

# Mankato Area Lifelong Learners

## Spring 2026 Newsletter



### FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Barbara Keating

#### ***Invite Your 55+ Friends, Neighbors and Relatives!***

The Lifelong Learners' Council and Committees are focusing on our 2026 Membership Drive. Our LL "Stay Curious ... Stay Connected" promotional postcards will be available at our presentations and activities. Pick up a few to give to friends, neighbors and relatives when inviting them to join. We have so much for so many. Let's share and grow our membership! Thanks!



**Mindy Van Raalte**

**Diane Manske**

**Jim Skogan**

**Loretta Burns**

**Karen M. Anderson**

# Free Activities for All Members

## First Friday Movie & Conversation

A monthly movie and conversation will be hosted on the First Friday of each month at 1:00 p.m. at Pathstone Latitude and Landing, 115 Rogers Street, Mankato. **Host:** Steve Gilbert



### **April 3 The Emigrants (2021, 2h 28m) PG13**

A sweeping historical drama set in 1849, the story follows Kristina and Karl-Oskar Nilsson as they leave behind poverty in Sweden and emigrate to Minnesota, settling near what is currently Taylor's Falls. This visually stunning film captures both the beauty and the harshness of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century frontier life, as it focuses on Kristina's journey as a wife and mother – showing the emotional toll of leaving home, the strength required to endure hardship, and the quiet courage it takes to hold a family together while facing the unknown.

### **May 1 Anatomy of a Fall (2023, 2h, 31m) R**

This courtroom drama and psychological thriller centers on a woman accused of her husband's mysterious death. The film delves into the complexities of guilt, truth, and the human psyche, leaving audiences questioning the nature of justice. It received widespread acclaim and won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, along with the Academy Award and BAFTA for Best Original Screenplay.

### **June 5 In the Heights (2021, 2h 23m) PG13**

Set in New York City's vibrant Washington Heights neighborhood, this musical drama follows a bodega owner dreaming of a better life while navigating the joys and struggles of his community. Based on the Tony winning stage musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda (*Hamilton*), the film is Miranda's love letter to his Latin culture and NYC neighborhood. Themes of identity and aspiration are expressed through lively song and dance. It received critical acclaim, including wins at the Hollywood Critics Association Awards and nominations at the Golden Globes and Satellite Awards.

*For information on each film, enter the name of the movie in the search bar at [imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com) and find a trailer, director and cast list, run time and more. Trailers are also on YouTube. Your organizer, Steve Gilbert selects the movies and facilitates conversation afterwards. There is no need to pre-register but signing in to validate membership is required. See you there!*

## Coffee & Current Events



Grab your coffee and join us on Zoom for relaxed, thoughtful conversations about what's happening in the world. We meet on the fourth Friday of each month from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. The next gatherings are April 24<sup>th</sup>, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, and June 26<sup>th</sup>. Whether you follow the news closely or just want to make sense of the headlines with others, you're invited. To sign up and receive a Zoom link for any of the meeting, simply send an email to [coffeandcurrentevents@gmail.com](mailto:coffeandcurrentevents@gmail.com).  
**Hosts:** Steve Gilbert and Georgia Holmes.

## Enrich Your Creative Writing Workgroup



Looking to grow as a writer? Join our small, supportive group of writers who meet at 1:00 p.m. on the second Friday of each month to share work, exchange constructive feedback, and encourage one another. Together, we nurture confidence, creativity, and competence in the craft of writing. Materials needed: Pencil, Paper, Memories and Imagination! Please contact the office if you'd like to participate. Location: Blue Earth County Library Conference Room, 100 E. Main St., Mankato.  
**Host:** Jeanne Epp

## Bridge Club



Do you enjoy using strategy, memory, and teamwork? Our Bridge group meets on the third Monday of each month at 1:00 p.m. at the WOW! Zone, located at 2030 Adams St., Mankato. It's a great opportunity to sharpen your skills, connect with fellow players and just enjoy an afternoon of fun and camaraderie. If you'd like to participate, please contact the office.  
**Host:** Mary Bliesmer

## Book Clubs



### History & Science Book Club

This Book Club reads non-fiction and meets quarterly on the second Thursday at 2 pm in the North Mankato Police Annex at 1001 Belgrade Ave., North Mankato. Our next meeting will be on June 11. The book selected for our June 11th meeting is *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*, by Tom Standage.

**Host:** Steve Gilbert

[A History of the World in 6 Glasses](#)

### BookMarks Book Club

This LLL Book Club reads fiction and meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday from 1 -3 pm in the Conference Room at the Blue Earth County Library, 100 E. Main St., Mankato. Books are chosen monthly and will be announced in the weekly updates. The book selected for March is *The Little Old Lady Who Broke All the Rules* by Catharina Ingelman-Sundberg.

