

North Shore **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**



OCTOBER 2024
A SUPPLEMENT TO

LAKE COUNTY PRESS
COOK COUNTY NEWS-HERALD



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North Shore Women in Leadership make us stronger

Women as leaders are an asset to the well-being of our north shore communities, evident throughout elected positions, to executive directors of non-profits, education and government jobs. Leading with a clear sense of purpose to uphold healthy connections, the women highlighted here do much to strengthen and sustain us all.

According to a research-based article in Forbes, only 10% of Fortune 500 companies

are women-led, but those that are significantly outperform those that are not. When women are represented in leadership roles financial stability is greater, and female leaders are more highly rated in leadership effectiveness.

While our five North Shore Women in Leadership do not lead corporations for financial gain, they bear responsibility for the financial health of their organizations, all in

the hopes of creating a sustainable future for our community.

Shining a light on the strong women leaders of Cook and Lake counties gives us all a chance to appreciate the good they do for our immediate lives and helps us recognize the importance of encouraging more women in leadership roles.


Thank you, Tracy, Linda, Gina, Lana and Tara, for stepping so competently into

your important roles. And thank you to all the other women of Lake and Cook counties who are leading from so many places.


Lead on!

-Kitty Mayo, editor of the Lake County Press

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Meet Gina Kleive,

Superintendent at Lake Superior School District #381

“Listen to understand.”

The first woman superintendent of Lake Superior School District, Gina Kleive started her new position just before this school year started, but she is no stranger to the confidence that makes a strong leader.

About being chosen as the first woman to lead the Lake Superior School District, Kleive’s reaction is one of great satisfaction.

“To be the first makes me feel quite humble, and it’s pretty awesome!” Kleive stated.

A graduate of the district from Two Harbors High School, Kleive has “come home” to the north shore after a notable career path. Kleive began at the Duluth School District

in 2006, became the assistant principal at THHS in 2022 and was the principal there since early this year.

Crediting her knowledge of how to work with people well to starting in her childhood, Kleive says she has also learned a lot on the job through all of her school positions.

“I would love to emulate some, and others I’ve thought no I’ll never be like that person, both are very important,” said Kleive.

Saying that it is possible to lead in many ways, something not dependent on a job title, Kleive says that as a woman she has learned her leadership style from both women and men in her life who have been her bosses, managers and leaders.

The overarching principle she puts into action is listening to understand.

“You have to really, really listen to understand someone rather than just responding,” Kleive said.

A strongly developed leadership philosophy is something that Kleive spelled out clearly for the school board at a recent board meeting following the eastern philosophy of Chi, or an individual’s energy, Kleive says that her Chi is positive energy with “C” standing for Calm and Collaborative, “H” for Hope and future thinking, and “I” to be always working with Integrity.

Laughingly saying that middle schoolers can be resistant by nature, Kleive says they were good training for building a case that could be truly motivating. A strong part of her leadership style is being able to understand the why and telling the story to connect the why of a decision to create resilient underpinnings.

“My style may take a little bit longer at the start, but it builds a stronger foundation,” said Kleive, adding, “When people understand the story behind the why, they are generally more invested in moving forward.”

Relying on participation in women leadership groups across the state for the last two decades, Kleive says she has developed a strong sense of self confidence.



“I came back in hopes I could make a difference to the community that supported me to become a teacher,” said Kleive.

Facing disappointments when she has been turned away from past goals, Kleive says she has needed to know in her own heart what she is truly capable of, even

when her talents were not at first readily recognized.

“It all works out in the end, and if it doesn’t work out, it’s not the end!” Kleive said.

Lake County Press



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Meet Tracy Benson,

Mayor of Grand Marais

BRIAN LARSEN
EDITOR, COOK COUNTY NEWS
HERALD

Q-Can you tell us a little bit about your upbringing in Grand Marais?

It's a small town. You meet most of your friends in kindergarten, and many are still my closest friends. I have fond memories of playing games at the Courthouse...and our sting-ray bike adventures out to Paradise Beach. However, it leaves little opportunity to master the art of introducing yourself to new people.

