

# The Gear

Serving the 439 Members of the SWE-WI Section

Mar - 2026

## SWE-WI FY2025-26 Anniversaries

Please join us in celebrating our SWE-WI section members and their SWE FY 2025-26 Anniversaries! The Society-wide list was distributed by SWE Headquarters earlier this year.

**55 years** - Marcia Strahl

**50 years** - Betty Parrott

**40 years** - Debra Nelson & Karen Spence

**35 years** - Stephanie Lewellen & Tracy Melin

**20 years** - Michele Dodez, Amanda Hobson, Keena Spencer-Dobson, & Bonnie VandenPlas

**15 years** - Emily Ballweg, Nicole Barna, Devon Curley, Samantha Dieckman, Nelly Gillman, Lori Moll, Janee Pederson, & Corrine Wolff

**10 years** - Valentina Brady, Katherine Coleman, Emma Cusack, Kylee Gregory, Michelle Lei, Susan Ottmann, Amanda Pustis, & Katie Vandenberg

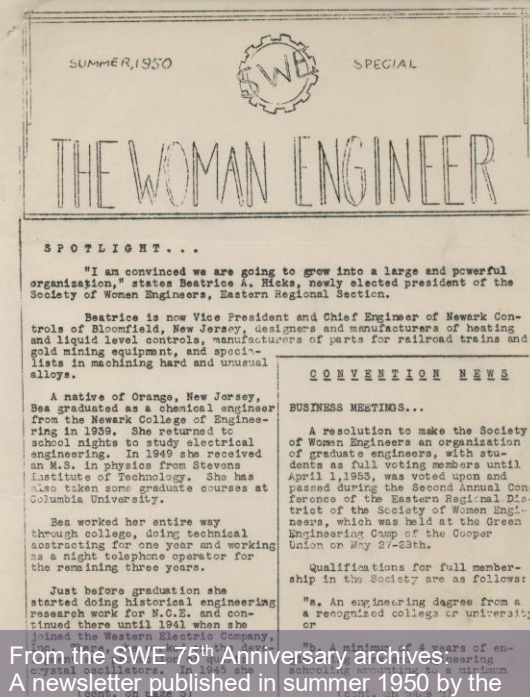
Submitted by: Susan Thomas Schlett, F. SWE

SWE-WI Membership FY26

### 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 \(link\)](#)



From the SWE 75th Anniversary archives: A newsletter published in summer 1950 by the Metropolitan New York Section announced the formation of a unified Society of Women Engineers.

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# Spring Forward Registration Open!

Registration is now open for our annual professional development event, Spring Forward!

Spring Forward will be hosted this year at UW - Stevens Point on Saturday, April 11, 2026 with some optional events the Friday before, including local tours and a networking dinner. In addition to many great sessions and panels, our keynote speaker this year will be Kelly Guay, who is Plant Manager at Ahlstrom's Mosinee Mill, co-owner of Sunset Point Winery, and a UWSP alumna!

Time	Alumni Room	Legacy Room	Room 374	UWSP Paper Pilot Line
7:30-8:00	Registration			
8:00-8:30	Networking Breakfast			
8:30-9:00	Welcome			
9:00-10:00	Keynote Kelly Guay			
10:10-11:00		Session 1 Parent Survival Panel	From Imposter to Expert	Tour and papermaking
11:10-12:00		Session 2 From Silence to Self	Career Journey/Pivots	
12:10-1:00	Celebrate SWE-WI			
1:10-2:00		Session 3 Multigenerational Panel	Papermaking in Wisconsin	Tour and papermaking
2:10-3:00		Session 4 Early Career Panel	ABC's of Working Remotely	
3:10-4:00		Closing Keynote Unapologetic Leadership	Optional Networking Space	

Schedule for 2026 Spring Forward Event

Registration for optional tours, networking dinner, and other optional items closes on Friday, March 20. Registration fully closes on **Friday, March 27**.

Register today at <https://form.jotform.com/260193325582154> to join us for this exciting event!



Photo from 2024 Spring Forward with SWE-WI



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](#).

# SWE-WI E-Week Celebrations

*Article by Natalie Gamez*

SWE-WI members came together to celebrate engineers week by competing in daily trivia. We hope everyone had a fun time learning about a few outstanding women engineers and scientists. Congratulations to Allison Neuser for being our winner and recipient of a \$25 Amazon Gift Card.

