

Stepping Stones

A publication of HearthStone of Wisconsin, Inc.
Newsletter date: Winter 2021

Inside This Issue:

1. Letter From Outgoing President
2. Letter From New President
3. HearthStone Swag from Santa / New Year, New Logo
4. St. Patrick's Day Hangout
5. HearthStone Board Welcomes New Leaders / \$500 to Family Caregivers
6. HearthStone Welcomes New Members
7. HearthStone Establishes COVID Safety Sub-Committee / Go Paperless Today / HearthStone's Holiday @ Home
8. 2020 Education Scholarship Winners
9. Thank You To Our 2020 Donors
10. Board Members & Advisory Board

Please consider a tax deductible donation to HearthStone. We need your support.

Letter from the Outgoing President

So, what does "Retirement" look like this time?

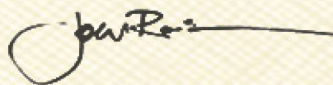
Well, let's see. I've retired from work several times now, but right now I'm back in the thick of things again. But, after 25 years on the HearthStone leadership team, I'm thinking this will be a bit different. And, I feel VERY confident in "letting go".

Our new President Leah, and her husband (our Treasurer) Alex have already demonstrated their leadership skills these past couple of years and the transition has been delightfully seamless. Kris has stepped up and picked up the Secretarial duties without a hitch and Patti has stepped into the VP spot with comfort and grace. We have an exceptionally strong Board of Directors to lead our organization, especially through these troubling times.

With the help of a LOT of talented and dedicated people through the years we have built a strong and vital organization that fulfills a unique and much needed/appreciated role in our community. And, thanks to the inventiveness and resilience of our leadership, that will continue. As evidence, thanks to Kathy and Jill and a host of volunteers, we delivered "swag bag" gift bags to over 120 of our "young people" participants. Carol and I were privileged to have delivered several and it was genuinely heartwarming to witness the literal tears of joy these surprise gifts brought to the families we serve. A reminder of why we all do this.

So, what's this retirement thing now? Well, I am happy to continue to serve as a member of our valued "Advisory Board", which means I'll attend meetings, but won't run them or have a vote, but that's okay. Carol and I will still volunteer to help out whenever or wherever needed, so that really won't change much. What will change is that a new generation of leaders will assume the mantle of leadership, which will determine how we will survive, evolve and thrive for the next 25 years!

Jon Rost,



Past President and Present Volunteer



CONTACT US:

HearthStone of WI
PO Box 1444
Sheboygan, WI 53082-1444

Email: info@hearthstonewi.org

<https://www.hearthstonewi.org>



"HearthStone is a self-help and advocacy organization for people with disabilities and their families."

Letter From Our New President



Hello HearthStone friends!

Some of you may already know me, but I also might be a new face to a few of you. **My name is Leah Curry, and I am honored beyond belief to be HearthStone of Wisconsin's new president.**

While these have been unprecedented times, I am looking forward to meeting all of our wonderful HearthStone participants, families, and supporters as soon as it is safe to do so, and I also hope to work closely with local leaders to help take steps toward a more accepting and accessible world for our HearthStone community.

Jon Rost was a force to be reckoned with and in large part has made HearthStone what it is today. I am so grateful for his influence and his kindness, and that he will be staying on in an advisory capacity. The Board of Directors has made the best of quarantine by meeting via video chat and coordinating changes to our leadership positions now to ensure a seamless transition by the time we are rejoining in person with all of you!

I have been working with HearthStone for over four years now, serving first on the Advisory Committee and then as secretary on the Board of Directors.

I am 26 years old, and I live in Sheboygan with my husband, Alex, who is HearthStone's treasurer, and we are expecting our first baby in June. I graduated from Lakeland College (now University) in 2015 and formerly worked in the newspaper industry for several years, including as top editor of The Sheboygan Press. In fact, I first met HearthStone's leaders while on a reporting assignment!

