

EAGLE EDGE

LEAD. EDUCATE. COLLABORATE. INNOVATE.

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2022



Ready to Read

Community partnership a win-win for young readers, aspiring teachers



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alumni and friends.

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In this Eagle Edge, you'll learn more about some new collaborations that highlight community engagement. Whether it relates to our purpose, practices or people, we are committed to aligning community needs with those of our future teachers to make a difference in the lives of the young people in the La Crosse community. The School of Education faculty and staff continue to seek out opportunities that provide future teachers authentic, hands-on experiences that are grounded in building relationships and improving academic success.

In this issue, there is an emphasis on the interface of the arts and education. For many years, research has indicated that the arts teach skills that impact academic and life success. Youth who engage in the arts are more likely to be organized, comfortable with public speaking, and willing to take risks. These skills prepare them to become the brave leaders in education that our world needs.

Finally, several teacher education majors are featured, who share why they are excited about reaching their future dream of becoming an educator. While society is making it tough for educators today, the passion and energy that new educators bring with them into the profession is something I hope will be welcomed and nurtured so that they are able to reach their full potential and positively impact the learners in their classrooms. With the teacher shortage facing us, our children deserve qualified educators working in partnership with families and communities. I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I did.

In Partnership,

Marcie Wycoff-Horn

Marcie Wycoff-Horn
Dean



Art education students showed off their latest creations during a senior art exhibition in December. Students expressed themselves through ceramics, painting, photography, sculpture and more.

Four art education students showcased their latest work during a senior art exhibition in December, expressing themselves through ceramics, painting, photography, sculpture and more.

By creating and exhibiting their work, the students say they gained a deeper understanding of their artistic passions and a better feel for the lessons they hope to share in their future classrooms.

Tekla Nimnow

Tekla Nimnow stepped out of her comfort zone by including a sculpture in her exhibit.

But not just any sculpture. Nimnow used roughly 10,000 plastic straws to create a three-dimensional reef — a statement on the harm that plastic and other waste inflict on our oceans.

“I had never done sculpture before, so I’d say that was the most challenging,”

says Nimnow, a native of Merrimac. “Straws are one of the biggest plastic waste contributions to the decaying, which is why I chose the ironic medium.”

Nimnow’s exhibit also includes three abstract stoneware vessels, four paintings of butterflies indigenous to Wisconsin, and six photos of fall colors in La Crosse.



Tekla Nimmow's portfolio included a 3D sculpture of a reef, which she created using plastic straws. The piece is a statement on the harm plastic and other waste inflict on our oceans.

WORKS OF ART

Art education students showcase their latest creations

Her assortment of pieces is a reflection of the variety of her many interests, as well as the versatility she hopes to have as a teacher.

Nimmow's student teaching placement this spring is at North Woods International School in La Crosse.

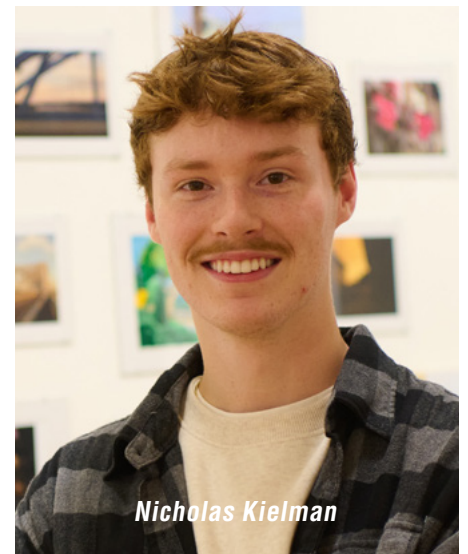
"I took as many different classes as I could," she says. "That way, I'll be prepared to teach whatever my students are interested in."

Nicholas Kielman

Finding significance in small moments.

That's what Nicholas Kielman sought to do with his paintings and photography, which depict the beauty of ordinary scenes around La Crosse.

"Even if a scene isn't picture perfect, there's still going to be beauty in it," notes Kielman, a native of Fond du Lac. He pointed to one of his photos, an evening street scene, as an example.



Nicholas Kielman

“It’s crowded by cars and telephone lines. But behind that, you have this beautiful sunset,” he says. “It’s a little moment that, if I didn’t stop and capture it, it would just be gone.”