During engineers week, a group also got together for a Happy Hour at Margaux Brasserie. It was a great opportunity to get to know those in the Milwaukee area a little better.

Consider joining us for a future event!



Attendees from left to right: Gretchen Borden, Danielle Schmitz, Gina Janke, Michal Riege, Heidi Balestrieri, Sam Billedeaux, Dani Hestermann, Elnaz Taromi (and family), Natalie Gamez, and Susan Schlett.



Follow the SWE Wisconsin LinkedIn account to stay up to date on SWE-WI events and share opportunities with your professional colleagues!

[linkedin.com/company/wisconsin-society-of-women-engineers/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wisconsin-society-of-women-engineers/)

# WE Local Portland 2026

Article by *Sam Biletdeaux*

I had the opportunity to close out Engineers Week 2026 with a trip to Portland, OR and attending WE Local Portland! After joining the WE Local Working Group for FY26 and supporting the Social Subcommittee, I had the opportunity to meet Portland WE Local Host Committee members in-person and help out with some of their activities such as the networking lunches and their WE Local Celebration which was themed “Roselandia”. It was a great experience supporting that team and seeing their visions come to life.

Closing keynote Amber Kemmerling said, “you will never regret making time to connect with others.” I definitely had that experience making meaningful connections in Portland, and can’t wait to attend a future SWE conference!



Name tag from WE Local Portland with volunteer purple rose and two cards from the SWE “Affirmation Jar” at the WE Local Celebration



Group photo with Portland LHC/Volunteers and FY26 SWE President Inaas Darrat



MSOE SWE attendees and MSOE Alumni from WI and WA!



Portland LHC members, WE Local Working Group attendees, and SWE HQ at the “Roselandia” WE Local Celebration.



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)

# My Trip to the 2026 WE Local Columbus Conference

Article by Susan Thomas Schlett, F. SWE

## Day 1 - Thursday 3/12/2026

I took off from Milwaukee, traveled through Detroit and landed at the airport in Columbus, Ohio. My roommate Keena picked me up and we checked into the Drury Hotel which was connected to the SWE conference area. That evening I attended the Columbus Museum of Art (CMOA) with Eileen Lindberg, Beth Silverman and Daryl Varney, where we viewed their multimedia exhibits and dined in their cafe.

(Photos 1-4 are inside and outside of the CMOA)

After dinner, relaxing in our hotel pool, I tried not to obsess over the impending gnarly weather that was headed to the Midwest.

## Day 2 - Friday 3/13/2026

The conference got into full swing with a bit over 500 attendees. I met up with friends from my SWE-WI territory: Andrea Falasco, Michele Dodez and Keena Spencer-Dobson (Photo 5 & Seated in Photo 6) and Carsyn Boggio and Tory Cantrell from Michigan Technological University (which is also in SWE-WI territory in the upper peninsula of Michigan). (Standing with me in Photos 6 & 7)

Photos 1-4

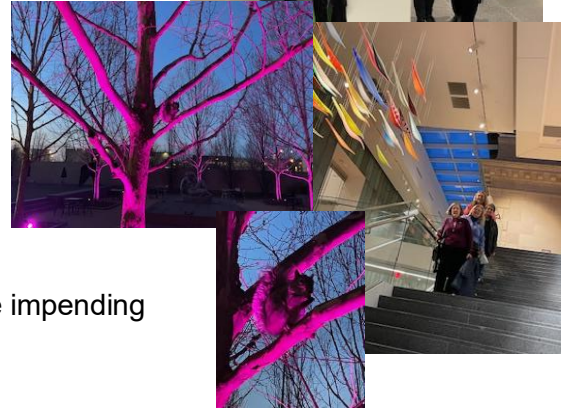


Photo 5

I enjoyed the networking luncheons and a variety of sessions. Sessions I attended included *Changing DEI Landscape* with SWE HQ VP of Operations Tiffany Swanigan, and Kris Liebau's session entitled *Leadership Mindset: Manage Your Energy for Greater Resilience*. That evening, in the blustery wind, I walked with Beth Silverman, Eileen Lindberg, Anne Townson and Michele Dodez (Photo 8) downtown (Photo 9), to Kooma Sushi Restaurant. The menu had more options for sushi than I have ever seen before! After dinner I headed back to the hotel hoping to take a swim, but unfortunately, I could not get near the pool due to the influx of Cheer Squads from all over the region!