I became interested in HearthStone because I have three brothers who have autism: Jared, 29, Timmy, 21, and Jacob, 20.

My story has a lot of twists and turns. My amazing mother, Claudia Ulatowski, passed away in 2015 and was my brothers' full-time caregiver. After I left the newspaper industry, and at times during my career, I found myself as one of my brothers' primary caregivers because I love them, and to make our situation work.

However, I believe these situations have formed me into the person that I am today.

My greatest heroes in life are all the HearthStone members who show me how strong and brave they are in every situation. And I feel such an incredible connection to our participants, their families, and their supporters because of my brothers and my mother.

I seek to grow as a person in all situations. At a vulnerable time, I was hurt by a leader at a different organization that I formerly took part in, but as a result, I now understand how important safety and kindness are in any non-profit setting. I believe our non-profits must be held to the very highest standards of gentleness, safety, and professionalism. I can say with confidence that those characteristics are unwavering in HearthStone's leadership and core group of volunteers, and it is something that I strive to continue building on.

I am eager for our organization to grow in many ways, so please send along any ideas or suggestions to me at info@hearthstonewi.org.

My hope as president is to continue the traditions that our organization knows and loves, as well as create new opportunities for our participants, their families, and supporters to learn and have fun. I also want to keep fostering our core group of volunteers' desires to learn and train in the areas that make them strong leaders.

Finally, I want to spread the word as much as possible about this amazing group, and as a writer, tell HearthStone's stories to everyone that I meet; I hope you will all join me in this endeavor!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Leah R. Curry'.

Leah Curry

HearthStone Swag from Santa

In early December, HearthStone's Board of Directors took on the role of Santa's little helpers by hand delivering swag bags to the over 100 HearthStone participants who are on our mailing list!

What is a swag bag? Glad you asked! We had drawstring bags with HearthStone's new logo featured on the front and filled the bags with a tasty chocolate treat, a holiday throw blanket, a stress relief ball with a smiley face, a water bottle with the HearthStone logo and a sweet hand-written holiday card.

This was a fun, safe alternative to our annual holiday party. HearthStone board members were asked to wear masks and gloves/mittens at all times during delivery and to stay a good distance away to follow COVID-19 guidelines. Our participants were extremely happy to receive the gift, and some even dressed up in holiday garb for the occasion!

Thank you to all the board of directors who traveled to make the deliveries, and a special thanks to board member Jill Spielvogel and her family for taking a lot of time to organize and fill the bags.

For fun surprises like this, please ensure you are on our mailing list by emailing info@hearthstonewi.org. Unfortunately, some of our bags didn't make it to our friends who have recently moved; if you've had a change of address, make sure to send us your updated info and don't miss out on a second of the fun!



Matthew



McKayla

New year, new logo

New year, new us. HearthStone of Wisconsin celebrated 2021 by ushering in a revamped logo.

Eagle-eyed HearthStone friends may have already noticed the change as we work to rebrand our website, social media and other content with the new design. Our marketing committee pursued the new logo with the hopes of focusing in on the "H" in HearthStone and creating an iconic design that can be immediately recognizable in our community.

We are extremely thankful to marketing committee member and designer extraordinaire, Ashley Streck, who dreamt up and created the logo for HearthStone. She is the co-owner of Twingenuity Graphics.



Join HearthStone's St. Patrick's Day Hangout

It's our HearthStone friends' lucky day. Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with your HearthStone friends at the virtual HearthStone St. Patrick's Day Hangout. Wear something green, join your friends and be Irish for the day.

Leprechaun friends Fred Brown and Tom Brown will join our shenanigans as well! Show and tell us how lucky you were finding the words on the St. Patrick's Day Word Search, included below!

Join us on Wednesday, March 17 from 7-8 p.m. via Google Meet. Go to this link for the video call on the time and date: meet.google.com/fzn-yehb-vjx

What to bring?

Something green to drink
(get creative!).