Kielman captured several of these scenes with a paintbrush — something he had never done before.

“Having this many of my paintings on display blows my mind,” he says. “It’s something I never thought I would do.”

He also explored ceramics for the first time, creating a collection of bottles and vases.

This spring, Kielman is student teaching at West Salem Middle School.

“I want my students to go for it and explore new things,” he says. “Putting yourself out there is how you grow as an artist.”

Jessie Solberg

One person’s trash may be another person’s treasure. But rarely is it another person’s masterpiece.

Jessie Solberg’s signature creation was a cyanotype collage depicting nearly 300 pieces of garbage. The process involved placing each item on chemically treated paper and exposing it to light, creating a silhouette effect.

“Picking up trash is something I do in my free time, so I thought it would be a fun project,” explains Solberg, a native of La Crosse. “It was fun searching for certain things that I knew

would look cool — mostly things with a transparent quality.”

Solberg’s exhibit also included intaglio prints of a bird and various stoneware pottery, including one more abstract piece in which the coils of clay wove in and out of one another.

“It was a virtual class due to the pandemic, and (Assistant Professor) Jarred (Pfeiffer) sent us home with a big bag of clay and told us to make something with it,” she remembers. “Mine is super weird. I’m really proud of how it turned out.”

This spring, Solberg is applying to graduate programs, looking to earn a master’s degree in fine arts or art therapy.





Samantha Annen

Loneliness. Anger. Hope. Uncertainty about the future.

COVID-19 has elicited a range of emotions from people around the world — emotions Samantha Annen sought to capture in her series of paintings titled, “The Forgotten.”

The paintings depict faces obscured by clouds of color, a similar effect to a mask, with only the eyes and nose visible. Annen used color and the expression in the eyes to bring out various emotions.

“Since the pandemic, I feel like a lot of people have forgotten self-expression and forgotten what they love to do, because we’ve had to

stay indoors,” she explains. “I tried to capture those feelings, and I’m proud of how it turned out.”

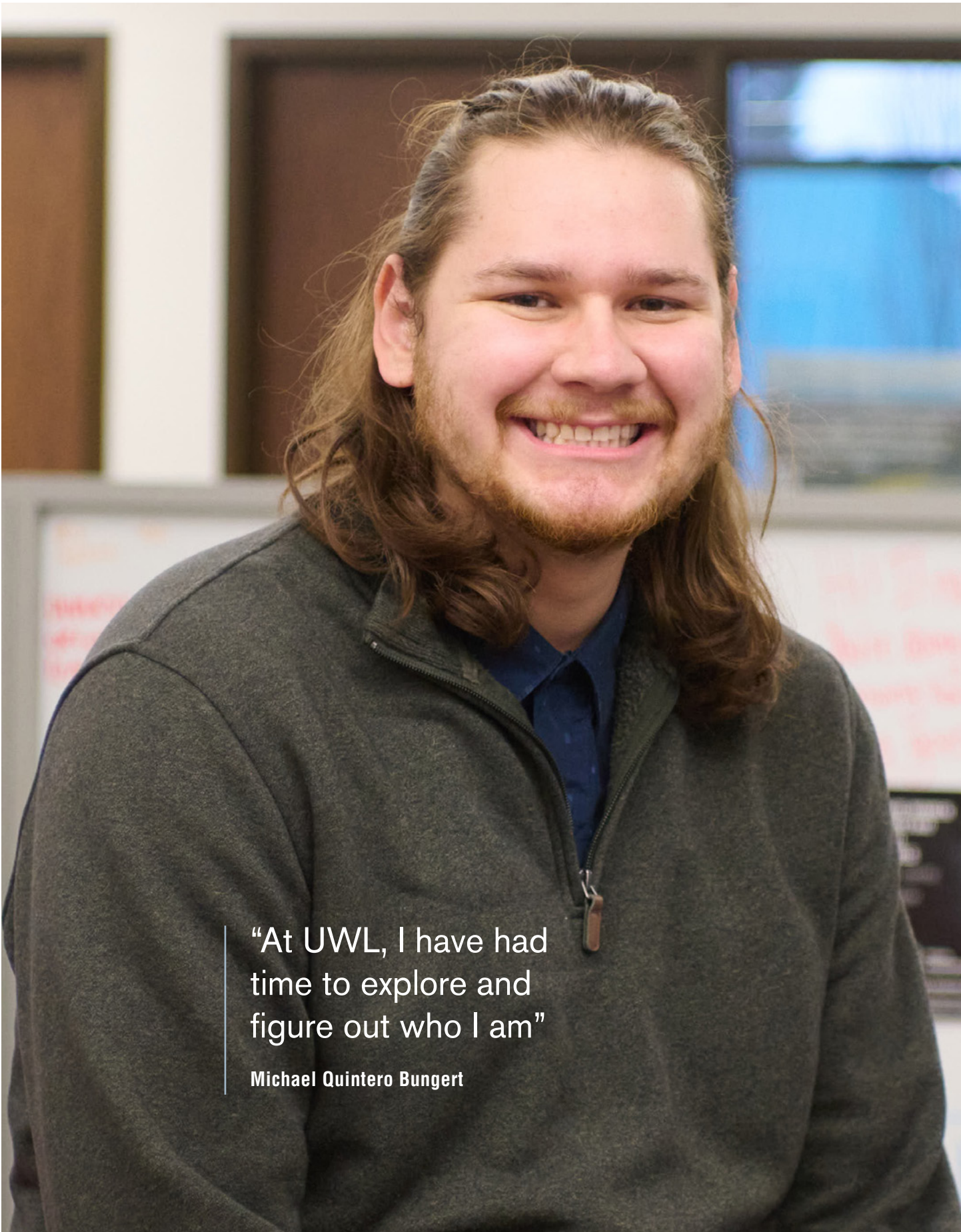
Annen’s exhibit also included a self-portrait, as well as photos and paintings of landscapes around La Crosse.

