



League Letter

Volume LX, Number 2, November 2025 www.univleague.wisc.edu Editor: Gisell Sirianni Asst. Editor: Roma Lenehan

UNIVERSITY LEAGUE CANDELIGHT CONCERT AND DINNER

Avanti Piano Trio

Thursday, December 18th, 2025, 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Maple Bluff Country Club



The Avanti Piano Trio—Alissa Freeman (piano), Hillary Hempel (violin) and Hannah Wolkstein (cello)—is driven by a passion to enrich the piano-trio repertoire. These superb musicians bring energy to their performances, along with fine musicality. Formed in Madison in 2018, the Trio has performed across the state in concert series, festivals, live on Wisconsin Public Radio, and on PBS broadcasts.

Although they are well known for their exploration of under-performed gems and works by female composers, their music is rooted in tradition. For our Candlelight Dinner and Concert on December 18, the Trio will perform a classical music program with an exploration of additional musical styles, including tango, jazz, and holiday songs. This promises to be a beautiful seasonal dinner and concert for us. You may wish to invite family and friends for this memorable evening of great and beloved music performed by skilled artists.

Thursday, December 18th
Cash Bar: 5:30 p.m.
Dinner: 6:00 p.m.
Music: 7:00 p.m.

Maple Bluff Country Club
500 Kensington Dr.
Madison, WI 53704

\$40 per person
Deadline: December 10th
No reservations accepted
after this date

Menu: King Salmon, Chicken Pesto or Eggplant Parmesan
(See menu details on the reservation form, page 13)

Rolls served with dinner and cookies for dessert, free coffee/tea and cash bar for drinks/soda.

Alissa Freeman
PIANO



With a unique profile in education, performance, research, and entrepreneurship, pianist Alissa Freeman has been lauded for her excellence in each of these arenas.

She has been the recipient of two Presser Awards, the Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship, numerous full-tuition academic and music scholarships, the MarySue Harris Teacher Fellowship, invitations to present for many large national and international arts and music organizations, and several awards in national and state piano competitions. She was also the founder and director of The 5pm Series, a concert series that offered financial support to musicians during the COVID-19 pandemic by hosting over 100 online concerts across the world.

Alissa currently manages and teaches at Panoramic Piano Studio in Madison, WI. She enjoys going on long hikes with her husband, Anthony, and dog, Ruby.

Hillary Hempel
VIOLIN

Hillary, originally from Lyons, Illinois, moved to Madison, Wisconsin after becoming Assistant Principal Second Violin of Madison Symphony Orchestra and becoming a member of the first violin section in Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra in 2017. Since 2023, she has served as a member of the Hunt String Quartet through Madison Symphony, which she loves! She subs in Quad Cities Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Iowa, and Oakwood Chamber Players.

She thinks music is a gift, a language, a way to share what composers have written, to express and create emotions and colors through sound. All music, whether orchestral, chamber, or solo, brings Hillary Hempel joy.

When Hillary is not playing the violin, she enjoys running and hiking, in any season, and spending time with friends and family.



Hannah Wolkstein
CELLO



Cellist Hannah Wolkstein received her bachelor's degree in Music Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she studied with Uri Vardi and Parry Karp, and received scholarship awards for both Cello Performance and Music Education.

Hannah performs both as a soloist and ensemble player for various events throughout Wisconsin. For two years Hannah lived in Atlanta, Georgia for a special apprenticeship studying with Wolfgang Laufer, former cellist of the Fine Arts Quartet. She also studied at the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Canada for one year with Bryan Epperson, former principal cellist of the Canadian Opera Company.

Hannah is currently a Speech and Language Pathologist for the Madison Metropolitan School District and lives in Madison with her husband and two daughters.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

It looks like Fall is finally here but Summer seems to have really hung on. It's nice to have the cooler weather and watch the colors change. Hope you had a good Summer and are ready for the change in seasons.

The University League is off to a strong new year. The Fall Coffee, last month, was well attended. The program by John Stofflet was very interesting and at least caused me to think back to many of the events and stories he covered. I applaud the Program Committee for getting us started.

September and October also mark the start of many of our Interest Groups. We now have nineteen. Everyone should find something to enjoy from our menu. Think about trying a new one this next year.

We should all mark our calendars for our annual Candlelight Concert and Dinner. It's Thursday, December 18 at the Maple Bluff Country Club. The Avanti Piano Trio will be our entertainment this year.

As we move toward our Quasquicentennial celebration next May, think about recruiting a new member to join our organization, 125 years in the making. Thank-you for all you do.

John Shanda
President 2025-2026



MEET YOUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The 2025-2026 Secretary and Assistant Secretary are Susan Lauffer and Julie Sadowsky, respectively.

Susan Lauffer - I was born and raised in New Jersey. After graduation from Mount Holyoke College in 1964 with an English degree, I then earned a Master's Degree in English Medieval History from Rice University. My employment has always been in the field of education; as a teacher of middle school English and History (where I co-authored a textbook entitled *Man, a Curious Creature*) and later as Director of a Professional Development Center for teachers and administrators in Northeast Oklahoma. My husband Don (a physicist retired from Conoco Phillips) and I have a blended family of four adult children, ten mostly adult grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Our youngest son graduated from UW-Madison. We always loved it here when we visited him and in 2009, he encouraged us to purchase the home next to his in Spring Harbor. We have been summer residents of Madison for 15 years and moved here for good in the Spring of 2025.