J	Q	Y	E	S	H	A	M	R	O	C	K	G	B	I
S	J	E	L	U	N	T	D	K	Z	R	X	T	I	V
M	L	W	I	Y	K	B	B	E	C	L	O	V	E	R
M	E	B	M	D	Y	B	I	X	J	D	I	U	Q	A
B	P	B	E	K	A	P	N	R	U	U	L	R	E	I
B	R	H	R	G	U	N	N	V	E	B	T	L	G	N
Y	E	A	I	E	O	C	C	Y	K	L	S	S	L	B
Q	C	Y	C	D	Z	L	P	E	H	I	A	U	V	O
G	H	Q	K	A	Z	C	D	E	B	N	C	N	L	W
H	A	I	A	R	X	V	M	Y	L	K	E	C	D	B
F	U	B	B	A	X	E	Z	F	A	E	B	H	J	H
V	N	E	K	P	R	M	L	B	R	P	R	A	C	E
J	Z	P	D	A	J	M	N	G	N	P	Q	R	J	R
P	P	N	L	E	E	J	D	I	E	P	A	M	X	B
Q	O	D	R	Z	E	M	H	Q	Y	M	M	V	H	I

BLARNEY
CHARM
CLOVER
DANCE
DUBLIN
EMERALD

GOLD
GREEN
IRELAND
ISLE
LEPRECHAUN
LIMERICK

LUCK
MARCH
PARADE
RAINBOW
SHAMROCK



We can't wait to *celebrate* with you!

HearthStone Board Welcomes New Leaders

In November, the HearthStone of Wisconsin Board of Directors voted on a few leadership changes after careful consideration and discussion.

As stated in the presidential letters of this newsletter, Jon Rost made the decision to move into an advisory board role after serving as president for 25 years. Leah Curry, who has been involved with HearthStone for four years and was previously the secretary, was voted into the president position.

Now filling Leah's previous position of secretary is Kris Williams, who was already a director on the board and an active HearthStone volunteer for over a year.

In addition, previous vice-president Larry Samet has stepped down but will remain a director on the board. Patti Saunders, who was already a director on the board and an active HearthStone volunteer for over a year, has taken on the vice president role. Patti will be filling in for Leah in the president role for a few weeks in summer due to maternity leave.

Alex Curry remains treasurer, a role that he has enjoyed over the past year and a half, rounding out the officer positions on the board.



Patti Saunders



Kris Williams

HearthStone Board Members Offer \$500 To Family Caregivers

New this year, HearthStone board members Leah and Alexander Curry have funded and established the Claudia Ulatowski Caregiver Memorial Grant of \$500, in memory of Leah's mother who passed away suddenly in 2015 after serving as sole caregiver to three sons. A family member who is a caregiver to someone with a cognitive disability may apply for the grant and use the money to improve the caregiver's quality of life, including but not limited to:

- Furthering the educational pursuits or professional development of the recipient
- Respite or similar services
- Family medical expenses
- Equipment, technology or accessibility renovations to help with caregiving
- Individual or family counseling or other mental health services
- Realizing an individual or family dream (a special trip, etc.)
- Self-care services or retreats to promote well-being of recipient
- A cause or community project close to recipient's heart

A recipient will be chosen in October, and others may apply again as the grant will be annual.



Please watch our website, www.HearthStonewi.org and our Facebook page for updates as we make the application available very soon! You can also email info@hearthstonewi.org for more info.

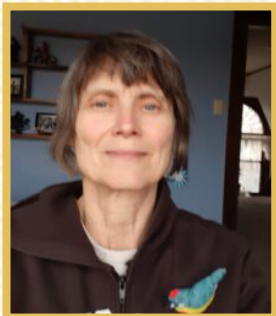
HearthStone Welcomes New Members

HearthStone of Wisconsin recently welcomed three new directors on the board. Learn a little about each of them below. A hearty HearthStone welcome to all of our new recruits!



