

Jim Athas



Jim retires after 24 years as a First Grade Teacher at Luther Elementary School.

Jim is a Fort Atkinson High School alumni, graduating in 1973. He received his degrees from UW-Whitewater: Bachelor's Degree in Music in 1977, Elementary Education in 1990 and Reading Specialist in 1996.

Previous careers for Jim included working in a food processing plant in the 1980's and teaching piano lessons. Jim is currently the Music Director at the First United Methodist Church in Whitewater, WI and an adjunct instructor at UW-Whitewater.

Jim feels his career highlights were the many first grade plays he produced over the years. Many of us have experienced Clifford – The Big Red Dog and other plays Jim so creatively produced and had first graders perform.

Jim has been involved in many musical theater productions over the years and wants to continue his church work and expand organ and piano lessons. He plans to do some subbing, and maybe teach some summer school. Jim would like to write, arrange and publish music and/or children's musicals. He will also be spending time with his new grandson and do some traveling. Jim said he may even start an Irish band!

Dean Berkas



Dean Berkas retires after 25 years at the Fort Atkinson Middle School as a Math Teacher. Dean also taught 3 years at Stoughton, Wisconsin and 12 years at Northwood-Kensett Community Schools in Northwood, Iowa.

Dean graduated from Richfield High School, Richfield, Minnesota in 1970, received his Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics from Luther College in 1974 and Master's Degree in Curriculum & Instruction from UW-Whitewater in 2001.

In 1995, Dean was the National Awardee from Wisconsin of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching and in 1994, he was the Wisconsin Nominee for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching. Dean was awarded the Wildermuth Award in 2008, Lion's Club Educator of the Month in 2004 and was twice nominated for the Kohl Teacher Fellowship Award.

Dean feels a career highlight was teaching at Science World from 1993 to 1995 which was a Science camp for 8th grade students that the Department of Public Instruction arranged.

Retirement plans for Dean include hiking, biking, traveling, camping, cross-country skiing, working part-time for EdSights (a mathematics consulting firm), spending time with family and volunteering.

Dean and his wife, Nancy, have children Erik (Jenny) Berkas, Kristin (Micah) Oines and grandchildren Aaron Oines and Evelyn Berkas.

Susan Bradley



Susan retires after 20 years as a Special Education Teacher at Barrie Elementary School.

Susan graduated from Belleville High School, Belleville, Wisconsin in 1971. She earned her Bachelor's Degree from UW-Milwaukee in Exceptional Education/Emotionally Disturbed in 1975 and a Master's Degree in Learning Disabilities from Minot State University, Minot, North Dakota in 1985.

Susan was nominated for the Wildermuth Award for Excellence in Education in 2000, 2001, and 2014, named Teacher of the Day by WFAW in April, 2000 and named Rotary Teacher of the Month in June, 2009.

Before coming to Fort Atkinson, Susan worked as an Office Clerk at Athens, Ohio Police Department from 1975 to 1976; a Special Education Teacher/EBD in Beckley, West Virginia from 1976 to 1980; a Special Education Teacher/EBD in Gallatin, Tennessee from 1980 to 1981; a child care worker at La Petite Academy in Hendersonville, Tennessee from 1981 to 1983; and a Special Education Teacher/EBD in Minot, North Dakota, from 1985 to 1993. Susan also worked part-time for 10 years at Blodgett Garden Center in Fort Atkinson during the summers.

Susan plans to do gardening both at home and as a volunteer at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fort Atkinson. Susan said her and her husband, Scott, who is also retiring this year from UW-Whitewater, "plan to travel as much as humanly possible while we still can." They would like to contribute some volunteer hours at different places such as the Food Pantry and Free Clinic. She will also be taking care of her 2½ year-old grandson, Kael, and her second grandson, expected in September. She and her husband help out their moms who are both in their 90's.

Susan and Scott have 4 grown children: Ben Bradley (Linda Giorno); Joel Bradley (Annie Haugen); Aaron Bradley (Jean Vogel); and Elissa (Tavis) Shields and grandchildren Kael Haugen Bradley, 2½ and his little brother expected in September, 2014.

