



VOLUME 46, ISSUE 1

# VIBRATIONS

## NEWSLETTER

### Mark your Calendar - The 46th Annual Dinner Dance

You are cordially invited to an evening of great fellowship, raffle drawings, the annual election and meeting!

The Owasippe Staff Associations 46th Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, March 9, 2024, starting at 5:00 p.m. CT.

We will be gathering at:

**Allegra Banquets - Villa Park**

237 W. St. Charles Road, Villa Park, IL 60181

Ticket price: \$65 per person. You must purchase tickets online or by mail, no later than Saturday, March 2nd. You must have a ticket to attend. There will be no walk-ins allowed! Please note this is an 21 and over event. We are currently looking for raffle prize donations as well as people will to sponsor gift baskets.

The agenda for the evening includes...

- \*Board Election results  
(you must vote no later than Friday, March 3rd on line)
- \*Board Meeting and New Officers announced
- \*Raffle and Silent Auction Prizes
- \*Music & Giveaways!



**Buy tickets / renew  
your membership  
here!**

**The newsletter for the members of the Owasippe Staff Association**

# 2024 OSA Board of Directors Candidates

Term Expires 2024	Term Expires 2025	Term Expires 2026
Michael Brus	Ryan Carlson	Jennifer Kotwasinski **
Wally Kleinfeldt	Kevin Harper**	Pat Troy
Chris Sanchez	Eddie McCarthy	Edgar Wolff-Klammer

\*\*Two term limit goes into effect



**Paul Kerchberger**, 26, currently lives in Lisle, Illinois a western suburb of Chicago. He began his Owasippe journey as a camper in 2008 at Camp Blackhawk (Go!). Paul then joined the ranks of staff as a CIT at High Adventure (Challenge Accepted!) in 2012 and the following year he joined the Camp Wolverine (Zaxie!) aquatics staff as an instructor. When he turned 18 Paul went on to become the Wolverine Commissioner for a number of years before finally joining the seasonal Ranger Staff in 2019. After a brief break to begin his professional career he returned to Owasippe as the Property Caretaker from 2021 – 2023. Paul grew up at Owasippe, both as a youth and a young adult. It is a place that holds an incredibly special place in his heart, and he wants nothing more than to contribute to the property’s ability to make an even bigger impact on today’s youth.

Paul’s professional career has also revolved around the Nonprofit Industry. With a Bachelor’s of Science from Carroll University and his Master of Nonprofit Administration from North Park University, Paul has worked for a number of organizations in the nonprofit realm. He began as a Quality and Compliance Analyst in the nonprofit realm including a small nonprofit healthcare organization in Muskegon and as the program director for the American Youth Foundation where he served as their Camp Director at a summer camp only 30 minutes north of OSR. Now, Paul has returned home to Chicagoland to begin his life with his Fiancé, Annie Nyberg, and has taken the position of Program Director of The LeaderShop, a youth development nonprofit based in La Grange. His professional experience makes Paul uniquely qualified to serve on the Board of the Owasippe Staff Association. He has in-depth experience in fundraising, recruiting, and event planning. Being elected to the Board would be the pinnacle of his life’s journey at Owasippe and Paul would love nothing more than to be able to contribute his professional nonprofit experience to the place that gave him his love, passion and commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of youth.

**Kevin Oster**, age 52 lives in Lockport, IL with his wife Susan and two daughters Allison and Emma. Kevin has been involved in Scouting since 1979. He is an Eagle Scout. He is a Brotherhood member of the Order of the Arrow. He first started attending Owasippe in 1984 as a camper at Camp Wolverine. He served on camp staff at Camp Blackhawk in 1988. Kevin worked at Blackhawk until 1992. He was an Eco-Con director, Commissioner and Asst. Camp director during his years on staff. Kevin was also part of the OSA CIT training staff for several years. He served 2 terms on the OSA board including a few years as the Treasurer.



Kevin has been involved in the dry-cleaning industry for over 30 years. Currently working for a large dry cleaner in St. Charles. He spent several years coaching and cheering on his daughters in their various sports. He is looking to get more involved with the OSA now that his girls are nearly completed with their academics and ready to start their own lives. He volunteered this past summer as a commissioner at Camp Blackhawk.