**Host:** James Booker

[The Little Old Lady Who Broke All the Rules](#)

## Dining Groups



Twice each month, we come together for a relaxed meal and good company. These gatherings offer an easy way to meet others, share stories, learn from one another, and enjoy lighthearted conversation. Weekly updates will include upcoming dining dates, and RSVPs can be made through the office.

### Luncheon Group

The luncheon group meets on the second or third Thursday of the month at 11:30 am, with restaurants chosen monthly. **Host:** Sue Howard.

### Evening Dining Group

The evening dining group meets on the third or fourth Thursday at 5:30 pm, also at rotating restaurants. **Host:** Sarah Suskovic.

# Spring Quarter 2026 Presentations

## Fees:

Please Register in advance of attending.

Presentation Fees are as follows:	Gold Members: Free-Register by email or phone
Silver Members: \$7 per presentation	Non-Members: \$15 per presentation

## Presentations:

### #1: **Wednesday, April 1st, 2 – 4 p.m. – Baseball 101: How to Enjoy Watching the Game Without Being an Expert**

Just in time for Opening Week, Baseball 101 is a friendly, engaging introduction to America’s pastime designed especially for the casual viewer or the “I kind of know the basics” fan. This presentation won’t drown you in statistics or arcane rules. Instead, it explains what’s actually happening on the field—why managers make the choices they do, what to watch for between pitches, how strategy quietly unfolds over nine innings, and why seemingly small moments matter. Whether you grew up with baseball or only tune in occasionally, you’ll come away watching games more intelligently, more confidently, and with a deeper appreciation for the drama hidden in plain sight. This is perfectly timed for the beginning of the season when every game still feels full of possibility.

**Presenter: Wes Gilbert** - Wes is a Mankato native and the owner of Mankato Computer Technology. He is a lifelong baseball fan and die-hard Twins fan and season ticket holder. His wife and two daughters have embraced his baseball obsession and join him for many games at Target Field every year. Wes spends his free time listening to baseball podcasts and studying stat pages. He previously led a Lifelong Learners class on baseball history in 2024. When he's not obsessing about baseball Wes loves to fish, cook, and spend time at his cabin on Lake Vermilion.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

### #2: **Tuesday, April 7th, 2 – 4 p.m. –A Conversation with Susan Arntz, Mankato City Manager**

Get first-hand information about projects currently underway and those that are planned. Questions are welcomed.

**Presenter: Susan Arntz** - Susan has been serving as Mankato’s City Manager for the more than 5 years. She brings 33 years of local government experience working with and listening to residents, organizations, non-profits, small businesses and large corporations to create communities where everyone thrives. Recognizing the challenges of her role and how her decisions impact lives, she shows up as a curious, inquisitive, and passionate partner. Susan also gives of her time and expertise by being involved with a number of organizations and committees locally, regionally, and statewide.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

### **#3: Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2 - 4 p.m. – Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence: Collaboration, Not Competition**

Artificial intelligence is transforming our lives, workplaces, and decision-making processes, yet it should not be seen as a substitute for human thought. In this presentation, we will explore the workings of AI, the science behind machine learning, and how intelligent systems are designed to enhance human expertise rather than compete with it. Utilizing real-world examples from healthcare, scientific research, and daily life, this discussion will emphasize both the potential and the limitations of AI technology. The talk highlights how humans and machines collaborate, offering a thoughtful overview of the ethical and social questions that accompany this rapidly advancing field.

**Presenter: Mansi Bhavsar, Ph.D.** – Dr. Bhavsar is an Assistant Professor of Computer Information Science at Minnesota State University Mankato. She leads efforts to enhance curriculum design and evaluation in the computing discipline. Her research is in the area of student-centered, Inclusive pedagogies and hands-on learning curriculum units with computer science concepts that include emerging technologies and real-world applications. Dr. Bhavsar’s research explores the digital transformation of education, with a focus on integrating artificial intelligence, IoT smart devices in computing, and human-centered design into computer science programs. Beyond the classroom, Dr. Bhavsar promotes STEM outreach, co-organizing regional workshops and career events that introduce thousands of middle and high school students to computing pathways. Her ongoing research explores the digital transformation of education, integrating human-centered design and intelligent technologies to create impactful, future-ready learning experiences.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

### **#4: Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4 p.m. – Stories of Mothering: Lessons from Around the Globe**

Mothering is a universal human experience, yet every culture brings its own meanings, expectations, and everyday practices to the work of motherhood. In this talk, Dr. Susan Schalge shares insights from her anthropological research on women’s lives in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, along with broader cross-cultural examples of how mothers care for their families in diverse settings. Her fieldwork in Tanzania explored how women balance informal labor, household responsibilities, and social networks to support their families, revealing the ingenuity and resilience embedded in daily life. Drawing on decades of teaching and research in sociocultural and applied anthropology, Dr. Schalge highlights how ideas about motherhood differ across societies—shaped by history, economics, gender roles, and local understandings of family. At the same time, she reflects on the common threads that connect mothers worldwide: creativity, care, and the pursuit of well-being for their children. This presentation invites lifelong learners to consider what we can learn from the many ways mothering is practiced around the globe.