The Edgerton native is student teaching in the Beloit Turner school district this spring.

“In school, I always felt most comfortable in the art classroom,” she says. “Art is a place where you can be yourself and do what you love. I hope my students will find themselves in their artwork.”

Above: Samantha Annen’s exhibit included a series of paintings depicting emotions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Left: Jessie Solberg created a cyanotype collage depicting nearly 300 pieces of garbage. While picking up litter around town, she kept an eye out for pieces that would stand out in her project.



“At UWL, I have had
time to explore and
figure out who I am”

Michael Quintero Bungert

Finding himself

UWL helped December grad explore his identity, prepare for his future

For Michael Quintero Bungert, college has been about much more than finding a career.

It was also about finding himself.

“At UWL, I have had time to explore and figure out who I am,” says Quintero Bungert, who graduated in December with a bachelor’s degree in social studies education. “Coming from a small town in Minnesota, it was hard for me to fully develop or express my identity as both Mexican and American. With my time at UWL, I was able to explore this identity with the help of my professors, my classmates and multicultural organizations such as the Latin American Student Organization (LASO).”

A native of Pine Island, Minnesota, Quintero Bungert says he was drawn to UWL through word of mouth and the natural beauty of the campus and community.

Almost immediately, he found his place at UWL.

He joined LASO his first year on campus and soon transitioned into leadership roles. His junior year, he served first as the organization’s vice president and then as its president.

“Meeting people who were also exploring their identities as Latinx students really helped with my own identity exploration,” he explains. “They were facing the same things I had to, so being able to share experiences or even just knowing I wasn’t alone was great. I wanted to help LASO be a resource and space for Latinx students who were finding their own way.”

In the classroom, Quintero Bungert learned how he can support and empower students once he becomes a teacher.

It was helpful, he says, “having education classes where I learned how to best implement what I learned from my past classes, and also how to include marginalized groups and their voices into topics I will teach in the future.”

Quintero Bungert says he enjoyed the history courses he has taken, particularly those taught by Professor Víctor Macías-González.

Macías-González was impressed with Quintero Bungert as well.

“I saw him blossom in some Latino and Latin American history classes,” Macías-González notes. “And then I saw him in action as a student leader in the Latino student org.”

Quintero Bungert plans to work as a substitute teacher in the La Crosse area before looking for a more permanent teaching position in Minnesota or Wisconsin.