“I would like to see the OSA get the CIT training program up and running again at Owasippe. The program I believe providing great value in the development of several generations of staff. I would like to see that partnership renewed with the camp and continue for years to come”

# 2024 OSA Board of Directors Candidates

**Mike Brus**, age 37, is a resident of Kalamazoo, MI. He attended Northern Illinois University where he earned his BS in Education. He is currently working as a brewer for Bells Brewery in Kalamazoo, MI. Mike joined Scouting in 1992 and first experienced Owasippe at Carlen in 1997. He joined staff in 2003 and worked on staff for the next 12 years. He has served as a Nature Instructor, Nature Director, Commissioner, and Camp Director at Blackhawk. He has also served as Climbing Director, Webelos Camp Director, CIT Director, and Associate Reservation Director during his time on staff at Owasippe.



Since his time working on staff ended, Mike has focused on volunteering at Owasippe, with an emphasis on helping the mountain biking program grow. Mike is an avid cyclist and in his free time he enjoys competing in amateur bike races all across the state of Michigan.

As a current OSA board member, Mike has enjoyed reconnecting and building relationships with the OSA membership. He hopes to be re-elected to the board of directors and continue contributing to the planning and execution of the many camp improvement projects that the OSA sponsors.



**Mike Mieszczak**, 47, lives in Brookfield, IL with his wife, Corrie and two kids, Natalie and Cameron. The family has been Reneker campers since 2014 and eagerly looks forward to it every summer. Mike works as an IT guy, is obsessed with the guitar and occasionally exercises his overactive imagination by writing.

Mike first camped at Owasippe in 1990. Two years later, he was a CIT during the whirlwind summer of '92, then spent three more summers at Camp Blackhawk. In 2017, Mike had the rare opportunity to work at camp once more as the Blackhawk commissioner. He and the family stayed in Staff Village and it was a summer to remember. Mike was introduced to a whole new generation of staff and was proud to see the camp's traditions still honored.

Mike is a life member of the OSA and recently volunteered to run the OSA Trade-O-Ree after Ron Kulak's passing. He plans to continue the TOR and hopefully expand the event. Mike also volunteers at the E. Urner Goodman Owasippe Museum, scanning various photos and artifacts and runs the museum website.

"When the OSA started, the board reached out to the current staff, past staff and troop volunteer leaders to become part of this group...just as the Owasippe Chant says, "now the scouts have joined this loyal band". This group's mission is to help preserve and enhance America's greatest and premier scout camp, a place near and dear to all of our hearts, a place that is home to our many cherished memories, a place that is our responsibility to take care of so that future generations can experience what we've all experienced at Owasippe.

As a board member, I would work to continue this mission: to reach out to all these people as we did in the past, to continue to grow our membership and to make significant contributions to the camp that will benefit the scouting program, staff development as well as maintenance, and conservation of the physical property.

There's a wealth of experience the OSA membership brings to the camp...from the people who bring their vast professional expertise to the financial support of those who can't be at our events for reasons of distance, age or other obligations...from the most recent generations of staff to the seasoned veterans who still bring valuable ideas to the table. The OSA had been a crucial and integral part of making the scout's experience at Owasippe better. We as a group are held in high esteem to other council staff alumni across America. They look at us and see what they can become.

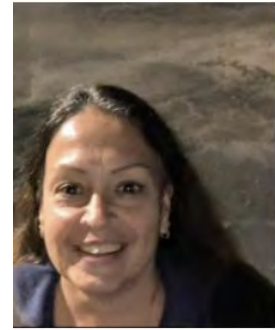
Owasippe has had an immeasurable impact on my life. Words cannot express what it means to me and I want to do my part to keep it going for tomorrow's scouts, who will one day be future staff and future OSA members.

I hope you will show your confidence and trust in me and vote for me in this election.  
Thank you...All the Wealth of Earth and Heaven."



