional Development, Danielle Schmitz, arranged a dinner meetup in the French Quarter where we got to try alligator bites, or as my son calls them, “chicken of the swamp” (top right, middle right).

At the life member reception it was great to catch up with 50+ year SWE member and friend Claire Shortall (below) and some of my Wisconsin members, Kristen Seashore, Samantha (Sam) Billetdeaux and Michele Dodez (lower right).



## SWE-WI Bi-Monthly Lunch Discussions

Join these virtual calls during lunch every other month to learn with other SWE members on a specific topic. These are at 11:30am-12:30am CST on the Fridays below. Please contact Andrea ([awfalasco@gmail.com](mailto:awfalasco@gmail.com)) to get the link to the Zoom meeting.

The next discussion, **12/12 at 11:30AM**, will focus on mindfulness during the stressful holiday season.

# WE25 Recap (continued)

*Susan Schlett*

Day 3 – Friday 10/24

Despite not having a company booth at the career fair, our SWE-WI member Andrea Falasco (top right) led a team from Kimberly-Clark Corporation, shown here at Friday's keynote address, proudly wearing their company shirts and distributing some of their products to conference attendees. Andrea and I ran into SWE-WI member Gretchen Hein's daughter Jenna Beaudoin (middle right). Gretchen recently retired from teaching at Michigan Technological University and had a 25+ year career serving as their SWE Counselor. Andrea had been a student at Michigan Tech. (SWE-WI territory includes most of WI plus the upper peninsula of Michigan – hence our connection with Michigan Tech.)



At the Fellows Tea, I am sorry to report that not a single new SWE Fellow was inducted this year. In addition, not a single Distinguished Service award was given. Time to start submitting some nominations people! Here are some photos from the Fellows Tea with many thanks to Laurie Ramsay for organizing (below).



At the Awards Ceremony, we (SWE-WI) had three members receive awards. They included Samantha (Sam) Billetdeaux from Milwaukee Tool who is in the first class of Esteemed New Professionals (previously known as the DNE or Distinguished New Engineer award, which I am proud to have nominated her for), Kyrie LeMahieu of Brunswick Corporation received the Rising Technical Contributor award and Gabrielle (Gigi) Mueller of Mercury Marine received a Trailblazer award. We took these photos with our current SWE-WI President, Natalie Gamez. (See Page 8 for photos)



## SWE-WI Handmade Ornament Exchange

It is time for our annual ornament exchange! The rules are to create one handmade ornament that is Wisconsin and/or SWE themed, partners contact each other for mailing addresses, mail the ornaments no later than December 8th, and please send Andrea some pictures of them to show the section. If you are interested in participating this year, please email Andrea ([awfalasco@gmail.com](mailto:awfalasco@gmail.com)) by November 20th and the partner assignments will be sent out on November 21st.

# WE25 Recap (continued)

*Susan Schlett*

Day 4 – Saturday 10/25

Since currently serving as a SWE Counselor for my alma mater Trinity College, I attended the SWE Counselor/Faculty Advisor Meeting, as well as the SWE Membership Meeting and the Town Hall to get a better understanding of the current SWE state of affairs. As fantastic as the conference was, I did come away with concerns. Despite the fact that SWE has grown to over 50,000 combined collegiate and professional members, and more than 12% of our membership is outside of the United States, we had far less attendance in general and at the career fair than last year. We had over 19,000 attendees at conference and over 400 exhibitors at the career fair in 2024. This 2025 conference we had about 14,000 attendees and a bit over 300 exhibitors. Many professionals and college students are not being financially supported to attend SWE conferences. In addition, certain scholarship recipients have had their scholarships rescinded based upon the nature of their application. We need to step up our SWE advocacy and support our headquarters staff, our sections & affiliates and our members now more than ever!