Susan's parting words are "Teaching is a team effort. It would be very difficult to try to do this without the support of other staff members, administration and parents. That's why it is vital to keep the lines of communication among all the parties involved as open and upfront as possible. Each day is a new day and every student needs the opportunity to show you his or her best self every day. Remember the student you may agonize over or get frustrated with today may become your co-worker, your caretaker or even your boss in years to come. Everyone has a story, and you may not know all the details, so be patient and kind, always. And be kind to yourself and your own family as well."

Rick Brietzke



Rick retires after 26 years as our Purdy Elementary School Principal. Rick started his career in education in Sparta and Plymouth.

Rick graduated from High School from La Crosse Central in 1973; received his Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from UW-LaCrosse in 1978; Master's in Educational Administration from UW-Madison in 1982 and PhD in Educational Administration from UW-Madison in 1995.

Rick was awarded Conservation Teacher of the Year and the Wisconsin State Reading Association Outstanding Administrator. When asked for career highlights, Rick had this to say:

- Working for 36+ years in a great and rewarding profession
- Being able to work as a principal for 26 years in one school...and with such a great staff including Secretary Karen Hetts.
- Appreciating the constant and never ending support of my wife, Sarah.
- Proudly recalling Veterans Day Programs including a send-off to Iraq. I will never forget talking to a dad from Milton watching his son deploy on a day with a 0 degree windchill...while 300 plus students and staff sang "God Bless America" while waving flags and banners as the busses passed the back side of our school. With tears and pride he said, "That's my son on that bus!"
- Planting early dreams of college education with Dream Scholarships.
- 23 years of Artists-in-Residence including Native Nick Hockings, Madison Singer and Songwriter Leatha Stanley, Aldo Leopold naturalists and most recently Chef Tyler Sailsbery.
- Being able to recognize the fine, hard work of Purdy Elementary School teachers including five Kohl Fellows. Nothing is more important in a school than the quality efforts of its teachers and support staff.
- Working with so many dedicated and talented administrators and school board members.
- My short walks from Purdy to Luther on the Wetland Boardwalk.
- Walking hen mallards and hundreds of ducklings through the school with staff and students.
- Watching my two children grow up in the School District of Fort Atkinson as they went from kindergarten through graduation.
- Reflecting on the yearly difference 125 plus volunteers can make.
- Recalling the trip to DC with Dennis Kuchenmeister to receive the 1st ever US Department of Education Green Ribbon Award.
- Helping Develop the Comprehensive Literacy Model and the corresponding constant focus on student achievement and growth.
- Understanding how enriched my life and others has been when working and learning with minority students.
- Being part of the development of the literacy coaching program...with administrators, teachers and "coach" Candice Johnson...peer coaching development...was the topic of my PhD dissertation completed 19 years ago.
- Working with two generations of students.
- Receiving unconditional love...each day...from 350+ Purdy students

Rick plans to spend more time with his wife, Sarah and their children, Laura and Phillip. He also plans to do more skiing, hunting, fishing, boating, exercising, biking, remodeling, forest and deer management and traveling. Rick said he, "still has some "gas in the tank" and plans to work part time with student teachers, summer school, educator effectiveness and some literacy projects."

Rick's parting words, "Make each day the best day of your life and the lives of those around you."

Tom Cook



Tom retires as our Director of Bands after 24 years. In total, he has 35 years of teaching.

Tom graduated from High School from Rock Falls High School in Illinois in 1974; received his Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from UW - La Crosse in 1979 and Master's in Music Education from Vandercook College of Music in 2002.

Tom was named Teacher of the Year by Prairie du Chien School District in 1986; nominated in Fort Atkinson for the Kohl Teacher Award and Wildermuth Award and was Rotary Teacher of the Month.