My Dad and Uncle (Sherm and Harold) owned a small business, Midway Service (that is now Buck's Hardware), so our family life revolved around that seasonality. You vacation in April and summer is work. Not a place for girls to work, my first job was cleaning rooms at Tomteboda and from their waitressing and selling clothes at Humphreys. Customer service is a skill mastered early. My Dad worked 7 days a week, so he snuck in time with me on wrecker runs, or grouse hunting after school and lots of fishing with a stop at Bjechees. For me, anything to be outside... snooping around down at the Lake; one warm summer we swam daily down at the Ponds. Skiing became a lifelong passion that I share with my kids and now my granddaughter.

I spent a lot of summertime at our library and obtained my own card when I was six. I would just read through the shelves.

I have two older brothers, Steve & Buck, and expectations for us were the same. Education being at the top of the list.

Our home was my mom's business...do things right, get your work done, and care for what you have. The sewing skills she taught me later transferred nicely into tiling skills at our various houses. However, I will never iron another pillowcase or bedsheet again. She was a gracious host, known for her pies...always ready for the drop-in company that is synonymous with living in a beautiful landscape.

Besides all the kids roaming, there were lots of dogs roaming or sleeping in the street, mostly black labs, and they made great friends. One time, surrounded by the pack and afraid, my mom cautioned me that they can sense fear, so never show them you're afraid. That advice has many applications.

Q-How long were you gone following

your graduation from high school? Where did you go to college, and what did you do following college?

I tagged along with my friend Lee Bergstrom to tour the University of Utah...I had never seen so many kids my age, and they were really friendly, not to mention the skiing. Though I had been accepted to several East Coast colleges, I left that visit all signed up. An English degree focused on American Literature meant more schooling. During our summers of selling clothes, Ruth Ann Hedstrom Vos and I read an article about paralegals... a new profession. (Needless to say, she now has her estate planning practice.) I became a tax & estate planning paralegal working initially in SLC. Most of my career was spent in downtown Minneapolis with Ameriprise Financial (originally IDS), working on everything related to financial planning – we were the advisor's advisor. That experience provided opportunities for continued learning, professional development, and practical knowledge in my personal life. You should always invest in yourself – no one can take that away.

Q-When did you decide to return to Grand Marais? You came once and left again, but you have come home for what I think is for good. Yes? No?

We tried several times to return, looking for a business to buy. I wanted to raise my kids here. That didn't work out, but they spent a lot of time up here with their grandparents and later working summers for their uncle. Then, a variety of life changes came together. I asked Pete if he would be willing to move to Grand Marais; could we try it for two years? My mom was in the Care Center, and I wanted the opportunity to be closer. My friends kidded him about November when the streets rolled up, which is not true anymore, and it turns out he likes it here.

Q-Throughout your time in Grand Marais, you have been involved in councils, groups, and boards that work to better the city/citizens. Where did you come by that "give-back" attitude?

From my own parents and all the other parents...you learn by example. The hospital Auxiliary bought much-needed equipment for our new hospital. Their main fundraiser, 'Holiday Homes', was a community event where residents opened their homes for tours




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during the holiday season, with all proceeds going towards the hospital. I saw the difference my mom and all those women made. Their final gift is the beautiful stained glass piece as you enter our hospital. Motivated by health events within our family, my father was very committed to seeing our hospital built and served on the hospital board for many years. He was active in the Masons and the American Legion...won't say he was in his seat every Sunday, but he always participated in the annual church fundraising. I also saw the quiet things they did for the community and our own extended family. My mom did hair up at the Care Center for residents. She was one of many, including Gladys Dockan... You take your skills and help. That is the cool thing about living in a small town.

My Dad wasn't one to lecture but always made himself clear. Beginning in seventh grade, at dinner one night, he asked me, "What office am I running for?" For me, it was Student Council every year; by senior year, I was president.

Q-Tell us a little bit about what it is like to be Mayor. I see your name on virtually everything that comes by my computer, so I know you are incredibly busy juggling a lot of balls in the air. How do you keep a balance between work and play?

