

# Lakeland PBS

## 2026 Board of Directors

### **Steve Berry, Past Chair, Bemidji, MN**

Steve serves as a vice-president of investment banking at Riverwood Bank in Bemidji. Steve just recently moved to Bemidji and had lived in the Walker / Leech Lake area for forty years. Steve also has teaching experience and worked as an Extension Educator for the University of Minnesota in the past. Steve tells us that he has been a long-time fan of public television and has fond memories of watching Victory Garden and Austin City Limits back in the 70s.

### **Laine Larson, Board Chair, Brainerd, MN**

Laine has served as the Superintendent of Schools for the Brainerd School District. Laine's recent work was to advocate for and implement a \$205M school bonding referendum that has been transformative for the Brainerd school district. Prior to her role in Brainerd, Laine served as the Superintendent of Schools in Thief River Falls, MN. Laine's commitment to education along with her extensive educational experience will be a big asset to the Lakeland PBS board.

### **Brent Gish, Board Treasurer, Naytahwaush, MN**

Brent brings to our board extensive experience as an educator, including positions as Principal of Naytahwaush Elementary, and Superintendent of Mahnomen and Red Lake school districts. Since 2005, Brent is a consultant and Executive Director of the National Indian Impacted Schools Association.

### **Kim Williams, Board Vice-Chair, Bemidji, MN**

Kim retired from serving as a special education supervisor at the Bemidji Regional Inter-district Council (BRIC). Kim is also a very active volunteer and loves being involved with various community youth programs. Kim's passion to serve children is very important considering Lakeland PBS' focus on children and education. She is also a past board member of Lakeland PBS.

### **Travis Annette, Bemidji, MN**

Travis is currently a Human Resources Manager with the Minnesota Judicial Branch – Ninth Judicial District, and was a past Director of Administration along with other positions with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe from 1994 – 2006. He is also a past board member of Lakeland PBS and the Northwest Indian Community Development Center.

### **Paul Peterson, Board Secretary St. Paul, MN**

Paul is a partner in the law firm Lind, Jensen, Sullivan & Peterson, P.A., a 27 lawyer firm based in Minneapolis. Paul has roots in the region and owns a lake cabin close to Hackensack. In addition, his wife grew up in Bemidji. Paul will be a great asset to Lakeland PBS and brings a wealth of legal experience to the organization.

### **Brett Severson, Brainerd, MN**

Brett grew up in the Brainerd Lakes area and has built a career in the Enterprise Data Storage and Infrastructure Solutions Industry with Dell Technologies. Along with a strong conviction in the mission of Lakeland PBS, Brett brings over 15 years of experience in troubleshooting complex IT ecosystems, managing large-scale product-improvement projects, and providing resolution management for critical executive and customer escalations. Brett's experience will help Lakeland PBS stay current with the ever-changing technology of media production and delivery.

### **John Ward, Baxter, MN**

John has a long history in education and public service. He taught school for many years in several Minnesota communities including ISD-81 in Brainerd. John also served eight years as a legislator in the State House of Representatives in districts 12A and 10A. John brings a deep commitment and very unique skill set to Lakeland PBS.

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### **Rick Beeson, Nisswa, MN**

Richard brings extensive business and organization leadership experience to the Lakeland PBS board. He currently is the EVP for Corporate Development & Government Relations at Sunrise Banks, N.A. and has served on their board for 34 years. He has also worked for the City of Saint Paul in the Department of Planning and Economic Development, and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency as well. Rick has also been very involved with the University of Minnesota as a Regent from 2009 to 2021, and as a Lifetime Trustee of the U of M Foundation.

### **William Hickey, Saint Paul, MN**

Recently retired, William comes to the Lakeland PBS board with a strong belief in the importance of public media, and extensive experience in business as the President and COO of Smyth Companies, a privately owned label and promotions company that has been in operation since 1877. William has been very active as a volunteer board member in organizations such as Boy Scouts of America Northern District, Ramsey County Historical Society, and United Way of Twin Cities. His family has a cabin on the Whitefish chain and “the lake” has been a big part of their lives for over 100 years.

### **Carl Yudell, Nisswa, MN**

Carl recently retired from his law practice in Chicago and moved with his wife to the beautiful Brainerd Lakes area. He has a strong business background and recently has served as the chair and treasurer of the Wetlands Initiative, a Charity Navigator Four Star 501(c)3 organization. For 25 years, Carl was the administrative partner of Yudell and Lonoff, LLC, a boutique estate planning and business transaction practice.

### **Erik Speer, Baxter, MN**

Erik brings to the board a wealth of professional experience in television news, production, and technology. He currently works as Senior Account Manager for AVI Systems, and has previous experience as production director for Intermedia Outdoors, videographer/producer/editor for the MN DNR, and chief videographer/editor for WDAY-TV in Fargo, ND.

### **Beth Passi, Baxter, MN**

Beth brings to our board extensive experience as an educator. Her experience spans across various educational settings, beginning with the Minneapolis Public Schools, followed by an independent school in New York City, and many years in a public school in Michigan. Now residing year-round in Baxter, Beth has had the opportunity to serve with several organizations in the region, including the Crow Wing County Community Health Advisory Committee, Lakes Area League of Women Voters, and the Nisswa Women’s Club.

### **Jon Fields, Blackduck, MN**

Jon recently retired and moved to the Blackduck area from Wisconsin. He brings to the board extensive experience in business development and public service. His professional experience includes 15 years as university faculty in South Dakota and Wisconsin, and 10 years as a Certified Business Coach as the owner of Effective Business Practices, LLC. Jon was previously involved with many community organizations, including the La Crosse Chamber of Commerce and the Coulee Region Business Center as a board member.

### **Jim Hanko, Bemidji, MN**

Jim is retired after having worked for many years as CEO at hospitals in International Falls, Marshall, and Bemidji. He has also served on the boards of numerous area non-profit organizations. His vast experience and dedication to the success of both Bemidji and Lakeland PBS are huge assets to our organization.