**Presenter: Dr. Susan Schalge** – Dr. Schalge is a Professor of Anthropology at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Her work focuses on sociocultural and applied anthropology, with specializations in gender, mothering, and the culture of higher education. She earned her MA and Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Schalge has conducted extensive fieldwork, including dissertation research in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania examining women’s informal labor and household organization. Her more recent work explores cross-cultural motherhood and anthropological pedagogy.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

**#5: Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – Cultivating Awe in Everyday Life**

Join Dr. Jonathan Hicks for an engaging and thought-provoking conversation on cultivating awe in daily life, where social science, storytelling, and lived experience come together. Drawing on research from leisure behavior, environmental psychology, and human–nature relationships, we will explore how moments of awe—often found in ordinary places and routines—can deepen well-being, strengthen social connection, and renew a sense of meaning. This lecture invites participants to rethink how they experience time, nature, and everyday moments, offering practical strategies for noticing wonder, fostering gratitude, and designing lives that leave room for awe. Among the goals of this session is to inspire each of us to slow down, look closer, and rediscover the extraordinary within the everyday.

**Presenter: Dr. Jonathan R. Hicks** – Dr. Hicks is a tenured professor and Chairperson of the Recreation and Parks Leadership Studies (RPLS) program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where he teaches courses in outdoor recreation, park planning, wildlife management, and public land use policy. He earned his Ph.D. and M.S. in Recreation & Park Management from the University of Illinois and holds a B.A. in Print Journalism from Western Illinois University. Dr. Hicks’s research focuses on the human dimensions of wildlife, wildlife-inspired awe, and natural resource recreation planning, and he incorporates experiential education and applied research into his teaching to enhance student learning and environmental awareness. A first-generation college graduate from Rockford, Illinois, he has been recognized for his community-driven approach to mentoring students and is deeply involved in advising and supporting learners in navigating academic and career pathways in Parks and Recreation.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

**#6: Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. - Can You Trust Your Own Eyes? Eyewitness Memory, Confidence, and Justice**

We tend to trust what we see — and we trust it even more when we feel confident about it. But how reliable are our eyes and our memories, especially in high-stakes situations like witnessing a crime? For many years, psychologists believed that an eyewitness’s confidence had little to do with whether their identification was actually correct. Recent research has challenged that conclusion in important and surprising ways. In this talk, a cognitive psychologist who studies human memory and decision-making explains what scientists now know about eyewitness accuracy, why earlier conclusions in the field turned out to be incomplete, and how various factors can moderate the relationship between confidence and accuracy. Along the way, we’ll explore how memory works, how it can be distorted, and what this research reveals about trusting our own perceptions.

**Presenter: Dr. Geoffrey McKinley** – Dr. McKinley is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Minnesota State University, Mankato where he teaches courses in cognitive psychology, human memory and psychology and the law. He earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign and his B.S. in Psychology from Arizona State University. His research focuses on how human memory works in real-world situations, particularly how people recognize faces and decide whether they have seen someone before. He studies eyewitness identification, how the design of police lineups affects accuracy, and the relationship between how confident people feel about their memories and how accurate those memories actually are, with important implications for the reliability of eyewitness evidence in the criminal justice system.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

**#7: Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4:00 p.m. – The Happy City**

For most of human history, cities were designed to foster safety, economic exchange, and close social ties—conditions that supported not only cultural and scientific progress but also human health and happiness. In contrast, modern conveniences have increased physical and social distance, contributing to rising loneliness, which can be as harmful as smoking. Drawing on examples from the U.S. and Europe, this talk explores how communities can restore social connectedness through walkable design, accessible public spaces, and inclusive neighborhoods. Based on Charles Montgomery’s book, *Happy City*, it highlights how urban planning can meaningfully improve well-being and community life.