You can be as busy as you like in this role, but after years of long commutes and many hours spent in an office, I treasure the flexibility to prioritize time with my family and other favorites, like radio time with WTIP. I appreciate that technology provides the ability to get work done outside an 8-5 schedule. And information is now so easily accessible that it is great to tap into other cities' work or the League of MN Cities to assist our efforts.

Q-What do find is the most rewarding part of your work? Frustrating?

Learning something new always draws me in. For example, the new cannabis opportunities have been an interesting learning challenge for the city and the county.

I enjoy working with our 5-member council. Many times, another counselor has made a comment that has given me pause and a re-think. It is important to have everyone's voice at the table.

We are responsible to the residents and our larger county. We have a watchful and caring community – I try to balance what they say with all the details we weed through as we work through issues.

It is great to connect with the larger community – we have many new business owners, and it feels like many young people are making this home.

It is always an exercise in patience, as

things can move more slowly than you would like. Many big initiatives include improvements to our wastewater system, infrastructure, street upgrades, etc. Projects of this scope, a small community can never afford. We depend on outside funding, but securing those dollars requires expertise communities don't commonly have on staff.

I see an opportunity for the city to better use technology to gain efficiencies. The council also has set improved internal and public communications as a major priority.

My greatest frustration is that we have yet to figure out how to diversify our economy. You should never have all your eggs in one basket. I see broadband as the key to moving the dial.

Q-Your husband is also great at volunteering for the community. Do you support each other in your volunteer work?

Pete is super supportive, or believe me, this would not be happening. Pete's first foray into local volunteering was with the YMCA advisory council—something we're both passionate about. He is now super committed to the Lion's Club. He's friends with the old guard, and he is excited to see all the new members and energy coming on board. Their efforts directly benefit other local non-profits.



Most of our efforts are separate, but occasionally, we do radio together, most recently WTIP's Small Change.

Q-Anything you want to say to the community, say it here.

It goes without saying that we live in a beautiful space...Lake Superior casts a magic spell. That said, there are lots of beautiful places; it is the people who make all the difference.

Many of us wonder, as the county continues to grow, how to welcome new residents

and make them feel welcome to use their skills to enhance this funky, strongly independent town they now call home. If you have a passion or talent, it can be put to good use. This is a community of curious, committed, problem-solving doers. Join the club. Make a friend.

This place can also feel a bit isolating, and it remains a hard place to live, but somehow, we're all here—making our daily trips from the grocery stores to the post office and the bank, saying "Hey there" at each stop.

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Meet Linda Jurek,

Visit Cook County and Cook County Chamber of Commerce Director

BRIAN LARSEN
EDITOR, COOK COUNTY NEWS
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Linda Jurek, often seen with a warm smile, is a person of enthusiasm and fun, yet she can be firm when the situation demands. As the Executive Director of Visit Cook County and the Cook County Chamber of Commerce, she is a familiar face in the professional sphere. However, her true essence is known only to those who have shared her journey. Here is Linda Jurek, a woman deeply rooted in her community and passionate about her work.

Q- How was it growing up in Grand Marais?

I was born at the North Shore Hospital in June 1960. Dr. Roger McDonald delivered me and was also my neighbor. My childhood was likened to the Little Rascals, with a neighborhood filled with children of all ages. We played all day: Red Rover, Tag, bee catching, exploring the creek that ran in front of the high school, Cops and Robbers, etc. I was one of the youngest kids, so keeping up was a big deal.

Q- Tell us about what your folks did and your summer jobs, sports, choir, or other activities.

My dad was born to Polish immigrants. They settled in Kettle River. Dad was one of eight. He often said they walked uphill to school and back. He was an entrepreneur, a logger, a hunter, and a fisherman. For fun, he welded and created snowmobile sleds. I would love to have my hands on one. He operated the Standard Oil Gas Station, which was located in Harbor Park. He decided to go back to school in the late 60s and become a law enforcement officer. He also started Joe’s Septic Service, which still exists today as G&G Septic. Sadly, my dad passed away in 1974 when I was 14 years old.