Career highlights for Tom include: WSMA State Championship Marching Band, School District of Prairie du Chien in 1987 and 1988; WSMA State Championship Marching Band, School District of Fort Atkinson in 2003; Top jazz band at UW - Eau Claire Jazzfest, Whitewater Jazzfest (two times), Uw-LaCrosse Jazzfest (five times), Branson Fame Festival National Champions, 24 straight years of Division I at State Solo & Ensemble and Best Show Choir Combo. Tom says "too many to count over too many years!"

Retirement plans for Tom are, "Not be at school 48 weekends a year and all summer long"; being a musician in Wall of Sound Band, join two other bands, play music with adults, refurbish his 24' deep water sailboat and dune buggy and travel away from Wisconsin during the winter.

Tom is married to Mary Pat Cook and they have three children, Jesse (Dorea), Megan, and Erin.

Tom's words of advice with music in his head, "Don't tug on Superman's Cape, Don't pee against the wind, Never Whittle towards Yourself...& don't mess around with Jim!"

Lynn Dowgwillo



Lynn retires as one of our Math Teachers after sixteen years; six years at the Middle School and ten years at the High School. Before starting her teaching career, Lynn worked at Jefferson County Human Services in the area of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention.

Lynn graduated from Green Bay Southwest High School in 1970; received her Bachelor's Degree in Math and Psychology from UW-Whitewater in 1973; her Secondary Education Certification from UW-Whitewater in 1998 and her Masters Degree in Education with an emphasis in Alternative Education from Marian University.

Lynn was a Wildermuth nominee and a Kohl Fellowship finalist. Lynn was a Math Team coach at Middle and High Schools and is a member of Wisconsin Math Council and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. She helped develop the Aleks program (with Linda Schroeder) for students who needed more support with Math as well as students looking for enrichment with the AP Statistics course.

Retirement plans for Lynn include: "Sleeping in a bit later in the morning and then doing some knitting, traveling, gardening, reading a book for enjoyment, and definitely spend more time with family and friends."

Lynn and her husband, Michael, have three children, Erin (Curt), Matthew and Nicholas.

Lynn's parting words are, "In this age of standardized testing, we can get overly focused on those important scores. Relationships won't be directly measured on those tests, but it's an important part of what we do as teachers. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all my administrators and co-workers for your mentoring, support, sharing and friendship. It's been a good 16 years and you all made it possible."

Shirley Erdman



Shirley retires as a Cook's Helper at Rockwell and Luther Elementary Schools after eight years.

Shirley is a Fort Atkinson High School alumni and attended IBM School in St. Louis, Missouri.

Before coming to the School District, Shirley was a legal secretary, owner and operator of "The Tasty Corner," and food and beverage manager for a local golf course. Shirley also owns and operates an estate sale and household sale business which she has been doing for 35 years.

Shirley and her husband, Steve, have one son, Trent.

Retirement plans for Shirley include collecting antiques, especially old Christmas items, watching Nascar racing as well as watching their son race at the Jefferson Speedway, which he has been doing for the past 18 years. Shirley and Steve also plan to do some traveling.

Karen Gomez



Karen retires after 33 years as our Art Teacher at Purdy and Luther Elementary Schools.

Karen graduated from Ablert Lea High School, Albert Lea, Minnesota in 1976; received her Bachelor's Degree in Art Education with a minor in speech from UW-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin, in 1980 and Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from UW-Whitewater in 1996. Karen was named Wisconsin Elementary Art Educator of the Year in 2004 and Kohl Fellowship Winner in 2009

Karen shared her career highlights which were working with Tom Ryan, a music teacher to create and produce original operas with 5th grade students, which included writing grants for artists to work with opera students and the entire school in dance performances and mural painting. Karen also organized several artists in residence including two clay stumps with clay artist, Joel Pfeiffer, which resulted in a large clay wall mural as well as an outdoor sculpture. Recently, Karen worked with mosaic artist, Connie Bier, to create large wall mosaics in both Purdy and Luther Schools. Over the years, Karen did large group projects including clay tile murals that are in the halls at Purdy and a Mondrian painting on the climbing wall at Luther. Under Karen's direction, students also created a large printed quilt of African designs that hangs near the office at Luther.