**Presenter: Mark Plotz-** Mark is a Road Safety Transportation Planner at the Region Nine Development Commission, where he develops county-level strategies to eliminate traffic deaths and injuries, with a focus on protecting vulnerable road users. His career spans more than 20 years, beginning in the Washington, D.C. area, followed by a move to Minnesota in 2019 to open a bike shop in St. Paul. He later relocated with his family to St. Peter in search of a more connected, walkable community. An avid cyclist, Mark owns several specialized bikes and commutes regularly by bike to his work in Mankato, regardless of the weather.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Messiah Lutheran Church, 1706 Lee Blvd., North Mankato, MN 56003**

**#8: Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4:00 p.m. – The Great Northern Innocence Project**

With more than 100,000 innocent people incarcerated in the U.S., The Great North Innocence Project (GNIP) frees individuals convicted of crimes they did not commit *and* prevents wrongful convictions through investigation and litigation, education and outreach, and advocacy. In this presentation Jack Reuler draws on real cases to explain the primary causes and consequences of wrongful convictions as well as how to remedy them. Jack will also discuss how GNIP works to proactively prevent wrongful convictions through outreach, education, and legislative advocacy and how community members can partner with GNIP to improve the criminal legal system.

Website: <https://www.greatnorthinnocenceproject.org>.

**Presenter: Jack Reuler-** Jack is the Speaker’s Bureau Coordinator for the Great North Innocence Project. He is also a qualified Rule 114 mediator and leads Mirage Mediation, handling family and organizational disputes. Jack has provided continuing legal education in ethics and the elimination of bias for law firms, corporate legal departments, law schools, public legal agencies, and legal associations. He served for seven years on the Judicial Council’s Racial Fairness In The Courts Committee, and his book, “The Theatre of Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” was published in 2022.

Jack also led the Mixed Blood Theatre to disrupt injustice, model equity, and create community, using theatre as a vehicle for artistry, entertainment, education, and effecting social change.

**Sponsor: Anne Fletcher**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

**#9: Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2 – 4:00 p.m. – Everything You Wanted to Know About Funerals but Were Afraid to Ask**

Join us for 90 minutes of education, humor, and answers to your questions. We'll start things off with a short program: "10 Things You Probably Didn't Know About Funerals and Cremation," and then we'll open the floor to questions for the remainder of our time together. This will be a great opportunity to dispel myths, remove doubt, and start preparing for your or a loved one's funeral. Following the program, attendees may take a tour of the mortuary.

**Presenters: Brittany Renberg and Ben Pawlitschek** - Brittany Renberg is a licensed funeral director and general manager of Mankato Mortuary. She has been in funeral service for more than 15 years. Ben Pawlitschek is a preplanning consultant for Mankato Mortuary. He has helped more than three thousand families plan their funerals and has been in funeral service for more than 20 years.

**Sponsor: Anne Fletcher**

**Location: Northview Mortuary, 2060 Commerce Dr., North Mankato, MN 56003**

**#10: Wednesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4 p.m. – Case of Chief Standing Bear: The Native American Fight for Civil Rights**

After the Battle of Little Bighorn, the Federal government wanted to appease the Lakota. The government offered the tribal land of the Ponca people in Northeast Nebraska to the Lakota. This required an order removing the Ponca from their reservation at the confluence of the Missouri and Niobrara rivers. By May of 1877, the United States Army had uprooted 700 Ponca and forced them to move to the Quapaw Agency in Northeast Oklahoma.

Once in Oklahoma, the Ponca discovered the government's promise went unfilled. Frustrated with lack of housing, squalor, and illness, Chief Standing Bear and 30 tribe members left the reservation without military permission and walked back to Nebraska in January and February 1878 only to be arrested for violation of a military order.

Before the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment no Native American had standing to bring a lawsuit in a United States Court. Chief Standing Bear brought a writ of Habeas Corpus challenging his incarceration. The government argued that he was neither a citizen nor a "person" entitled to sue. The result was a new understanding of the Fifth Amendment.

**Presenter: James Fleming** – James Fleming practiced law in Minnesota for 35 years before his recent retirement, 22 of those years as a public defender. He served as the chief public defender for the 15 counties of the Fifth Judicial District in southwest Minnesota, based in Mankato, and later for the Second Judicial District (Ramsey County).

**Sponsor: Larry Nicol**

**Location: Pioneer Bank, 1450 Adams St., Mankato (Victory Drive & Adams)**

**#11: Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4:00 p.m. – North Mankato’s Water at Stake: Data Centers and Minnesota’s Policy Choices**

In 2023, a developer quietly proposed a hyperscale data center just west of North Mankato, and city officials signed a non-disclosure agreement. In 2025, the city released a legally required environmental assessment for public comment without disclosing that it involved a hyperscale data center or the project’s enormous water and energy demands. The City Council approved it unanimously, giving the green light for the developer to proceed. The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy [has since filed suit](#), alleging inadequate disclosure and review, with a trial scheduled for June.