DAPHNE PETERSON

.Daphne Peterson comes to HearthStone after being a Special Education teacher at the high school and middle school levels for over 25 years. Serving on the Board of Directors for HearthStone provides an opportunity to give back to the community, while fulfilling the desire to spend time with, and enrich the lives of, people with disabilities. Daphne is serving as Chair to the Advocacy Committee.



GERALYN LEANNAH

Geralyn Leannah is retired from the Sheboygan Area School District where she worked as a Reading Specialist at Longfellow, Sheridan and Pigeon River Elementary schools. She has worked as a mentor, tutor and guardian for individuals with a developmental disability over the course of her career. She serves on the board at Lakeshore Community Health Center, and Christian Service and Education at First Congregational UCC in Sheboygan.



FRED BROWN

Fred Brown has been a teacher and coach for over 30 years. He began his teaching in Sheboygan County at Lightfoot School as the Physical Education instructor. While there, he coached Special Olympics and taught swimming. Since his retirement Fred continues to coach at Lakeland University and teach exercise classes at the SPORTS CORE. Fred's passion for working with others has been a major part of his personal and professional life. Fred is honored to be on the HearthStone board and looks forward to advancing the mission of this organization.

HEARTHSTONE ESTABLISHES COVID-19 SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE

HearthStone of Wisconsin is very aware of our members' eagerness to resume activities and get together as an organization; we feel the same way! We want to let everyone know that we are closely monitoring state guidelines on COVID-19 when it comes to gatherings. In fact, we recently established the COVID-19 Safety Sub-Committee, consisting of a few directors from our board, who are tasked with following the latest developments and research and consulting with health care professionals for recommendations.

Our participants will be the first to know when we are at the point of deciding it is safe enough to get together again. Know that this is at the forefront of our thoughts, and we look forward to resuming all of the HearthStone in-person fun when it is safe to do so.

GO PAPERLESS TODAY

Here at HearthStone, we are always looking for the newest and easiest ways to connect with YOU, all of our friends! We are increasingly looking for ways to do this online and digitally. To help with this, please make sure to follow our Facebook page, HearthStone of WI, and to check on our website regularly, www.hearthstonewi.org, and you will be instantly connected to all the latest info!

You can also join our email list by sending your name and email to info@hearthstonewi.org.

Feeling green? You can choose to go completely paperless by letting us know on Facebook messenger or by emailing us. We can make a note to send you all the great stuff you receive by mail in a digital format by email only.

Help us reduce our paper output today!

HEARTHSTONE'S HOLIDAY @ HOME



The annual HearthStone holiday party is always a big hit among our participants; unfortunately, we could not have the party in person this year due to COVID-19 precautions, so we invited our friends to attend a virtual HearthStone Holiday Hangout instead!

HearthStone participants used their smart phones or computers to join the Hangout back in December and spread some holiday cheer with their friends. Mr. Fred Brown—who has helped many of our participants on their fitness journeys and is also a newly appointed board member for HearthStone—came to the party and played holiday songs on his cello! Santa made a surprise appearance and joined the fun, too. Conversation, music, jokes, laughter—we all had a great time!

HearthStone Names 2020 Education Scholarship Winners

While school may have looked a little different this year due to COVID-19, it didn't stop Sheboygan County high school seniors from pursuing their dreams and taking on their first year of higher education, and HearthStone of Wisconsin was ready to support two very special seniors on that journey.

In the spring of 2020, the HearthStone Education Committee selected Sheboygan County students Jesse Anderson and Cameron Bruggink to each receive a \$1,000 educational scholarship from the organization. The students graciously met with board members via Google Meet to talk about their hopes and dreams and how the scholarship would help them along the way.

We are now accepting applications for our 2021 scholarships. We offer two \$1,000 scholarships to Sheboygan County students with an identified intellectual disability, traumatic brain impairment, or autism. The scholarships are awarded to students who are planning to attend, and are enrolled/enrolling in, a university, college, technical school, vocational school, or an approved apprenticeship program. To apply, visit hearthstonewi.org/scholarship/.