He knows he’ll miss UWL and the campus groups of which he’s been a part, including LASO and the men’s ultimate Frisbee team.

Most of all, he’ll miss the people.

“I have really enjoyed being able to meet some amazing people at UWL,” he says. “Taking multiple classes with the same professors allowed me to be more comfortable in the classroom and make connections at UWL. Similarly, being friends with students in the same major ... created a support system for my classmates and myself.”

Reading

When teaching literacy, books are just the beginning

buddies

A partnership between the School of Education and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse is providing local children with personalized reading instruction and future teachers with valuable experience assisting young learners.

In February, 80 SOE students were paired with children (kindergarten through third grade) from the Boys & Girls Clubs at Northside and Hamilton elementary schools in La Crosse. Throughout the semester, each student spent one on one time with their reading buddy, getting to know them on a personal level while learning how to provide individualized reading lessons.

“One of the most important tools for a teacher is relationship building,” explains Caryn Peterson, a lecturer in the Educational Studies Department at UWL. “Working one on one, students are able to know a child’s likes and dislikes, what their reading level is, and how to fine tune a lesson

plan that will meet their needs. Those kinds of relationships have a huge impact in the classroom.”

Deanna Maynard, assistant professor of educational studies, says it’s critical to find materials, genres and teaching techniques that make reading enjoyable for students.

“If we can engage learners at a young age, then we can make literacy interesting and fun for the rest of their lives,” Maynard says. “Maybe that means introducing them to poetry or engaging them in writing. It’s important for them to see that there’s a lot out there.”

SOE students say they found the experience enjoyable and impactful as well.

McKenna Bowers, a sophomore majoring in early and middle childhood education, says the program has been a great lesson in adaptability.



Sophie Zmuzinski works with her reading buddy at the Boys & Girls Club at Northside Elementary School in La Crosse. Students say the reading buddies program gives them valuable experience teaching and connecting with children.

For example, Bowers' reading buddy loves basketball and moving around. So, after finishing a book, Bowers plays basketball with the student while she asks him about the book's themes, characters, setting and plot.

"I never expected this program to help me in the way that it did, because you truly must expect the unexpected," she says. "You have to be able to have a flexible lesson plan in case it doesn't work with your buddy's mood, activity or way of learning for the day. That is truly what teaching is all about."

Marshall Simon, a sophomore majoring in elementary education and teaching English to speakers of other languages, says the program has taught him the importance of connecting with students on a personal level.

"It's cool to see our relationship grow, as well as seeing the progress my buddy has made in their literacy skills,"

he says. "The relationship my buddy and I have built is beneficial to both of us, and is something we both look forward to every week. I think one of the biggest things is learning to build a relationship with my students in a way that allows them to trust me and want to learn from me."

Martha Moran, a sophomore majoring in elementary/middle education and special education, agrees.

"This program has shown me the drastic impact I can have on a student, giving them a personalized, unique and safe learning environment," she says.

Teigen Meiners, '13, community engagement coordinator for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse, says this one-on-one instruction has the potential to be highly transformative.

Typically, there's a 10:1 child-staff ratio at the Boys & Girls Clubs. When each of those 10 students has unique needs, the job becomes exponentially more challenging.

"It's not always easy. Some of our members are reluctant to read because they're behind, and some might be reluctant because they're way ahead," Meinders, says. "So it's really nice that students can modify their lesson plans for the individual they're working with."

"We know that, the more meaningful connections we're able to make with a child, the more we're going to be able to help that child," Meiners adds. "These relationships have

allowed us to spark that interest in reading and writing, which is so important at this age level."

Jake Erickson, CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse, says this partnership has been beneficial — especially coming out of the pandemic.

"We rely on our strong partnerships to create high-level opportunities that will benefit local youths' academic success," he says. "Many kids have suffered from learning loss and social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Partnerships, like Reading Buddies, help close education gaps and promote healthy relationship building."

Typically, there's a 10:1 child-staff ratio at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse. The new literacy partnership with UWL ensures that children receive personalized, one-on-one instruction.



LENDING A HAND



Western's Rebecca Hopkins (left) and UWL's Heather Linville (right) unbox learning materials that will support Afghan evacuees learning English as a Second Language.