Left to right:
Julie Sadowsky and Susan Lauffer

My friend Judy Stevenson recommended joining University League and also invited me to serve on the Scholarship Benefit Committee. My other interests include gardening, lap swimming, reading (two book clubs), knitting and walking our dog, Dancer. I look forward to being involved in Interest Groups and making many new friends.

Julie Sadowsky – I am a proud UW-Madison alumna and am retired from American Family Insurance. I have been a member of University League since 2024 and so far, have been a part of the Dining Out - Lunch and Wine Divas/Divos Interest Groups. In addition, I have been active in my church and in the past served on the Board of the Friends of UW Health, a group that raises money to support the patient experience. I have two grown sons; Eric lives in the St. Paul, Minnesota area and Joel (who's getting married this November) lives in Austin, Texas. I like reading and golfing, although I'm not very good at golf and recently started taking piano lessons again after a 50-year break! No grandchildren yet, but I do have 'grand-dogs' who have unique names: Peanut Butter (because he's that color) and Blueberry Pancake (he has blue eyes).

INTEREST GROUPS

Armchair Travelers

Hello fellow Armchair Travelers and other University League members who can join us anytime. We meet on the first Monday of the month at 6:45 pm. Mary Jo will send out our zoom link a week before the program and on the program date. If you are interested in the program, and you are not a member, contact Mary Jo at mjwillis@wisc.edu and she will send you our zoom link.

Programs include:

- December 1, 2025: European Christmas Markets presented by Sally Owens
- January, 2026: No program
- February 2, 2026: Recent Travels to Turkey presented by Cindy May
- March 2, 2026: Want to take a Trip? Hear From our Experienced Travelers
- April 6, 2025: Travels to Laos and Vietnam presented by Diane McHugh
- May 4, 2025: Safari-Glamping style presented by Elaine Rosenblatt

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN!

Each year the University League Nominating Committee has the responsibility of inviting members to serve on the University League Board for the ensuing year, which runs from June 1 – May 31. Most positions are for two years – one year as the Assistant and one year as the Chair or position leader. The board is composed of 18 nominated positions and 2 appointed positions.

Advantages of serving on the Board include new friendships, the opportunity to make decisions about the future of University League, and the responsibility to help University League continue to be the vital organization it has been for the last 124 years.

The Nominating Committee has begun its work and hopes to have the next board firmed up by early 2026. We welcome your offer to serve and/or your suggestions of members to serve on the Board for 2026-27, as we continue to celebrate calendar year 2026 as the University League's 125th anniversary. You can make suggestions to Nominating Committee Chair Cindy May or members Linda Baumann, Barb Drake, Mary Ann Reale, Diane Smidt, and Judy Stang.

The future of University League depends on having an active board to provide leadership!

Please say YES when you are asked to serve!



UNIVERSITY LEAGUE MEMBERS VOLUNTEER AT THE PBS-WI GREAT WISCONSIN QUILT SHOW

University League members volunteered in several capacities at the annual Great Wisconsin Quilt Show, which is organized and sponsored by the Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Service (PBS-WI) and ran September 10-12 at the Alliant Energy Center.

Jane Dunn and Mary Ann Reale worked Quilt Security along with Basia Pulz, a Polish Heritage Club of Wisconsin member. They monitored the entrance and exit of quilt exhibit displays to maintain the integrity of quilts registered in the ten-category contest. They assisted quilt hangers and judges during setup, and hung identification cards for each quilt, including quilt number, title, description, and artist name and location.



The show attracts attendees arriving by car or bus from all over Wisconsin and neighboring states. One-day, two-day, and three-day tickets are sold. Many out-of-towners even spent a night or two in Madison. In addition to viewing quilt displays, visitors can buy quilt supplies and paraphernalia in the exhibit hall, sign up for and attend a wide variety of workshops, dine on-site, and even enter a raffle with some amazing prizes.



Left to right:
Jane Dunn, Basia Pulz, Mary Ann Reale

Ticket booths are located at both entrances. This year Cindy May was stationed at the back booth with another volunteer. They made change, used a credit/debit card machine, handled the “will call” list, and answered questions. Interacting with attendees as they arrived was rewarding and fun. Their enthusiasm and love for quilts and/or quilting was contagious.

Great Wisconsin Quilt Show volunteers get free parking and admission, plus there is time before or after a shift to view the stunning variety of quilts on display in the corridors and exhibit hall.

If you’re interested in volunteering for PBS-WI for the Quilt Show, the Garden & Green Living Expo each February, and/or several phone-bank fundraisers held throughout the year, please let Cindy May know and she will gladly add you to the University League PBS-WI group email list so you will get notices of volunteer opportunities as they are announced.

Cindy May
clmay@wisc.edu
(608) 335-9291

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE FALL COFFEE

The University League held its Fall Coffee Wednesday, September 24th, 2025 at Blackhawk Country Club.