My mom was born in Colville. She was a fourth-generation descendant of the Lief Family. Her parents homesteaded on County Rd. 14 West, while her grandparents home-

steaded on County Rd. 14 East. “Hanging On - Homesteading in Cook County” by Eleanor Jackson Stone provides a historical account of early settlers, depicts the rugged life, and provides an account of the generations of families growing up in Colville. My grandmother, Ellen Lief Backlund, was born in Colville in 1906. My mom was a stubborn Swede Finn and would often describe her family as poor farmers. She insisted on having her own garden, and her raspberry patch was visited by many alley walkers who could hardly resist grabbing a handful. My parents built their home with Malner Construction, mom’s first cousins. They shared a blueprint with the Dockan family home and borrowed \$5,000 from Walter Wojtysiak to build our family home at 410 East 2nd Street.

I am a fourth-generation Lief/Backlund family member; my daughter Jillian Kratt-Haugen is fifth, and my grandson Breck is the sixth generation in Cook County.

I spent a tremendous amount of time playing in the woods. I was also very involved in all the wonderful youth programs in the ‘60s: Blue Birds, Camp Fire Girls, confirmation classes, the Son’s Rays, and high school activities, including band, cheer, volleyball, gymnastics, and track. Theater and music were very important to me.

My first job, at the age of 13, was washing dishes at Birch Terrace. I also cleaned rooms at the Seawall, worked at Humphrey’s, sold donuts at the Donut Shop, waited table at the Harbor Inn, and ski school instructor (for the younguns) and beer bartender at Lutsen Mountains. There were so many wonderful people who touched my life during that time: mentors and friends.

Q- When did you graduate from Cook County High School?

I graduated from CCHS in 1978. Our class was one of, if not the largest, with 83 students. We are a very close-knit group of friends to this day, with many classmates living in Cook County. Ann Mershon was a favorite mentor and teacher.



North Shore Health Proudly Honors Our WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP!

North Shore Health would like to recognize and honor our women in leadership roles. They set an exceptional example for our staff with the dedication and compassion it takes to meet the changing healthcare needs of our community. We thank you for all of your tireless efforts!



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Following high school, I pursued higher education at St. Cloud State, majoring in theater and English. I furthered my studies at the University of Wisconsin Superior and Lake Superior College, specializing in medical staff transcription. In 1981, I began my professional career as a medical transcriptionist and healthcare billing coder at North Shore Hospital, where my aunt, Betty Blackwell, was my boss. In 1983, I moved to Duluth and started working at Miller-Dwan Medical Center. I was one of the first certified medical staff coordinators for the State and a founding member of the state program for certification in this field.

My career and educational path are unique, and I have acquired many skills along the way: certified fundraising, major event planner, leadership training, business owner, kickboxing instructor, golf course pro shop attendant, and best of all, MOM.

Q- Marriage and kids, etc.

In June 1985, I married Michael Kratt, and we were blessed with three wonderful children, Nicholas, Jillian, and Travis. Today, I am a proud grandmother of three amazing grandchildren.

Mike and I divorced, and I remarried in 2018; Jason Simons.

Q- What was your position with the Duluth Tourism (or Chamber) before moving back to Grand Marais?

Before returning to Grand Marais, I worked as the Director of Membership Retention and Event Planning for the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce. However, my life took a turn when my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. She did not want to leave her home on 2nd Street, and I couldn't bear the thought of being far from her. A dear friend, Lee Bergstrom, told me about the position with Visit Cook County. That was 11 years ago. After 30 years, I moved back to Grand Marais to take care of my mom, who passed away a short four months after my return home.

Q- When did you start as the Visit Cook County Director?

After stuffing my professional toolbox and enjoying countless visits to Cook County over the years, my thought was how hard can it be to attract visitors to this beautiful corner of the State. I started with Visit Cook County as the Executive Director in July 2013. Within months of returning, I also joined the Cook County Chamber Board as a board director.

Q- How has Visit Cook County grown through the years?

Visit Cook County has grown tremendously over the years, not only as a well-respected and professional destination mar-

keting organization but also as one that has strategically grown our tourism economy. We are supported by a lodging tax (paid by our visitors who stay in our lodging facilities). Since our formative years, beginning in 2010, we have grown the lodging tax collection by nearly \$1M. Tourism is our economic driver, accounting for 81% of the economy in northeastern M.N.