This presentation explores how the proposed project could threaten the sustainability of the Mt. Simon aquifer, North Mankato’s sole water source. It also places the project in a broader context; North Mankato is one of at least ten communities in Minnesota facing similar proposals, driven by major tech companies seeking expanded capacity for artificial intelligence. The talk concludes by examining emerging policy ideas aimed at regulating these developments and ensuring that decisions remain in the hands of local communities.

**Presenter: Louis Schwartzkopf** – Louis is a retired Physics Professor from Minnesota State University Mankato. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California in Berkeley. His work has been published in top physics journals, and he is the co-holder of four patents. Twenty-five years ago he switched his focus to environmental advocacy. Among his projects have been a [greenhouse gas inventory for the cities of Mankato and North Mankato](#) and project lead for the [Minnesota State University Mankato climate action plan](#). He is a board member of the [Southcentral Minnesota Clean Energy Council](#).

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude & Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato, MN 56001**

**#12: Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4:00 p.m. –Transgender 101: Fact or Fiction**

Dr. Alexander Kovic, a leading expert on transgender issues, will give a presentation on the facts of transgender identification and will debunk current misinformation on transgender individuals.

**Presenter: Dr. Alexander Kovic**- Dr. Kovic works as an integrative psychologist who tailors therapy to the individual rather than fitting into his therapy techniques. He works with adults and gender-diverse teenagers. He splits his practice between general mental health and specialties in sex therapy and gender-affirming care. Dr. Kovic is considered one of the leading experts on and gender identity and sexual therapy in the state. He practices out of the Urology Department at Health Partners in St. Paul. Dr. Kovic received a B.A. in Criminal Justice from Hamline University, before receiving an M.A. in Forensic Psychology from Argosy University in 2011, and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology degree in 2017 from the Minnesota School of Professional Psychology. He completed an APA accredited pre-doctoral internship at Napa State Hospital and a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Minnesota Medical School – Program in Human Sexuality.

**Sponsor: Greg Suskovic**

**Location: Pioneer Bank, 1450 Adams Street, Mankato (corner of Victory and Adams)**

**#13: Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2-4:00 p.m. - After Lincoln: A Family's Journey Beyond the Presidency, 1865-1926**

2026 marks the centennial of the death of President Lincoln's eldest, and only son, who lived to adulthood: Robert Todd Lincoln. To commemorate that event, Lincoln historian, Bryce Stenzel, will be offering an in-depth look at Robert Lincoln's career as a prominent attorney, Secretary of War (under presidents Garfield and Arthur), Minister to Great Britain and President of the Pullman Railroad Car Company. He will also discuss the lives of Robert Lincoln's wife, children, and grandchildren, highlighting lesser known, but interesting facts about this prominent American family.

**Presenter: Bryce O. Stenzel** – Bryce, a Mankato native, earned his B.S. in Social Studies and M.A. in History, *summa cum laude*, from Minnesota State University, Mankato. He has taught all levels, written extensively on local history, the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln, and has portrayed Lincoln as a costumed interpreter nationwide for over 35 years. Bryce serves as President of the Friends of the Boy in Blue Civil War Veterans Memorial, the Mankato Area Community Band, and the Le Sueur County Historical Society, and as Secretary of the New Ulm Civil War Artillery Battery. He lives in St. Clair.

**Sponsor: Steve Gilbert**

**Location: Ecumen Pathstone Latitude and Landing, 115 Rogers St, Mankato**

## Save the Dates

### GETTING TO KNOW DEMENTIA

**April 27, May 4, May 11, May 18, May 26, June 1 (Free Education series)**

**3-4:30 pm | The Pillars, 3125 Prairie Rose Drive, Mankato**

Register by calling 507-381-6953 or email: [janeunzeitig@gmail.com](mailto:janeunzeitig@gmail.com)

Getting to Know Dementia is a community-based training created by Teepa Snow, a world-renowned dementia educator. Jane Unzeitig, a RN, BSN, Certified Independent Coach provides training for memory care staff, family members, civic and church groups and others. She teaches skills which help others improve communication and support for people living with dementia.

### Coming this Summer: Nancy Zwickey Memorial Garden Tours

**June, July and August (dates to be determined)**

Watch the weekly updates for more details for these free special events.

### Humanism as a Lifestance: Naturalism, Ethics, and Meaning

**Tuesdays Sept 8, 15 & 22**

**1-3 pm | Pioneer Bank, 1450 Adams Street, Mankato**

Audrey Kingstrom, Past President and current Board Member of [HumanistsMN](http://HumanistsMN) will present this 3-part series. Participants are encouraged to come to all three sessions, but folks are welcome to come as they are able. Each presentation will focus on one salient aspect of humanism interspersed with discussion.