Karen stated that, "Many large projects were the focus of our art shows to reflect the importance of the arts to students which included collaborative projects as well as musical performances. I also had involvement in the Hoard Art Show and the Cygnus Art Show to showcase student art in the community. My goal as an art teacher has been to make sure that all my students are successful, that they have an appreciation for the arts and that staff, school board members, families and the community see that importance."

Karen is a member of the Black Hawk Artists Group exhibiting her work every November at the Hoard Museum and exhibits at the Mary Hoard Art Show in the spring. Karen works primarily as a collage artist but also creates handmade books, watercolors and acrylic paintings. Her most recent show was at the Holy Wisdom Monastery in Middleton in an exhibit entitled "Love Remembered".

Karen and her husband, Benjamin, have two children, Jenny and Joan and four grandchildren, Lilly, Orion, Preston and Jaden.

Karen's parting words, "I have enjoyed teaching art all these years and will miss my students immensely. They made me laugh, surprised me, challenged me and constantly amazed me. I will miss the smiles, hugs and cheers. I'm always amazed when I get applause when demonstrating a project! But now, I embark on a new chapter in my life and I am looking forward to having the time and the energy to create my own art."

Sharon Haupt



Sharon retires after 45 years as Administrative Assistant to John Ottow, IT Director/Copy Center.

Sharon is a Fort Atkinson High School alumni, having been born and raised in Hebron, Wisconsin.

Sharon was awarded Support Staff of the Month in December of 2013.

Retirement plans for Sharon include spending more time with family, traveling, reading and relaxing.

Sharon and her husband, Jack, have one daughter, Jennifer.

Susan Henn



Susan retires as our Gifted and Talented Coordinator after ten years in our District. She has spent over two decades in the field of Gifted Education. Previous careers include Youth Ministry and Interior Design.

Susan graduated from Natrona County High School in Casper, Wyoming, in 1977; received her Studio Art and Geology degrees from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington in 1981; Education degree from St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa in 1993; and Master's in Professional Development with an emphasis on Gifted Education from Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1999.

Susan stated some of her career highlights include:

- Presentations on gifted issues over the past twenty years at: National Association for Gifted Children Conference, Wisconsin and Illinois Associations for Talented and Gifted Conferences, Challenging Advanced Learners Academy, and the Sloan Consortium Blended Learning Conference.
- Teaching online and summer courses for the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth, and presenting at WCATY Online Teacher Training sessions.
- Wildermuth Award Nominee at Fort Atkinson School District in 2010.
- Active Involvement in Waukesha County Talent Development Network and Whitewater Talented and Gifted Network from 1993 to present.

Susan states her retirement plans are to: "Create, ponder, pray, wonder, celebrate, reflect, paint, design, read, share, and experience awe."

Susan and her husband, Dennis, have three children, Josiah (Yuki), Rebekah (Chris), Cayla (Jason) and two grandchildren, Eliot and Sarai.

"Notice beauty, value friendship, and laugh long and hard," are parting words from Susan.

Dennis Kraus



Dennis retires after 13 years as our custodian at Luther Elementary School.

Dennis is a Fort Atkinson High School alumni, graduating in 1970.

Before coming to the School District, Dennis worked at Schweiger Industries (Furniture manufacturer) in Jefferson, Wisconsin, Ladish Malt (currently Valero in Jefferson, Wisconsin) and J-STAR (farm equipment industry).

Dennis and his wife, Rosalie, have two children, Denise (Ricky) and Dennis Jr. (Natalie) and grandchild Gwendalyn and one on the way in July.

Retirement plans for Dennis include going to flea markets, gun and car shows.

Ann Massoglia



Ann Tomasin Massoglia retires after 34½ years as our Speech-Language Pathologist at Barrie Elementary School.

Ann graduated from Milton High School in 1975; received her degrees from University of WI-Whitewater earning her Bachelor's Degree in Communicative Disorders in 1978 and her Master of Science degree in Communicative Disorders in 1980.