Q- When did you assume the dual leadership role of Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Visit Cook County?

Following Jim Boyd's retirement in December 2021, I formally began the dual leadership role of the Chamber and Visit Cook County.

Q- What are your roles in these positions?

The largest responsibility is the organizational management of five boards of directors: three tourism association boards, the Chamber board, and the VCC board. Leadership is a key responsibility in balancing the needs of the community and our tourism-based economy.

Q- And how big is your staff?

Currently, there are four staff members at the Info Center with key coordinator Carah Thomas-Maskell at the helm. The administrative team consists of:

Kjersti Vick, PR and Marketing Director
Malorie Brazell, Event and Marketing Manager

Roseanne Cooley, Finance and Business Manager

Angel Schinze, Administrative Support Specialist

Q- List any and all personal and team awards and honors garnered since moving back to Grand Marais.

2014 Travel Marketing Award - Explore MN

2015 Award of Excellence Visit Cook County - Explore MN

2016 Superior Storm Festival - Explore MN Award of Merit

2016 Visit Cook County DMO - Explore MN Award of Merit

2017 Linda Jurek Rising Star Award - Explore MN

2020 Kjersti Vick Rising Star Award - Explore MN

2022 Linda Jurek - Roger Toussaint Award for statewide tourism leadership

Kjersti and I are often asked to speak at industry conferences. Visit Cook County is often referenced as one of the leaders in state tourism efforts. We also have received community public relations awards.

Q- What do you like best about your work in the community?



I love my work. I enjoy the challenge of balancing and educating the business and community dialogue and economics. I will choose gratitude. We are a unique community. It takes each and every one of us to keep us balanced.

Q- In the future, what do you see as our area's most significant concerns?

The most significant concerns are those we speak of regularly: workforce, balancing our seasonal economy, housing, and the cost of living.

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Meet Tara Solem,

District Manager and Watershed Planner for Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District

"I feel like every day we are making a difference."

Leading the Lake County Soil and Conservation District for the last four and a half years, Solem loves the hands-on nature of the job and the front-end results when working with government agencies and landowners.

"I feel like every day we are making a difference by helping to figure out solutions to erosion and protecting water," said Solem.

Prior to moving to the Two Harbors area with her family, Solem spent 12 years working for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency after graduating from Bemidji State University.

Her early adulthood was a formative time for Solem, leaving her with many life les-

sons that she absorbed and has transmuted into a personal leadership style.

Coordinating and overseeing voluntary grant-funded projects related to natural resources and conservation throughout Lake County, Solem supervises five staff and is a conduit for the five board of supervisors.

Watershed planner is another title Solem holds, one in which she coordinates with other agencies and local government on prioritizing water restoration and protection projects, encompassing three watershed plans that include St. Louis-Cloquet, Rainy River Headwater-Vermillion, and Lake Superior North watersheds.

Battling the myth that leaders must be extroverted, vivacious and outgoing, Solem says her leadership style is much different in its reflective nature.

"You can be an effective leader no matter your personality type, I am much more reflective in listening to what people are telling me and reflecting how it fits into the work we do here to come up with solutions," said Solem.

As a woman in leadership, Solem says that defining herself as effective, despite her quieter demeanor can be challenging. Finding that more dominant personalities can be dismissive, Solem says that she believes that is oversight on their part and knows that her observation skills as a self-defined introvert bring her vast information.

"I think it takes a while for people to understand I'm not meek, they come around to seeing I deserve their respect because I consistently provide my knowledge over time and that builds trust," Solem stated.

Starting out as a young mom Solem says she learned early on that a deeply grounded sense of self-confidence was vital, regardless of whether others quickly picked up on her ability to lead.

"There's going to be people that don't understand or care, but from an early age I realized that I'm not going to let other people's opinions affect me," said Solem, "I know what my knowledge and expertise is, and I feel good about myself."



Passionate about her own work, Solem says she feels incredibly fulfilled in her work role and would advise others to learn to lead in ways that match their interests.