### LOVE YOUR AGE VINE'S 55+ EXPO

**Tuesday, September 29, 2026, 1-4 pm.**

# 2026 SPRING REGISTRATIONS & MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail form and checks to: Lifelong Learners 129 Morris Hall, Mankato, MN 56001 For Online

Registration: <https://link.mnsu.edu/lll>

Silver Membership: \$50/year – Presentations \$7 each	Gold Membership: \$150/year – Presentations included
Non-Member: Presentations \$15 each	<b>Registration prior to attendance is requested.</b>
___ New Member, ___ Renewal, ___ New Information	___ New Member, ___ Renewal, ___ New Information
___ \$50 Silver (Basic) Membership – Member 1	___ \$50 Silver (Basic) Membership – Member 2
___ \$150 Gold (Bundled) Membership – Member 1	___ \$150 Gold (Bundled) Membership – Member 2
Name: _____	Name: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____	City/State/Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Birth Year: _____	Phone: _____ Birth Year: _____

Member	Member	PRESENTATIONS: \$7 for Silver members; Free for Gold members
1	2	
___\$7	___\$7	#1: Wednesday, April 1st, 2 – 4 p.m. – Baseball 101: How to Enjoy Watching the Game Without Being an Expert.
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___\$7	___\$7	#3: Friday, April 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 - 4 p.m. – Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence: Collaboration, Not Competition
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\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Total Presentations

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ Total Annual Membership Fees

Grand Total \_\_\_\_\_

Submit Registration form and payment to: Mankato Area Lifelong Learners, 129 Morris Hall, Mankato, MN 56001

# Great Decisions 2026

## Spring Quarter Presentations

<b>Speaker</b>	Henry Berman	Richard Leitch	Michael Barkin
<b>Date</b>	April 8	May 13	June 10
<b>Location</b>	Pioneer Bank	Pathstone Latitude	Pioneer Bank
<b>Topic</b>	U.S. Engagement Of Africa	Trump Tariffs	Diplomacy Video

## Biographies

**Henry Berman** is a retired businessman, working for 34 years at Ecolab, a global company based in St Paul. Henry has personal ties to the Middle East Region and has spent much time there in the last decade. He has a strong interest in the ever-changing dynamics in this turbulent part of the world, including the emerging continent of Africa and Southeast Asia. Henry is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations and is active in a local Great Decisions Group. He has given popular presentations throughout Minnesota on such varied topics as Saudi Arabia, Future of the Kurds, Egypt and the Arab Spring, Syrian Refugee Crisis and the U.S.- Israel relationship. Henry has a BA from Hamilton College and an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College.

**Dr. Richard Leitch** earned his BA in East Asian Studies from Colby College in 1985 and went on to earn an MA in Asian Studies from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign after a two-year career on Wall Street. He earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from Illinois in 1995, where he was the recipient of the Harriet and Charles Luckman Award for Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching, and the College of Liberal Arts Award for Distinguished Teaching by a Graduate Assistant. He has been a member of the Political Science Department at Gustavus since 1996, where he teaches courses in International Relations, Comparative Politics, Asian Politics, Environmental Politics, and the Politics of Poverty. In 2000 he received the Swenson-Bunn Award for Teaching Excellence at Gustavus, and in 2008 the Edgar M. Carlson Award for Distinguished Teaching. In 2012 he was included in The Princeton Review's The Best 300 Professors. His research interests include Japanese domestic politics and foreign policy, and he is the co-author of Japan's Role in the Post-Cold War World.

**Michael Barkin** is the Senior Diplomatic Advisor to the Commandant of the Army University (Army War College.) His presentation focuses on the roles, tool, and constraints of diplomacy.

## Great Decisions 2026 - Save the Dates

Andrew Latham	Tanisha Fazal	Alan Carlson	Jay Shahidi	Todd Lefko
<b>July 8</b>	<b>August 12</b>	<b>September 9</b>	<b>October 14</b>	<b>November 11</b>
Pioneer Bank	Pioneer Bank	Pioneer Bank	Pioneer Bank	Pathstone
<b>U.S. China Relations</b>	<b>Multilateral Institutions</b>	<b>Ruptured Alliances</b>	<b>The Future of Human Rights</b>	<b>Ukraine and European Security</b>

# Winter Quarter 2026 Presentations

## Immigration Basics & the Local Immigration Underworld



## Canada, Our Good Neighbor to the North



# Remembrances-Part I



**Anita Dittrich (1934-2025)**

**Anita was a founder, the first Office Manager, an active member, and a longtime supporter of LL.**

“Anita was one of the founding members thirty years ago for Lifelong Learners. She exemplified both our mission to ‘promote vitality in later years’ and our motto, ‘Stay curious. Stay connected.’ After she retired in 1996, she worked part-time as the Lifelong Learners Office Manager for 11 years and was instrumental in getting our organization well established.” (Barbara K.)