In addition to Ann's duties here in the Fort Atkinson School District, she has been a lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for 20 years teaching Language Development and Disorders in Children. Several teachers from Fort Atkinson have taken her course.

Some career highlights for Ann has been a cooperating teacher/supervisor for the Communicative Sciences and Disorders Department of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, supervising over 100 student teachers and/or practicum students (who all did their practicum in Fort Atkinson schools with Fort Atkinson students); receiving the Wildermuth Award for Educational Excellence Award and being a nominee for Kohl Fellowship Award.

Ann and her husband, Randy, have one daughter, Catherine Ann, who recently graduated in May from the University of Wisconsin Law School with a degree in Law.

Retirement plans for Ann include running, mountain biking, playing tennis, having a good cup of coffee and conversation with friends, and taking quiet walks with Randy, Catherine, and Kyna (pronounced KEENA) their Siberian husky.

Ann's parting words are, "I will leave the Fort Atkinson School District confident that I have made a positive impact on the learning community here and that the Speech-Language Program will continue to be a vital part of what makes the Fort Atkinson School District exceptional. I am ready in my own life for new challenges, time with my family, and new opportunities to make a difference. Thank you all for being my loving and caring family for the last 34 1/2 years."

Barbara Nyland



Barbara retires after 13 years teaching in Fort Atkinson with 11 years teaching Kindergarten at Purdy Elementary School and two years teaching art and music to all Kindergarten classes in the District.

Barbara graduated from Pardeeville High School in 1973 and earned her Bachelor's Degree from UW-Madison in Early Childhood Education in 1977. Before coming to Fort Atkinson, she taught in Watertown and Oconomowoc School Districts, private school in Milwaukee and Lutheran Social Services mainly at the Preschool or Kindergarten level.

When asked about a career highlight, she commented, "A highlight happens every day when teaching Kindergarten."

Barbara and her husband, Jim (deceased) have two children, Lindsay Blumer and Paul Nyland and two grandchildren, Maclean Blumer and Dashiell Blumer.

Retirement plans for Barbara include spending time with family, especially her grandsons and her Mom. Also finishing some projects at her home that have been on the "to do list" for the last ten summers. She also hopes to enjoy some of her hobbies of golfing, reading, hiking, traveling and kayaking.

Barbara's advice is to read the book "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" by Robert Fulghum and believes the world would be a kinder and perhaps a little less stressful. Here are a few excerpts from the book:

- Share everything
- Play fair
- Don't hit people
- Put things back where you found them.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Warm cookies and milk are good for you.
- Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work everyday some.

Barbara offers this quote, from an unknown author, that helped her through her years of teaching and devoting so much time and care to other families, "Tomorrow is not promised to anyone, young or old alike, and today may be the last chance you get to hold your loved one tight. So if you're waiting for tomorrow, why not do it today? For if tomorrow never comes, you'll surely regret the day, that you didn't take that extra time for a smile, a hug, or a kiss and you were too busy to grant someone what turned out to be their one last wish. So hold your loved ones close today, and whisper in their ear, tell them how much you love them and that you'll always hold them dear. Take time to say "I'm sorry," "Please forgive me," "Thank you," or "It's okay!" And if tomorrow never comes, you'll have no regrets about today."

Linda Schroeder



Linda retires as one of our Math Teachers at the High School and as Department Chair for the Math Department after 26 years. Linda also taught at Whitewater High School for five years.

Linda graduated from Beloit Catholic High School; received her Bachelor's Degree from UW-Whitewater in Mathematics & Secondary Education; she earned her Master's Degree from St. Mary's University in Curriculum & instruction with an emphasis on Educational Technology. She is a member of the Wisconsin Math Council and the National Conference of Teachers of Mathematics.