"Each of us have to ability to be a leader.

Find out what your passion is, learn to have your voice and give yourself grace," Solem said.

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Meet Lana Fralich,

City Administrator for Silver Bay

"I truly believe change is inevitable, growth is optional."

The city administrator of Silver Bay for over 16 years, Lana Fralich sees herself as a professional problem solver, viewing many city related situations as a puzzle with complex pieces.

Before coming to Silver Bay Fralich had a background in project development in housing, and a degree in accounting.

In the world of municipalities, Fralich says that she has to apply a broad skillset to multiple issues, like public process, financial management, human resources, development, utilities, recreation, and streets.

Sometimes being in city administration decisions can be criticized, but Fralich believes that her work goals should reflect what the majority of city residents want. Since the development of the city's comprehensive plan in 2015, city goals have been centered around that.

"Does it fit the vision of the comprehensive plan? Everything flows from that," said Fralich, adding, "The entire idea is about creating a sustainable community to leave for the next generation."

As a post-mining company town no longer taking its cues from a corporate sponsor, Silver Bay has been challenged with creating a new way into the future that addresses both aging infrastructure, and an aging community. Those factors, along with a growing influx of visitors discovering the incredible natural beauty of the north shore is pushing change.

"We have to adapt; I truly believe change is inevitable, growth is optional," Fralich stated.

An example of one of the big projects Fralich has been a part of in Silver Bay is Black Beach and projects around it. The closing of the mine-owned beach created public outcry, leaving Fralich with one of the puzzles that she was intrigued with solving.

Not thinking of the situation as having no options, Fralich listened to residents who felt strongly about having access to the Lake, and was ready to move into action when the timing was right. Bringing her excellent understanding of funding to bear, multiple projects from the waterfront to the campground and road work have come to fruition.

Saying that leaders are doers who listen, Fralich believes tenacity and watching for the right timing have helped her get results. Along with a real willingness to learn and keeping her compass on doing things for the right reasons, this has helped her get through situations where not everyone is pleased.

"I am focused on getting projects accomplished," said Fralich, "I am not perfect but I try to be my genuine self and just let my work speak for itself."

Coming prepared with facts is a characteristic that Fralich is well known for, and being ready to answer questions builds her self-confidence, but she says that she deeply cares about the people and community she works for as she grew up here and always considered Silver Bay home.

Often finding herself the only woman in a room of decision makers, Fralich says that she never sees that as a problem.

"It's not a competition, whoever we are,



we just need to figure out how to work together," said Fralich.

While transitioning through change can be hard, Fralich is clearly committed to principles of integrity and hard work in her position. She credits staff for the work they do as well.

For those times when things go less smoothly, Fralich has experienced advice for others; "Give credit to others, be accountable when you make mistakes, and lead by example."

Lake County Press

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*Serving (not the word Insuring) State Farm Families since 2016

*Business Mgmt degree from Buena Vista University

CH-2745060





KRAUS-ANDERSON®

PROUD TO SUPPORT WOMEN LEADERS



Lake Superior Dental



Lake Superior Dental is pleased to announce our new addition Annie Davis, Advanced Dental Therapist, to our Two Harbors team. We would like to thank you for allowing all of us at Lake Superior Dental to serve your oral health needs, it has been a joy earning your trust and we remain committed to always putting the patient first.



Annie Davis, Advanced Dental Therapist.
Annie loves working with her patients, creating lifelong relationships to provide the best possible dental care.
Our commitment to your oral health is unwavering and we appreciate your trust as we grow to meet your needs.

Two Harbors Clinic
1453 Hwy. 2
834-5616
lakesuperiordental.com

Helping individuals aged 55+ live independently



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Care Consultation and Coordination
- Caregiver Support Groups
- Chores
- Education
- Grocery Shopping
- Light Housekeeping
- Meals on Wheels
- Reading2Connect
- Social Events
- Transportation
- Victory Chorus - Two Harbors



Volunteer Opportunities:
Whether you have five minutes or five hours, give us a call. Thanks!

(218) 834-8024 www.communitypartnersth.org