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

# My Trip to the 2026 WE Local Columbus Conference (continued)



Photo 10

## Day 3 - Saturday 3/14/2026 (aka Pi Day!)

It was time to celebrate Pi Day and wear my Pi Day scarf! (Photo 10) It was good to see friends from SWE Headquarters (HQ) such as Section Relations Manager Jessica Ames (Photo 11). We had a group photograph taken of the Late Career/Retiree Affinity Group (LCR AG). (Photo 12) Beth Silverman, Daryl Varney, Mary Kinsella and Mary Zeis discussed items from the LCR meeting. (Photo 13) Beth Silverman and Anne Townson are currently the co-leads for the LCR AG. (Photo 14)



Photo 11

To round out the day, it was great to see SWE HQ staff: Events Manager Dee Manella; Executive VP of Strategic Partnerships & Events Jennifer Scott; and our SWE Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer Karen Horting. (Photo 15) I learned a lot from Holly Teig's *Honoring Pioneering Women* session and encourage people to check out the book she and others wrote about the early SWE Achievement Award recipients.



Photo 12



Photo 14



Photo 15



Photo 13

# My Trip to the 2026 WE Local Columbus Conference (continued)

## Day 3 - Saturday 3/14/2026 (aka Pi Day!) (continued)

The highlight of the conference for me was Lisa Hinkelman's Keynote Address. She is the Founder and CEO of *Ruling Our eXperiences* (ROX). Lisa has dedicated nearly two decades to understanding and empowering girls through research, programming and advocacy. Her group has surveyed over 17,000 girls in the U.S. and produced a Girls' Index study in 2017 and 2024. To quote Lisa, "the data presented in this report paints a nuanced picture of girls' experiences with STEM. On one hand, we see tremendous potential and readiness among girls to embrace STEM opportunities. Their interest in these fields has grown significantly since our initial study. On the other hand, we observe concerning trends in girls' confidence levels, particularly during the critical middle school years, which can profoundly impact their perceptions of their abilities in math and science. This report is more than just numbers and statistics. It is a call to action for educators, parents, policymakers, and all those invested in nurturing the next generation of female STEM leaders. By understanding where girls need our support, we can develop targeted strategies to bolster their confidence, challenge stereotypes, and create pathways for success in STEM careers." **In other words, it is not enough to tell girls they can be anything they want to be. We must show them how!** I wanted to learn more so I bought Lisa's book entitled, *Girls Without Limits, Helping Girls Succeed in Relationships, Academics, Careers, and Life*.

## Day 4 - Sunday 3/15/2026

After sharing a 4:30 am ride with Beth Silverman to the airport (thank you Beth!), I waited in a 55 minute TSA line and then boarded a plane to Chicago. Thrilled to be almost home, I came to find out all flights to WI have been cancelled! Luckily I have a wonderful son who is about one hour from O'Hare airport and he was able to give me a ride to my car at Milwaukee airport. From there I drove another hour home, just beating the blizzard that gave our yard 8 inches of snow! SWE conferences can be an adventure, but I was glad to arrive home safely!

I hope to see many of you at the Annual SWE Conference in **Boston, November 5-7, 2026!**



**Save the Date** – WE26 will be in Boston, MA this November 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>.

Hotel registration information is typically available from SWE HQ in the May timeframe. Stay tuned for more details, and start planning your next SWE conference soon!

# FY27 SWE-WI Elections

## *Glen Hills Middle School – 12/13/25*

Attention all SWE-WI members! It is that time of the year where we hold section elections for fiscal year (FY27) which runs from July 1, 2026 until June 30, 2027 per our bylaws.

Elected positions include:

- **President**
- **VP1-Professional Development**
- **VP2-Collegiates**
- **VP3-Outreach**
- **Secretary 1 – Recording**
- **Secretary 2 - Society Liaison**
- **Treasurer**

Position descriptions can be found at [wisconsin.swe.org](http://wisconsin.swe.org) under: About SWE WI.

If you are interested in running for one of these positions, please fill out the interest form to be shared in the weekly SWE-WI E-blasts. Information the nominating committee needs includes: a bit about your self, which position you are running for, and why.

Submit the form, along with a headshot no later than **April 13, 2026**.