I was chosen to be one of the SWE brand ambassadors for the 2026 SWE conference in Boston advertising, so I was able to pretend to be a model at the photo shoot (top right). In addition, I got to do a membership interview with media team member Ron Zywicki (middle right). The day was almost complete with dinner at Meril Restaurant with LCR members. First table included: Barbara Read, Ceal Craig, myself, Ellen Quinn, Holly Hansen, Eileen Lindberg, Mary-Jane Green, Mary Ann Walsh, Laura Meldrum and Diane Peters. The second table included: Sarah Cambell, Jennifer Lynch, Marie Aloia, Candy Robinson, Carol Weber, Laurie Ramsay, Carol Raburn, Jan Williams, Vicki Johnson & Vickie Glancy Cannon (Photos below taken by Laurie Ramsay).



**Save the Date!  
Holiday Wine  
and Unwind**

Join SWE-WI members in the SE Wisconsin area on **Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>** after work to network and connect over a glass of wine. Location still TBD, keep an eye on the weekly E-Blast and SWE-WI calendar for more details! Reach out to [samanthabilletdeaux@gmail.com](mailto:samanthabilletdeaux@gmail.com) with any ideas or questions!

# WE25 Recap (continued)

*Susan Schlett*

On the walk back to our hotel we got to see the Halloween Parade (Photos 17abc). I was happy to collect some of the famous beads thrown from the parade floats without having to show anything to get them!

I hope to see many of you in Boston, November 5-7, 2026 for the next annual SWE conference or at one of the WE Locals in Austin, TX, Portland, OR, or Columbus, OH, or at the SWE-WI Spring Forward Professional Development Event scheduled for April 11, 2026 at Stevens Point, Wisconsin!

Written by  
Susan Thomas Schlett, F. SWE 10/2025  
SWE Wisconsin Section Membership Chair  
Late Career/Retiree Affinity Group Member



Professional and Collegiate SWE members from Wisconsin at WE25

# WE25 Award Recipients

## *Sam Billedeaux – Esteemed New Professional Member*

This award honors a SWE member with less than ten (10) years as a professional SWE member and who has demonstrated professional excellence in engineering, engineering management, engineering education, engineering technology, or science related to engineering, leadership in SWE, as well as professional organizations, and/or the community.

## *Kyrie LeMahieu – Rising Technical Contributor Award*

This award honors an individual who identifies as a woman and has been actively engaged for less than five years in the fields of engineering, engineering management, engineering education, engineering technology, or science related to engineering as a professional or graduate student. The nominee must have demonstrated outstanding technical performance and/or leadership in a technical field, as well as leadership in professional organizations and the community.

## *Gabrielle Mueller – Trailblazer Award*

This award honors an individual who identifies as a woman and has been actively engaged for five to 10 years in the fields of engineering, engineering management, engineering education, engineering technology, or science related to engineering. The nominee must have demonstrated outstanding technical performance and/or leadership in a technical field, as well as leadership in professional organizations and the community.

To learn more about all of the 2025 SWE award recipients that were honored at WE25, check out the [SWE All Together blog post](#).



Natalie Gamez, Sam Billedeaux, and Susan Schlett



Susan Schlett, Kyrie LeMahieu, and Natalie Gamez



FY26 SWE President Inaas Darrat and Sam Billedeaux

SWE-WI has been recognized in two categories for the 2025 SWE Recognition Program! Membership Retention Recognition (Professional – Large Section) and Mission Recognition (Silver – Professional Section).

Congratulations to all SWE-WI members on being recognized! To learn more about the recognition program, see the [SWE All Together blog post](#).

MISSION

# 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/>

### SWE-WI OUTREACH SAVE THE DATE

STEAM Fair (Glendale) – December 13, 2025

Future City (Milwaukee) – January 17, 2026

STEM Fair (Milwaukee) – February 22, 2026

EMDC (Milwaukee) – March 13, 2026

## 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)

## 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/>

# FIRST Volunteering FY26

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 Wisconsin. No experience required! To volunteer at any of these events, follow the **FIRST Volunteer Registration Guide**.