UWL, Western donate learning materials to support evacuees at Fort McCoy

UW-La Crosse and Western Technical College joined forces to provide much-needed learning materials for Afghan child evacuees who were recently staying at Fort McCoy, about 40 miles east of La Crosse.

Thanks in part to a donation from National Geographic, UWL and Western are sending hundreds of student workbooks, CDs and DVDs to classrooms on the Army base. The materials are designed to help students learn English as a Second Language (ESL), which will ease their transition into a new country and culture.

"Anyone who has had to leave their homeland that quickly and immigrate to a new place is going to have some psychological trauma," explains Heather Linville, associate professor of educational studies at UWL. "That can cause difficulty in learning and readiness to learn another language."

The new workbooks and learning tools, Linville adds, will give students a strong foundation as they integrate into society and enter the school system.

Rebecca Hopkins, associate dean at Western, says providing ESL instruction to the community is a key part of the college's mission. Through a grant, Western was able to send several staff members to lead ESL instruction at Fort McCoy.

"We are honored to have been able to respond quickly, with tremendous Wisconsin Technical College System support, providing an experienced instructional team on base that can be there for the duration," Hopkins notes. "These materials will be a wonderful addition for consistency in learning."

This is the latest example of La Crosse's colleges and universities working together to support newcomers from Afghanistan.

Previous efforts have included drives for toys and school supplies, youth sports camps at Fort McCoy, and a series of panel discussions intended to help the community understand refugee resettlement and the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

UWL senior Damian J. Combs

Major: Instrumental music education

Hometown: Columbus, Indiana

Previous college: Indiana University

Q: Why did you choose to transfer to UWL?

A: I chose to transfer to UWL because I moved to La Crosse and this school was the best fit for me, especially as a musician and going into teaching music. To me, UWL is a small university, with the feeling of a big university. I love the fact that this is a smaller campus because everything seems more personable, especially when it comes to one-on-one help, and it really feels like a family here.

Q: Tell me about how you started in higher education.

A: I started out majoring in business administration/information systems from American InterContinental University. I graduated with an associate degree. I then transferred to Indiana University and went there for two years, majoring in informatics, before transitioning to UWL to study music education.

Q: What advice do you have for transfer students? What advice would you give a first-year transfer student?

A: My advice would be to make sure you learn everything about the university as much as you can. It is important to become familiar with your surroundings, and join a club, sport, etc., so you can become the true Eagle you are developing into during your time here! It's okay to also indulge yourself in only academics, too.

Q: What has surprised you here at UWL?

A: What surprised me about UWL is the campus' size. However, it still has that feeling of a big university, which is appealing, especially if someone wants the big university feel, but likes the campus to be smaller. I am also surprised at how helpful everyone has been during my time here. You can always find answers, and the communication is top-notch! I have never felt lost.

Q: Who has helped you or helped you in your transition to UWL?

A: Hands down, Ashley Cree from SOE (School of Education). She has helped me beyond any words I can say! I am so thankful for her support and guiding me on the right track to graduation. She has broken everything down for me so that I know I am on track. I could not be more appreciative of her guidance and overall support!

Q: What would you like to do with your degree after you graduate from UWL?

A: I would like to teach music in a middle school to start, but I am not opposed to teaching high school to begin my music-teaching career. The opportunity to teach music at the high school level also appeals to me. Regardless of where I begin, I would be content splitting my time between teaching music at both a high school and middle school.