If you have any questions, contact nominating committee chair Susan Schlett at 262 337-3934 or [schlett@yahoo.com](mailto:schlett@yahoo.com). Consider running. It is a great place to learn new things and develop leadership skills!



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 Outreach Opportunities

## *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

- Contrapt (Waukesha) – April 24<sup>th</sup>
- Contrapt (Milwaukee) – May 8<sup>th</sup>
- Math-In Day (Waukesha) – May 28<sup>th</sup>

## *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.

Have you heard about a STEM event or have an idea for a SWE-WI Outreach activity? Send information to [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org).

## *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/>  
For any SWENext questions, contact: [outreach@swe.org](mailto:outreach@swe.org)

# SWE-WI Spring Outreach Details

## *SWE-WI Role Models Needed for Contrapt*

SWE-WI sponsors an award at the Contrapt competition for Middle School Students, we need SWE role models to judge. No prior experience is needed to be a role model, only a desire to be present and pay forward what others have done for you.

Please sign up at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4CAAEE2BA75-62973402-contrapt>

The April 24th competition is at WCTC in Waukesha from 9:30am-12:00pm.

The May 8th competition is at MSOE in Milwaukee from 9:30am-12:00pm.

Please contact Heidi at [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org) for more information

## *Math-In Day Volunteers Needed*

Math-In Day is a day at Banting Elementary dedicated to math. SWE-WI will be visiting classrooms and talking about engineering with students from all grades while they build domes from gummies and toothpicks. Instructions and materials will be provided.

Math-In Day will take place on May 28<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am-3:30pm at Banting Elementary in Waukesha.

Please sign-up at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4CAAEE2BA75-62973403-mathin>

The more volunteers we have, the more classrooms we can visit.

Any questions contact Heidi Balestrieri at [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org)



WAUKESHA 4.24.26  
MILWAUKEE 5.8.26



# 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/CztqvtTXYQB2hK6JA>

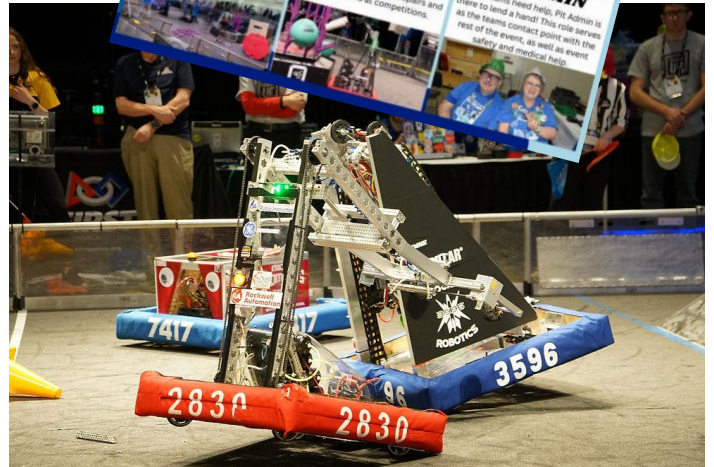
# FIRST Volunteering FY26

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 the state! To volunteer at any of these events, follow the **FIRST Volunteer Registration Guide**.

## FIRST Robotics Competition

- 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**. Volunteer at a FIRST event? Let [swewioutreach@swe.org](mailto:swewioutreach@swe.org) know!

## Women Developing Women Conference

Milwaukee School of Engineering's Center for Professional Education is proud to host the annual Women Developing Women Conference on Thursday, April 16, 2026. The theme for 2026 is Building Your Influence for Lasting Impact

Learn more about this event and register here: <https://www.msOE.edu/wdw/>

# SWE Resource Spotlight

Did you know about *All Together*, the official blog of the Society of Women Engineers that features stories about SWE members, engineering, technology, and other STEM related topics? You can access all content on the *All Together* [website](#).

Sign up for the monthly *All Together* newsletter

Sign Up! 

Want to get a monthly copy of the *All Together* newsletter in your inbox? Opt-in by submitting your email [here](#).



## Global Women Engineers

### Affinity Group



Check out one of the recent *All Together* blog posts where the Global Women Engineers Affinity Group (GWE AG) leadership share their backgrounds and how their involvement in this AG has benefited them: [Across Borders and Disciplines, From Vision to Impact: The Story of SWE's Global Women Engineers Affinity Group](#).

## 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.