## **FIRST LEGO League Explore**

- Dates TBD – Stay Tuned!

## **FIRST LEGO League Challenge**

- 11/22 - 11/23/25 – Milwaukee, WI
- 11/22/25 – Janesville, WI
- 11/23/25 – Oshkosh, WI
- 12/6/25 – Madison, WI
- 12/6/25 – Green Bay, WI
- 12/7/25 – Pewaukee, WI
- 12/13/25 – Mukwonago, WI
- 12/14/25 – Milwaukee, WI
- 12/20/25 – Oak Creek, WI
- 12/20/25 – Waukesha, WI
- 1/18/26 – Sun Prairie, WI

## **FIRST Tech Challenge**

- 11/22/25 – Sheboygan, WI
- 12/13/25 – New Berlin, WI
- 12/20/25 – La Crosse, WI
- 1/3/26 – Reedsville, WI
- 1/17/26 – Milwaukee, WI
- 1/31/26 – Madison, WI
- 2/7 – 2/8/26 – Brookfield, WI

## **FIRST Robotics Competition**

- 3/6 – 3/8/26 – Plymouth, WI
- 3/20 – 3/22/26 – Appleton, WI
- 3/27 – 3/29/26 – Mukwonago, WI
- 4/2 – 4/4/26 – La Crosse, WI
- 4/17 – 4/19/26 – Brookfield, WI

For more information about FIRST opportunities in the state, check out the **FIRST Wisconsin website**.



## **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/>**

# SWE-WI Scholarship

## *Undergraduate Engineering Scholarship Applications Accepted 11/15-1/31*

Scholarship applications will be accepted for the SWE-WI is pleased to announce the application period for the Scholarship Program is open November 15, 2025 through January 31, 2026. This program will award \$1000 minimum scholarship to a currently-enrolled female students pursuing a degree in engineering or engineering technology for ABET-accredited, 4-year colleges in Wisconsin or the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

For additional information on application requirements and eligibility see SWE-WI website:

<https://wisconsin.swe.org/scholarship/>

## *Giving Tuesday/End of Year Scholarship Donation Request*

With Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber Monday coming up, please consider paying it forward to our future women engineers. Scholarship application is open through January 31, 2026 for 2026-2027 female engineering students. Through individual and corporate sponsors, SWE-WI has raised over \$70,000 for 48 female engineering students attending colleges in Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

We are hoping the SWE-WI community to help fund another \$1000 scholarship. Any gift is welcome.

Donation period open now through 12/31/2025. For more information, go to

<https://wisconsin.swe.org/scholarship/>, top of the webpage

Thank you in advance for your support  
From the SWE-WI Scholarship Committee

## *About Martha Maxwell Scholarship Fund*

For those who knew her, Martha Maxwell was a fun-loving enthusiast who loved to make light of any situation. She was passionate about SWE and loved to share her passion with young women starting out in the engineering field. Martha's career took her through industrial engineering and manufacturing roles, most recently as a Project Engineer in the Advanced Manufacturing department at Rockwell Automation. She also was an active member of SWE-WI for many years, and served in numerous leadership positions, most recently as Section Representative. In August 2012, Martha passed away after a battle with cancer.

To honor Martha's memory and continue fostering her excitement about engineering, math, and science for young girls and women, SWE-WI has created a memorial scholarship fund in Martha Maxwell's name. The goal is to raise funds for \$1000 scholarship will be awarded to SWE collegiate members attending school in Wisconsin or the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

**Save the Date  
Spring Forward  
with SWE-WI!**

Spring Forward with SWE-WI will return in 2026 in Stevens Point on **April 11<sup>th</sup>**! Save the date, you will not want to miss this great opportunity to network with professional and collegiate SWE members from around the area, get a chance to present and build your confidence to submit a proposal at a larger SWE conference, and overall be inspired by the talented women throughout our region.