# 2024 OSA Board Nominations

**Chris Sanchez**, lives in Lowell, IN. She has 3 adult children: Christopher, Scott, and Dawn. Dawn is married to Jeremy Dewar. Her grandson Wyatt Nash Dewar. Chris retired from Park Forest/ Chicago Heights School District after 16 years. She was a Physical Education/ Health Teacher, Athletic Director and Union President for her school district. Prior to teaching here, she has held teaching positions in both Illinois and Michigan. Her sum total of teaching years was 32. In her spare time, lol, she loves to kayak, snow shoe, play cribbage and garden when she is home. Visiting her grandson is the best of times and has introduced him to the camp she holds so dear. Chris was first introduced to Owasippe in 1972 when her dad took his troop to Wolverine South. Mom and the girls got to stay at Family Camp. In 1973 Chris was hired as an Aquatic Aide and from there served through the 1981 camping season moving into the role as Aquatic Director. In 1986 she was asked to run the Trading Post at the Ad Center and proudly served in this capacity. She would take a break until 1994 when asked to be the Reservation Aquatic Director and oversee all pool operations. In 2000 she became part of the Maintenance Staff and served there for 7 years. She moved into the role of the Trading Post Manager for the reservation in 2008 where she served until 2022. 2023 saw her accept a new role at camp, that of the Adventure Bus Driver. What a way to celebrate her 40th Anniversary! It was the best!!! Chris is a Life Member in the OSA. She has previously served on the Board of Directors. She says it seems like she can never spend enough time at camp helping in any capacity needed. She says it is GREAT to work alongside members of all staff, their friends and families. She really loved the turn outs at this past years work weekends. What a dedicated group of people, everyone with a special talent to give. She would like to include members of the community at the work weekends that have special skills. She hopes to continue to engage all staff from all eras. It's great to have all staff and families join the Owasippe Family. It is especially GREAT to reconnect with people you have not seen in 20+ years.



## OSA Board & Voting

The OSA is managed by the nine members of the Board of Directors whom you elect. Since each term is staggered, three positions must be elected each year. Elections are held and announced during the annual meeting held the first Saturday in March. Each OSA member that is currently registered can vote for up to three candidates on one ballot. Voting will take place online through the OSA website. Voting will conclude at the annual meeting. It is highly encouraged to vote early online! OSA Board & Voting Join us at the March 46th Annual Meeting to see your new OSA board members!

### Scan here to vote!



**Voting opens February 11th  
and closes on March 9th**

## President's Perspective

*By Kevin Harper*



Happy New Year Membership!! We are looking forward to 2024 and all of the great events the OSA will be hosting. A special thank you to Jen for planning and organizing the Wolves Game on 1/28. Also Dinner Dance tickets are currently on sale and the Spring Fix-It will be held on May 17-19. We had a spike of members, friends, and staff at pizza night this past November with around 75 people in attendance. It is always great seeing our members and catching up with friends! A quick update on the eBay store in 2023 we sold and shipped 375 items that were previously donated to the OSA bringing in \$4888.00. If you'd like to take a look the organization ebay page is OSA\_1978. Looking forward to seeing everyone on March 9th in Villa Park at Allegra Banquets! Remember that you must be a member in good standing to vote in the board election.

Thank you to the following people for your financial donations in 2023. \$51,000.00 was donated during the last week of the year which brought the total to \$54,053.00.

Your generosity means everything to the OSA and to the projects we do at Owasippe.

Susan Blew	Tim Gibbons	Nick Pajor
Ronald Bradbery	Richard Gudmundson	Thomas Seymour
Jessica Brogan	Terri Lee	Lori Shannon
Joey Carey	Noel Morales	Suzanne Smyth
Norville R Carter	James Nothnagel	Ned Swanson
Bob Daman	Ellie O'Brien	Edgar Wolff-Klammer
Rich & Carla Gargas	Elaine Pagels	John Sterling

Additionally the OSA received \$8,130.00 for the memory of

Ron Kulak, Steve Parrish, and Ronald Bradbery.

Also thank you to everyone who volunteered and provided supplies and materials during 2023.



**Scan here for all the  
2024 raffle prizes!**

### **46th Anniversary Annual Meeting - Raffle**

Scan the Raffle Prize QR code to check out this year's 2024 prizes! Raffle prizes range from a Ninja Foodi blender to handmade items to amazing LEGO creations! We also have our two night Guest Lodge stay as well as Split the Pot on the website!

### **New Life Members**

Tom Sniegowski

Jeffrey Nowik

# Galloping Grape Vine



Laura Chmura (Levan), husband Steve, and daughters Charlotte and Junie (Haley) will welcome a baby boy this winter.

Katie Heffernan became engaged to Andy Richardson over the Christmas holiday. They currently live in Virginia. Congrats!

Rachael Seida (Belka) currently resides in Stuttgart, Germany with her Top Gun husband Joe and sons Jacob, Everett, and Teddy.



## Needed: LEGO Bricks!

Do you have any LEGO bricks/pieces lying around your house? [Any shape! Any size! Any color!] Consider donating them to Camp Reneker (Go For It!) for use this summer and beyond. If you have any donations, please reach out to [susan@ronderby.com](mailto:susan@ronderby.com). Thank you!



Major Chris Skopec married Grace Stiegler in New Orleans, LA in mid January! Thirteen past Owasppe staff members were able to travel there and celebrate the happy couple! The trip also included a small reunion of the 2003 Blackhawk Nature staff! The crew had a wonderful weekend catching up and sharing old staff stories!



