

Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council

FY 2012 COUNCIL MEMBERS

Blue Earth County – Gina Wenger, Mankato. Gina has a B.A. in Art and Music, M.A. in Art Education and PhD in Art Education and Women's Studies. She is an Assistant Professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato in Art and Art Education. Gina has been touring the United States recently giving lectures on Children's Artworks of the Japanese American Internment Camps and she has been volunteering to teach photography. She previously was a public school art teacher and sang with Musicorum in Mankato 2007-2009. Term began 8/1/11.

Brown County – Denice Evers, Springfield. Denice has a B.A. in Elementary Education/Special Education and is vice president of the Springfield Community Theatre and president of the Brown County Historical Society. She has been a judge for speech competitions and has been involved for over 30 years acting and directing theater productions. She previously served on the PLRAC board from 1999-2005. Term began 9/1/07. Denice serves as vice-president.

Faribault County – Lill Robinson, Blue Earth. Lill is president of the Blue Earth Town and Country Players, and is a retired Middle School Language Arts teacher from the Blue Earth Area Public School. She is involved in the Masterpiece Art Program and the Retired Senior Volunteer Players. Lill was co-founder of the CAPP Committee of Blue Earth Schools. Term began 9/1/09.

LeSueur County – Elizabeth Traxler, LeCenter. Elizabeth has a B.S. in Elementary Education and M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction, and she is a teacher at LeCenter Elementary School. As an artist Bette is a writer and performer, she has written and directed plays and readers' theatre. She is involved in a local artist group, is a columnist for the LeCenter Leader newspaper writing human interest stories and is active in the Arts in Our School Committee in LeCenter. In the past Bette also served as a board member, author, actor and director of the LeCenter Community Theatre. Term began 9/1/09. Elizabeth serves as secretary.

Martin County – Bonnie Taplin, Fairmont. Bonnie is chairman of Interlaken Heritage Days Festival of the Lakes, Fairmont and is a member of the Red Rock Center for the Arts, Fairmont. She has served as Chairman for the Granada Centennial, Women of Today Junior Miss Program and Family Fest. She has also served on a variety of community and church boards and programs. Term began 8/1/10.

Nicollet County – Melanie Schmidt, North Mankato. Melanie has a B.S. degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato. Melanie is the Program Supervisor for Mankato Community Education and Recreation Department. Many of these activities focus on youth and include hosting Prairie Fire Children's Theater, the Guthrie, CLIMB Theater and independent directors producing and directing children's theater performances. She is an Assistant Speech Coach at Mankato East H.S. and has coached and judged Speech and One Act Play Contests since 1991. Melanie has been Assistant Director for Aktion Theatre Group, been a facilitator for the Mankato Diversity Council, and is also involved with the Mankato Area Healthy Youth Committee. Term began 8/1/11.

Sibley County – Paula Scheffler, Henderson. Paula has a B.S. in Elementary Education and is presently a Substitute Teacher in schools in the area including LeSueur and New Prague. Paula has been active in the school serving six years as a School Management team member of ISD 2397, six years on LeSueur Henderson Community Education and four years as an Advisory Board Member of LeSueur Henderson Healthy Communities. Term began 8/1/11.

Waseca County – Open

Watonwan County – Joe McCabe, St. James. Joe has a B.S. in Accounting and is the St. James City Manager. He is the co-chair for the St. James Community Theater and involved with the St. Mary's Church Choir. Joe has been stage manager for over 20 productions, performed in plays, and assisted in high school one act plays. He is a member of various community organizations. Term began 8/1/10.

At-Large – Gregory Wilkins. Greg has a B.A. in Intercultural Studies/History/Political Science and a minor in Visual Art; a MS in Educational Leadership; and A.B.D. in University Administration. He is Associate Director of Student Activities at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He has been active in the Arts as a painter, photographer, writer, actor, singer and musician. He is currently involved with the Southern Minnesota Poets Society as well as a facilitator on the Mankato Diversity Council but also is a playwright and screen writer. Last year for one month he was in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam working with Hmong people and their native art and craft. Term began 8/1/11.

City of Fairmont – Judy Berkeland, Fairmont. Judy has a M.A. in K-12 Music Education with an emphasis in Curriculum and Development. Judy is the Orchestra Director for grades 5-8 at Fairmont Public School. She has taught all grade levels in music and numerous choirs. She has participated in many bands playing mainly brass instruments. She has been the choir director for many churches. Judy has directed the vocals in various musicals and played cello in two Fairmont High School Musicals. She was the Community Choir Director in 2009 which presented a concert at Red Rock Center for the Arts, Fairmont. She is a participant in the "Quality Teacher Network" based through the Perpich Center for the Arts which provides a resource for the legislature when making decisions on the MN Standards for the Arts. Term began 8/1/10.

City of Mankato – Mary Motter, Mankato. Mary has a B.A. in Elementary Education and M.S. in Curriculum and Instructions. She is a fifth grade teacher at Eagle Lake Elementary School. She was in charge of the school's Artist in Residence program for over seven years and served as president of the Mankato Area Public Schools CAPP Committee. She was a member of Twin Rivers Arts Center, was one of the founders of this organization, and served as their president for nine years. Mary was a member of Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council from 2000-2006 and served as president.

City of New Ulm – Open

City of North Mankato – Pat Potzler, North Mankato. Pat has a B.S. Degree in Home Economics Education and is a former instructor. She taught Family and Consumer Science in the Mankato Schools. Pat has been a member of the Minnesota Valley Chapter of Sweet Adelines since 1979 and serves on their Management Team; is the Performance Coordinator as well as the costume committee chairman and the newsletter editor. She served on the Regional Board of Directors for the Can-Am Region 6 Sweet Adelines and currently is the Team Coordinator for the Regional Management Team. Pat also sings in the Treble choir and WELS chorale at her church. Term began 9/1/06. Pat serves as treasurer.