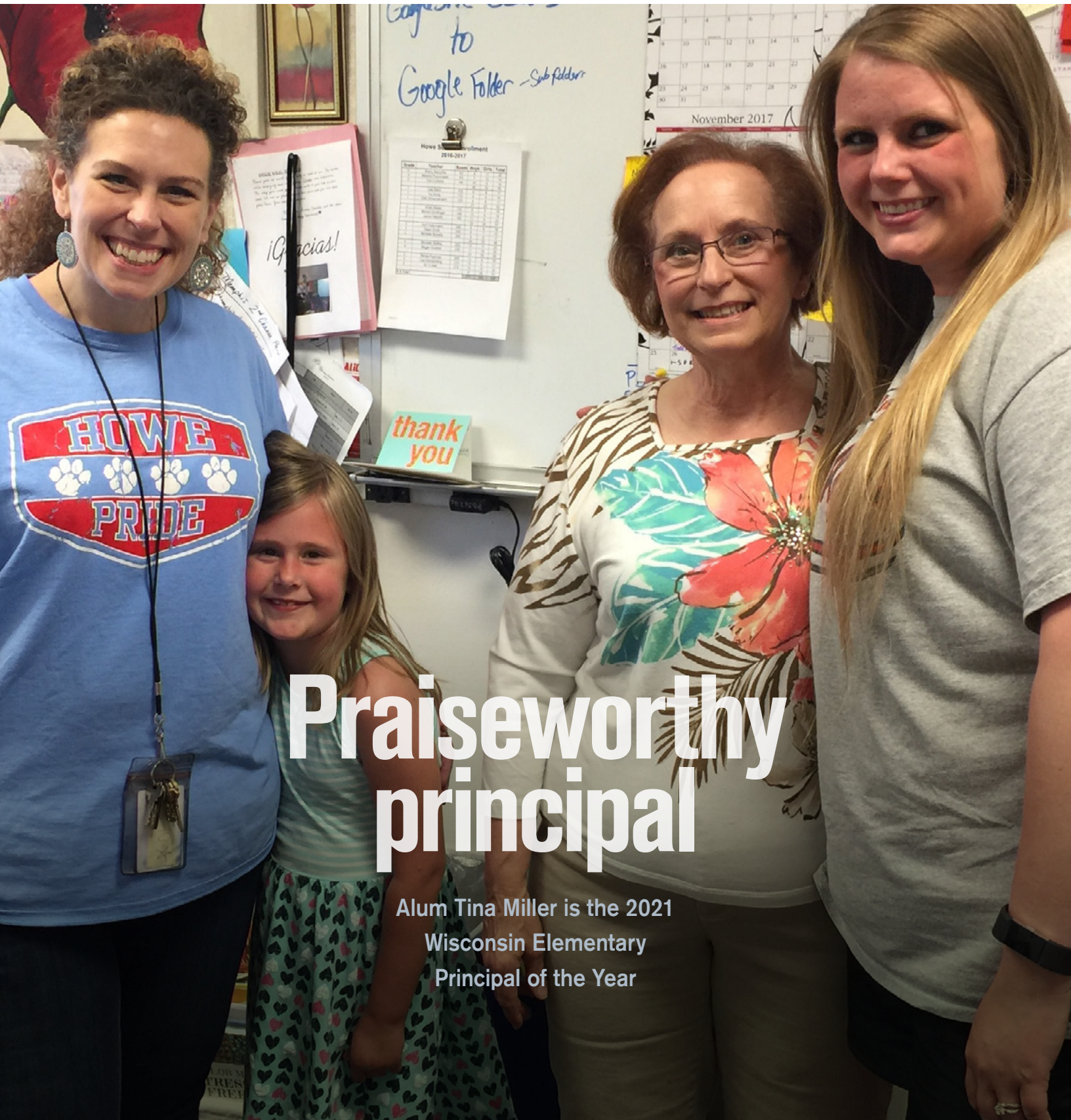
Q: Anything else you would like to share?

A: I am blessed and grateful beyond words to be a student at UWL. I am doing so well, and I have met some great people, from students to faculty. UWL really feels like home to me. I am enjoying my time as a music student, and continue to learn a great deal. I am right where I need to be, and I am thankful for this opportunity to learn and grow musically and personally.

'It really feels like a family here'

Transfer student Damian J. Combs
found perfect fit at UWL





Praiseworthy principal

Alum Tina Miller is the 2021 Wisconsin Elementary Principal of the Year

Tina Miller and her mother, Donna Weber, hold the unique distinction of being the only mother-daughter pair to serve as principals in the Wisconsin Rapids public school district.

“Continuing that legacy,” Miller, '03, says, “has been really important to me.”

Now, Miller can add another exclusive honor to her resume: 2021 Wisconsin Elementary Principal of the Year.

She was nominated by several staff members and parents in her district. Representatives from the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, the Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards and the Wisconsin Parent Teacher Association selected her for the honor.