“I first met Anita when I joined in 2013 as a new retiree. She was, along with many other long-time members, an inspiration to me on how to remain vital, active and always learning well into our later years.

Anita patiently helped me learn the ropes of being treasurer when I took on that role. She was an active member of our Book Ends book club and always contributed thoughtfully. Anita also freely shared her experiences as a Latvia refugee during World War II with us. Great Decisions was another area that Anita attended and contributed to regularly as well as attending countless presentations and events.” (Sharon S.)

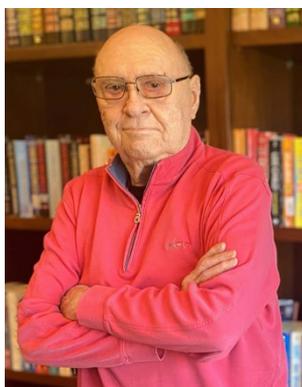
**Anita was active in VINE, MSU, LL, and the community and she welcomed all.**

“I knew Anita best, however, through the Vine Memoirs Writing Group. Anita’s three essays in our Memoirs book, *Preserving Memories*, illustrate much of who she was... Anita’s second memoir titled, *Beautiful Moments in My Life*, told of her time in a Displaced Persons camp when she attended a multi-national Boy Scout / Girl Guides jamboree in Bavaria. She rejoiced being among others from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Ukraine, Italy and Belgium. She commented, ‘With tears in my eyes, ... I remember thinking, why can’t all the nations of the world be holding hands and singing together and living in peace? To this day, my eyes tear up and I think of this evening whenever I hear the bugle play Taps.’” (Barbara K.)

“I’ve known Anita for many years, especially when she oversaw the Lifelong Learners office and when she was active at Vine. She was a wonderful person, outgoing and kind. I heard her presentation on how she came to the US and marveled at how her family was able to survive. She always had a smile when our paths crossed. I will miss her.” (Grace K.)

“Anita also was active in Vine Stompers Line Dancers, Spelling Bee and the Memoirs group. You might not know that Anita collected owls which are also the logo for our organization as well as a symbol of knowledge and wisdom. Truly, she was an amazing woman that was an inspiration to many as she lived her life to the fullest. I will forever be grateful to have known Anita and will miss her greatly.” (Sharon S.)

# Remembrances-Part II



## Dave Janovy (1934-2026)

### ***Dave was a Founder, President, and Lifelong Supporter of Mankato Area Lifelong Learners.***

Dave Janovy was instrumental in both the founding and growth of Mankato Area Lifelong Learners. Dave originally proposed the founding of MSU for Seniors in October 1995 at a meeting of Mankato Area Retired Educators. Then, he and Eddice Barber held the first meeting later that month with Elderhostel members and MSU retirees. The organization was founded as MSU for Seniors, and in 2008 changed its name to Mankato Area Lifelong Learners. Dave was an instrumental liaison to MSU for several years and spearheaded the original courses. Later, in 2014-5 he served as the president of LL and served on several other committees and the Council over the years. We will remain indebted to his service, his leadership, and his commitment to aging adults in this community for many years to come.

### ***Mankato Area Lifelong Learners has lost a Titan.***

"I first met Dave and Darlene Janovy at a gathering at Jack and Harriet Kent's home - shorthand for Jack's recruiting both members for and leadership of Lifelong Learners. Dave later developed his own version of that tactic. Dave was a true asset in the many facets of leadership maintenance necessary to sustain a non-profit organization. Being a part of all that is certainly memorable.

Perhaps the two most striking moments that stand out among many would be the task of hiring an office manager after Anita retired and the process of getting the MSUM foundation convinced that Lifelong Learners needed its own Numbered Account. I knew little about University Bureaucracy so was grateful that Dave was my cohort. That was a memorable experience! Dave's long tenure on the Lifelong Learners Council contributed a huge amount of insight and persistence is also memorable. His strong intellect stood out not only as a leader but also as a friend and colleague. "(Rallah M.)