OUR 2020 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS SHARED THE BELOW THANK-YOU NOTES:



"Dear Hearthstone, I am very grateful for your support towards my college career. Your support will help me grow and sharpen my skills in the maintenance field. This experience of higher learning in my chosen trade will allow me to be fully prepared to support the company I will be working with in the future. Thank you."

- Jesse Anderson



"To the board of the Hearthstone Educational Scholarship, wanted to take the time to say thank you so much for the scholarship opportunity. Throughout my sophomore year of high school, I was in an accident that resulted in a traumatic brain injury. Our family faced many medical bills that added up, fast. This scholarship will help me to attend the college of my choice, Concordia University Wisconsin in the fall, where I will continue my education and also continue to grow my relationship with Christ. I'm so thankful for this opportunity, and want to thank everyone involved."

- Cameron Bruggink

Thank You To Our 2020 Donors

A HUGE HearthStone THANK YOU to all of our donors to the 2020 FUNdraiser. While our mail-in/digital fundraiser looked a little different this year due to safety precautions that prevented our usual dinner and entertainment, our supporters showed up with the same heart and generosity.

Here's a shout-out to all of our 2020 donors who make what we do possible:

- Alan & Pam Rudnick
- Andrea Schmitz
- Anthony Fischer
- Bruce & Brenda Lisiecki
- Chris Hemmer
- Corinthia Van Orsdol
- Dave & Kris Williams
- David & Sandra Sachse
- David Gass
- Donna Hines
- Frank & Terri Sterzen
- Fredrick Brown
- Gus & Linda Tiboris
- Janet Sartori
- Jeff & Janielle Bruggink
- Jeff & Patti Beltz
- Jena Hoftiezer
- John C & Katherine B Miller Foundation
- John Zechlinski
- Jon & Carol Rost
- Jonathon & Nancy Moulton
- Julie & Richard Leonhard
- Kathleen Stoffel
- Kevin & Charlene Halbert
- Kiwanis Club of Sheboygan Falls
- Larry Samet
- Lee & Linda VandeWall
- Lonna Peterson
- Mark Radtke
- Marvel Harrison
- Patti Saunders
- Paul & Barbara Gruber
- Randall & Judith Hake
- Randy & Rita Romanoski
- Ray Cary
- Rich & Bev Testwuide
- Richard & Carol Gross
- Richard & Kathleen Manny
- Robert and Peggy Feider
- Ron & Theresa Zimmermann
- Ronald & Barbara Preder
- Stephen Hamer
- Susie White & Mike Froh
- Tim & Pat Petzold
- Tom & Linda Weber
- Tom & Ruth Rost
- Also, all those who donate via AmazonSmile

HearthStone's Board of Directors - 2021

- Leah Curry, *President*
- Patti Saunders, *Vice President*
- Kris Williams, *Secretary*
- Alex Curry, *Treasurer*
- Fred Brown, *Social*
- Geralyn Leannah, *Education*
- Kathy Manny, *Education Chair*
- Daphne Peterson, *Advocacy Chair*
- Karen Post, *Social*
- Larry Samet, *Advocacy*
- Angie Shaw, *Advocacy*
- Jill Spielvogel, *Social Chair*

HearthStone Advisory Board - 2021

- Jon Rost, *Former President/Parent*
- Carol Rost, *Parent/Advocate*
- Frank Sterzen, *Parent/Advocate*
- Craig McFadden, *Advocate*
- Denise Drews, *Advocate*
- Cindy Sook, *ADRC*
- Jody Merenick, *RCS Empowers*
- Jeff Everett, *RCS Empowers*
- Dana Traas, *DVR*
- Laurie Rabl, *Inclusa*
- Ashley Streck, *Advocate/Marketing*
- Chris Post, *Advocate*

"Our mission is to make our communities a welcoming place for people with disabilities and to support and encourage positive life experiences."