“It’s still unbelievable to me that I was chosen. I just shake my head and say, ‘Is this real?’” says Miller, who holds a master’s degree from UW-La Crosse. “To be recognized by my staff, my administrative peers and parents in our district, it’s such a great feeling.”

Receiving the award was a full-circle moment for Miller, who grew up in Wisconsin Rapids and attended the district where she now works.

She earned her bachelor’s degree from UW-Stevens Point and soon returned to Wisconsin Rapids to teach second grade at Mead Elementary School.

A year in, Miller and several of her colleagues decided to pursue their master’s degrees through UWL’s professional studies in education program.

For Miller, the program was about much more than furthering her education and setting her up to become an administrator. It was also a time of personal growth and the foundation for long-lasting friendships.

“The biggest benefit of the program was having 40 to 50 people in this little community, helping each other through the process,” she explains. “These people become your biggest cheerleaders and champions. You go through life with them for those two years. I still keep in touch with a lot of them, even though we all graduated in 2003.”

After earning her degree, Miller took on a new role in her district, splitting time as a classroom teacher and a professional development facilitator.

In 2008, when her school became a charter school, Miller became a charter school grant coordinator in addition to her professional development work.

Finally, she became the principal of Howe Elementary in 2016.

Being a principal, and being named the Elementary Principal of the Year, has allowed Miller to share her passion and teaching philosophies with a wider audience. Teaching, she says, is about more than pushing students to excel in the classroom.



Tina Miller

“I have always believed that happy kids learn,” she says. “Teaching isn’t just an exercise in regurgitation; we need to get students in the right brain setting to learn. This means understanding the challenges kids carry in their invisible backpacks and creating a safe and structured environment for them every single day. It goes back to having empathy, working together as a staff and making sure we’re serving the whole child.”

Miller had an excellent role model mentoring those characteristics — her mother. Even now, two decades after her mother’s retirement, Miller still calls her at the end of most school days.

“It’s so cool to have that connection with her and to be able to talk about the challenges of the job, even though they’re very different from back in the ’90s when she was a principal,” Miller says. “To share this award with my mom and the rest of my family has been really special.”



HELP ON THE WAY

Rob Dixon, director of the UW-La Crosse school psychology program, says the university's new online program addresses Wisconsin's extreme shortage of school psychologists. It's the first in the state — and one of only three in the country — to offer online studies in school psychology designed for full-time teachers.

Unique program set to grow state's school psychologists

A new UWL online program aims to help address Wisconsin's extreme shortage of school psychologists.

Working with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Education on the School Based Mental Health Professionals Grant, UWL is adding an online program to its esteemed traditional program that will allow current teachers to become endorsed as a school psychologist while continuing to teach.

Rob Dixon, school psychology program director, says the new program has three main goals. First, it addresses the extreme shortage of school psychologists who are working

to meet the academic, behavior and mental health needs of the state's students. Second, it curbs the growing need to fill positions in rural districts — all while keeping teachers in the classroom as they get advanced credentials. Finally, it will help to diversify the field of school psychology within the state.

"There are many educators who want to become school psychologists but can't leave their communities and jobs to attend a face-to-face program," Dixon explains. "This extends UW-La Crosse's reach to provide the knowledge and skills in the hands of educators who can then make a difference in a child's life."

Dixon says the new program is the first in the state — and one of only three in the country — to offer online studies in school psychology designed for full-time teachers.

"While other programs seek to find that balance between distance, face-to-face and hybrid, we will be the only program in the state to offer asynchronous, online education in school psychology to meet the needs of the state," Dixon notes. "We are only the third program in the country to offer this unique type of programming."

UWL's traditional school psychology program typically graduates 12 licensed students a year. Dixon says they get multiple job offers. Most

School psychologists work to meet the academic, behavior and mental health needs of the state's students. The new online school psychology program at UWL addresses the extreme shortage of school psychologists, works to curb the growing need to fill positions in rural districts, and diversifies Wisconsin's field of school psychology.

seek positions in urban or suburban locations, he notes, leaving rural districts scrambling. While the impact of graduates from the new, online program is a few years off, Dixon anticipates an additional dozen students graduating annually will help meet the long-term needs of the state.

UWL will work with the Wisconsin DPI on the School Based Mental Health Professionals Grant to target rural districts, prioritize attracting individuals who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the local population, and recruit qualified teachers who will be supported by their school districts in pursuing the school psychology degrees.