Linda stated her career highlights were being nominated for the Wildermuth Award several times; working with Don Wahl as a student teacher at the High School and then later getting hired to work with him as a colleague here at FAHS. She established the ALEKS Program at the high school to better meet the needs of the pre-algebra students and worked with the department to implement the MATC dual credit math course. Most rewarding has been receiving the many thank you notes from her students and hearing of their successes.

Linda and her husband, Jim, have three children: Amy (Jay) Oakley, Bob (Leah) Schroeder, Steve Schroeder and grandchildren Ian (8), Mia (5), Eve (2), Carter (5) and William (3).

Retirement plans include enjoying their family farm, traveling, spending time with her husband, her children and five grandchildren all who live here in Fort Atkinson. She plans on volunteering in the community, watching the Packer games without a lap full of papers to correct, and taking time for hobbies such as gardening, reading, crocheting, knitting and sewing for the grandkids.

Linda's advice is, "Be proud of what you are doing for students. You can make a difference for these kids. Remember that each of these students is someone's son or daughter. Treat them as if they were your own son or daughter. I remembered being told early in my career that the student who is the least lovable is the student who needs your kindness the most - this challenge is what I tried to remember and practice. There is good in every student."

Linda's parting words, "Lastly, I would like to thank all of you that I have had the privilege to work with. Thanks to Dr. Zaspel and his leadership. My department members have been the best! The staff here at FAHS has always been very supportive and helpful. Everyone here works as a team. Be proud of that. Stay positive and work together."

Ann Wagie



Ann retires as our Kindergarten Teacher at Barrie Elementary School after 27 years. Before coming to Fort Atkinson, Ann taught first and second grade in Whitewater for four years.

Ann graduated from Warren High School in 1972; earned her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education in 1976 and Master's in Elementary Education in 1987 from UW-Whitewater.

Ann stated her career highlights were receiving the Wildermuth Award and "working with a lot of wonderful people at Barrie!"

Ann and her husband, Dennis, have two children, Amy Wagie and Katie Passage with two twin girls arriving in the summer.

Retirement plans for Ann include biking, walking, working in her flower gardens and helping with the twins.

Ann's words of advice are, "Keep a sense of humor and love what you are doing!"

Vicki Wright



Vicki retires as our Principal of Rockwell Elementary School after 12 years. Vicki also worked in the Director of Instruction's Office for one year and was the GATE Coordinator for 11 years. Before entering the world of education, Vicki was a Peace Corps Volunteer and was a Peace Corp Trainer for new volunteers.

Vicki graduated from Osceola High School; earned degrees in Home Economics from UW-Stout; Gifted Education from UW-Whitewater and Administration from UW-Madison.

Vicki shared these career highlights:

- "As I look back on my career, I am very proud of my years of working with students. That is why all of us become educators, to touch the lives of children."
- "Working with the Rockwell staff, I am very pleased to say I hired 75% of the current staff and feel honored to have worked with all of them and those who have already retired."
- "Being part of a PTO that built a new playground and outdoor learning center."
- "Grant writing over the years to make change happen for children."
- "Planting and nurturing the seeds for Advanced Placement classes in Fort Atkinson and watching it grow!"
- "Coaching multiple Future Problem Solving teams to state level and going to the national level five times."
- "Being part of the decision making team for a District that has grown in many ways."
- Being awarded the State Teacher of the Year Award in 1983 and Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in 1984.

Retirement plans for Vicki include, "(1) Sleep and rest, (2) Read all the books I want to read not related to educational theory or leadership, (3) Gardening and exercise, (4) Figure out what will be the next stage of my career/life. In my last administrative class someone asked my why at my age, I would want to go into administration – My reply was, "Well, I am not dead yet." So again, I am not dead yet. There is something very purposeful out there for me, I just need to figure it out."

Vicki and her husband, Peter, have two children, Matthew and Tiffany and grandchildren, James, Adaline, Claire, and one yet to be determined.

Vicki's parting words, "Follow your dreams and work to make it happen! Never allow yourself to say "I should have done that."

We also recognize and thank:

Scott Arndt

Mike Murray

Peggy Stewart

Kay Woods

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