### ***The Mankato Area Elder Community has lost an Advocate.***

"In the early 1980s a developer began gutting the Stahl House Hotel in Mankato (now the site of the Wine Cafe). The workers tearing the walls down to the studs wore demolition masks while its poor, predominantly elderly tenants still occupied the building, including one 90-year-old with emphysema. Dave Janovy, along with other faculty from Mankato State University formed a community group to help local legal aid attorneys stop the demolition and to find housing for the displaced tenants. Dave provided an expert affidavit on the impact of the displacement on the tenants. This helped secure a federal court order enjoining the demolition until the tenants were in other housing and a subsequent settlement securing subsidized housing and relocation payments for the tenants. The community group subsequently formed the nonprofit Partners for Affordable Housing to provide emergency shelter and transitional housing in the Mankato area. PAH is still around today, operating three shelters and other housing programs in Greater Mankato." (Larry N.)

# Acknowledgements

One goal of this 30th anniversary year of Mankato Area Lifelong Learners was to strengthen our financial stability through donations. **Two extraordinarily generous gifts totaling over \$15,000, when combined with numerous gifts from our members**, have brought our current total donations for this fiscal year to \$22,000. Thanks to your generosity, we are on stable financial ground for this fiscal year.

The Exploratory Fund-Raising Ad Hoc Committee is conducting a preliminary request of donations from local businesses. **Mankato Area Lifelong Learners gratefully acknowledges the receipt of a donation from Community Bank, Mankato.**

Together, we now need to focus on the recruitment of new members for long-term financial stability. Please help by inviting your friends and acquaintances (55+) to the special event on March 26 and encourage them to join the organization. **Thank you for all that you do for others and the organization.**

## Volunteer Opportunities

**Lifelong Learners need you to volunteer your time.**

- **We need someone with survey experience to set up a member survey.**
  - The questions are written but must be put into Qualtrics software.
- **We need volunteers to serve on the following ad hoc committees:**
  - **Special Events: March 26<sup>th</sup> Bring a Friend Event**
    - One hour commitment to set-up social hour (noon- 1 pm)
  - **Special Events: Holiday Party 2026- Help plan and set up the event**
    - Planning meetings and Set-up the day of the Event
  - **Special Events: Nancy Zwickey Memorial Summer Garden Tours- Help plan and host (if you wish) a garden tour for members in Summer 2026**
    - One day commitment
- **We need assistance to recruit new members.**
  - **Join the Challenge to Recruit a New Member (March 26- Labor Day)**
  - **Use the coupon to invite a friend to a presentation or event.**

**BRING A NON-MEMBER FRIEND (55+) FREE WITH THIS COUPON  
TO ANY PRESENTATION OR SPECIAL EVENT**

**Guest Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Member Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

If possible, pre-register your guest by calling the Office at 507-389-2011 or  
e-mail: [lifelonglearners@mnsu.edu](mailto:lifelonglearners@mnsu.edu)

(Expires on September 7, 2026)    Limit of one coupon per friend

(Value: \$15)

# Membership Renewal Notifications:



Membership Renewal Notices are emailed to you at the beginning of the month that your membership is set to expire. Please feel free to contact the office with any questions.

# Quarterly Newsletters:



Due to budget constraints, Lifelong Learners has transitioned to sending its Newsletter quarterly in a paperless format at no cost. Beginning with the new fiscal year in July 2026, printed copies will be available for an annual fee of \$20 to cover printing and mailing costs. Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

## 2025 -2026 Council Members and Social Group Coordinators

<b>Officers:</b>	<b>Committee Chairs:</b>	<b>Special Interest Coordinators:</b>	<b>Spec. Interest Coordinators (cont.):</b>
<b>President:</b>			<b>Creative Writing:</b>
Barbara Keating	<b>Admin &amp; Finance:</b>	<b>Book Clubs:</b>	Jeanne Epp
	Jim Rife		
<b>Vice President:</b>		<b>History &amp; Science:</b>	<b>First Friday Movies:</b>
(needed)		Steve Gilbert	Steve Gilbert
	<b>Comm. &amp; Membership:</b>		
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Barbara Keating	<b>BookMarks:</b>	<b>Coffee &amp; Current Events:</b>
Ken Saffert		James Booker	Steve Gilbert
			Georgia Holmes
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Great Decisions:</b>	<b>Dining:</b>	
Terry Salerno	Georgia Holmes		<b>Others:</b>
		<b>Luncheons:</b>	
<b>Members at Large:</b>		Sue Howard	<b>Editor:</b>
Rallah Madison	<b>Presentations:</b>		Terry Salerno
Mary Bliesmer	Steve Gilbert	<b>Dinners:</b>	
Larry Nicol		Elizabeth Peters	<b>Office Manager:</b>
Bill Fredrickson		Sarah Suskovic	Colleen Fritz