The first students will begin classes in summer 2022. Applications are currently being accepted at: uwlax.edu/grad/school-psychology-online.

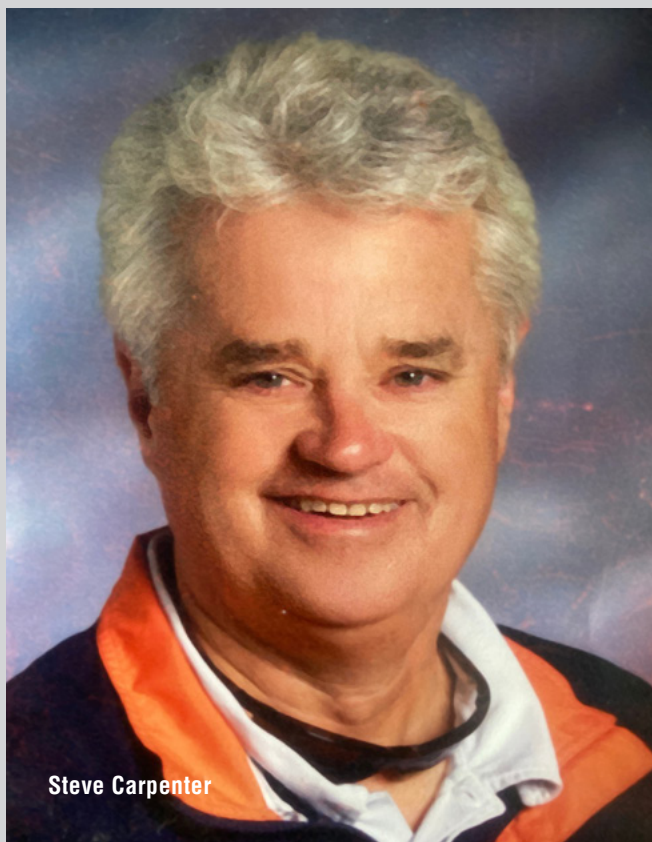
The U.S. Department of Education's School Based Mental Health Professionals Project and DPI are providing critical support for the program's start-up costs, including \$20,000 for tuition waivers during its first year.

Those accepted into the program will remain in their current teaching positions while taking the online program. They will complete their practica and internship hours in the school where they are currently teaching.



A LASTING LEGACY

Waukesha PE teacher gone but not forgotten



A longtime teacher and tennis coach in the Greater Milwaukee Area won't be forgotten.

Steve Carpenter, a 1972 graduate in physical education, excelled on UWL's tennis team, playing No. 1 singles and doubles. "Carp," as his friends called him, went on to touch thousands of lives during his 35 years as a physical education teacher and coach in the Waukesha school district. He died Jan. 10, 2010, following a 16-month battle with ALS.

Along with serving as head tennis coach at Waukesha South High School, Carpenter was a tennis professional at the Moorland Park Indoor Tennis Club in New Berlin, and the Olympia Resort in Oconomowoc. He spent many summers at Horeb Park in Waukesha and at Fowler Park in Oconomowoc, giving tennis lessons and working with players of all ages and abilities.

After Carpenter was diagnosed with ALS, one of his last wishes was to provide an enduring fund for students at his school, Lowell Elementary. The Steve Carpenter Scholarship was funded through the contributions from his family, friends and supporters. It funded both scholarships and grants for students to participate in special activities such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, auditory and verbal therapy, sports camps, music instruction and more.

Carpenter's successor at Lowell was Bill Kirsch, '84 & '92, who regarded Carpenter as a close friend and mentor.

"To replace my dear friend and mentor was more difficult than you could ever imagine," Kirsch notes. "With Steve's blessing, I took over as physical education teacher at Lowell in Waukesha."

In recent months, Kirsch worked with the school district and the Carpenter family to raise funds to rehabilitate the Lowell school gymnasium — including improved flooring and baskets, along with a sound system and stage. In October 2021, the district celebrated Carpenter's life and legacy by naming Lowell's renovated gymnasium in his honor.

Kirsch says it's a fitting tribute for a man who touched countless lives and enjoyed sharing his passion for physical education.