**Read the article here!**



**Visit WKS Woodturning on Facebook**



Kurt Wolff-Klammer has recently been featured/wrote another article for a Wood Working journal. Check out some of his latest pieces on his facebook page!



## Ranger Ron Signing Off

It is with a heavy heart that I am letting you all know that I will no longer be the Assistant Ranger at Owasippe.

Many of you are probably wondering why. Without getting too far into the weeds of it, basically, the time demands for the position have continually increased but the compensation has not. This reached a tipping point in late October and I had hoped to find a middle ground between added time for added pay. Instead, and much to my surprise, I was abruptly informed that PTAC would be parting ways with me.

I have truly enjoyed the past six years as “Ranger Ron.” I have learned a TON and I got to teach some too. I have gotten to know (and love) an entire new generation of Owasippe Staffers and campers. I got to see Maggie shine on Reneker Staff. I got to work in the woods, at one of my favorite places on earth. I am in much better physical shape than I was when I was six years younger. I believe I helped make a difference. The list of positives FAR outweigh any negatives. I have so much to be grateful for.

This was not what I wanted, but it is what it is. I guess all good things must come to an end. This definitely stings, but I am also excited for what my future may hold. I have to remind myself not to be so sad it's over that I forget to be glad it happened. I don't know what's next for me, but I know I will be OK, and the Derbys will be OK.

In closing, I'd like to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who helped me along the way ... fellow Staffers, dedicated volunteers, campers, friends, and family. Owasippe is an amazing place, but the real “magic” is in the people, the friendships, sharing the struggle towards a common goal.

I plan to continue to support Owasippe, in any and every way I can, for as long as I live. I hope you all will too.



## Pizza Night

A big thank you to all that came out to Pizza Night! We had about 75 people there. Always great to catch up with friends! Special Thank you to Tim Gibbons who won the split the pot (\$355) and donated it back to the OSA.



## End of the Trail

Mai Merritt, age 58, passed away on January 1, 2024. She was born on May 22, 1965 in Monterey, California to Barry and Kay Merritt. She is preceded in death by her mother, Kay (Hebrank) Merritt. She is survived by her father, Barry Merritt; siblings, Kem Merritt, Jon Merritt, Geoff Merritt, Cari Merritt; Aunt to True and Bailey Merritt

Mai spent many summers at Owasippe with her sister-in-law Candy. Mai brought smiles and laughter to so many campers and staff members. She will be greatly missed!



John Kennedy, a OSA life member, OA Vigil member and avid supporter of scouting. Beloved husband of the late Sandra (nee Kotecki); dear uncle of many nieces and nephews; preceded in death by his siblings Margaret (Martin) Harlow, Rita (Henry) Mueller, Francis (Emily), Patrick (Nancy) and Nancy (Richard) Stern. Visitation Saturday morning February 2nd from 8:00 a.m, to 9:30 a.m. going to St. Paul of the Cross Church for 10 a.m. Mass. Interment St. Joseph Cemetery. Info 847-685-1002 [www.cooneyfuneralhome.com](http://www.cooneyfuneralhome.com)



Owasippe Staff Association  
P.O. Box 7079  
Westchester, IL 60154

LEAVE BLANK FOR MAILING

**Vibrations** is published four times per year by the Owasippe Staff Association.

**Editor:** Maureen Harper

The opinions stated by contributors to *Vibrations* are those of the authors and are not by fact of publication necessarily those of the Owasippe Staff Association or its Board of Directors. Publication does not imply endorsement. All materials are subject to editing.

Articles, tidbits, and photos are encouraged. Submissions can be made out to [osa.vibrations@gmail.com](mailto:osa.vibrations@gmail.com) or mailed to: OSA Vibrations Editor, P.O. Box 7097, Westchester, IL 60154. All materials which the author wants returned must be accompanied by a self addressed stamped envelope.

Deadlines for submitting materials for publication are as follows:

- |          |           |            |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| • Spring | (Issue 1) | January 15 |
| • Summer | (Issue 2) | April 1    |
| • Fall   | (Issue 3) | August 7   |
| • Winter | (Issue 4) | October 15 |

## Connect with us!

The Owasippe Staff Association  
P.O. Box 7079  
Westchester, IL, 60154



Owasippe Staff Association



osa.alum



@osa.alum



osa.vibrations@gmail.com



The newsletter for the members of the Owasippe Staff Association