The audience was introduced to John Stofflet's distinguished career and the fascinating stories from his travels and experiences. It was a delightful event, and we thoroughly enjoyed both his presence and his insightful talk.

We were even on his Facebook post where he even shared a link to our website in his comments.

Thank you, John Stofflet!

We're excited to share a few of the wonderful moments captured during the event!





2025 BIG 10 CONFERENCE OF UNIVERSITY CLUBS

Every two years, the Big Ten College Clubs meet to connect with participants from different universities and exchange ideas. The 2025 host, The University Club in Iowa City, Iowa, enthusiastically organized a program that inspired representatives to reflect on our founders and the impact each volunteer has today; how our small dreams become big possibilities; and how our leadership voices collaborate to seize incredible opportunities.



Left to right:

Jane Dunn and Donna McCarthy

During the weekend of June 6-8, 28 attendees from Penn State, Ohio State, Purdue, Illinois, Northwestern, Michigan State, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa plus 21 additional Iowa Club members enjoyed networking, learning, sharing, and socializing on the beautiful University of Iowa campus and in vibrant Iowa City. The conference was held at the Hilton Garden Inn-Conference Hotel in the heart of the UI campus and within a few blocks' radius of downtown. Donna McCarthy and Jane Dunn represented University League.

The Program included a **Welcome Reception** on Friday evening at the Vue rooftop patio, featuring a video trivia game that highlighted facts from all the Big 10 schools. Saturday morning speaker Jane Cox's "**The Yellow Rose of Suffrage**" performance was a powerful portrayal of women's fight for voting rights. In four **Breakout Sessions**, attendees shared best practices relating to Interest Groups, Volunteerism, Scholarships, and Communication. Before lunch, a tour of the New Hancher Auditorium Performing Arts Center impressed the group. Lunch at the Strauss Theatre included entertainment showcasing a video of campus landmarks and

notable University of Iowa sports figures.



A short but **Scenic Tour of the campus** included a loop through downtown, up the hill to Carver Hawkeye Arena, Kinnick Stadium, Stead Family Children's Hospital and University of Iowa Health Center (UIHC). Tour guides highlighted the proximity of Kinnick Stadium to UIHC and reminded guests of the heartwarming "WAVE" tradition in which football fans wave to the children in Stead Family Hospital at the end of the 1st quarter. The tour continued down the hill, past the Stanley Art Museum and back to the hotel. Afterwards, representatives enjoyed free time to explore the Art Fair in downtown Iowa City. An **Evening Banquet** was followed by "Working the Crowd: Mass Gathering Medicine." **Keynote Speaker** Dr. Azeem Ahmed provided anecdotes and experiences as the Medical Director for Kinnick Stadium and Carver Hawkeye Arena and insights into sports medicine.



Sunday morning was the **Business Meeting**, during which the organization by-laws were reviewed and approved. After Penn State presented on overview of their campus and theme, “Honoring the Past-Welcoming the Future,” the Welcome Banner was passed to Penn State for the next conference to be held June 8-10, 2027. The Big 10 Conference of University Club Organizations now includes 18 schools with Wisconsin scheduled to host this Conference of University Clubs in 2037.

Before the conference, each club was asked to complete a nine questions survey dealing with university affiliation, financial and facility support from the university, membership numbers and strategies to build membership, types of general meetings and club-wide events, number and types of Interest Groups, service activities to support the University and/or the community, fundraising activities, and type and frequency of communication with members. Information provided similarities as well as the unique nature of each club. A summary of the Breakout Sessions around these questions produced useful information and ideas for all clubs to use. A new idea suggested by the group was to add a zoom component to promote the conference to all.

The most successful membership strategies reported included: organizing newcomer groups, relying on word of mouth, and having current members invite potential members to meetings, programs, or Interest Groups. Other effective approaches were mentoring new members by longer-term members, maintaining an engaging website, participating annually in the university’s Age-Friendly University Day, and offering partner memberships. In addition, non-members are allowed to attend one or two meetings as guests before joining the League (WI). Everyone agreed that the most effective strategy is simply talking about ourselves and sharing what the group does.



Membership numbers for clubs attending (new members in parentheses) – Wisconsin 244 plus 35 partners (15), Iowa 748, Illinois not reported, Indiana 335 (19), Minnesota 300 (25), Michigan State 155 (12), Northwestern 65 (4), Ohio State 300 (20), Penn State 401 (38), Purdue 536 (54), Michigan 368 (27). Big 10 clubs not in attendance were Nebraska, Maryland, Rutgers, UC Los Angeles, U Southern California, Oregon, and Washington.

Overall, the Big Ten Conference of University Clubs was well organized, interesting and motivating. It was great to meet many wonderful and dedicated people who care so much! Thank you for the opportunity to represent University League.



THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING:

The Enduring Legacy of The University League Angelena Frensley Lenehan Endowed Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Letters and Science

Angelena Frensley Lenehan

Profile: University of Wisconsin Foundation

Angelena came to Madison in 1962 with her husband William T. Lenehan, a new instructor in the UW English Department. As his career progressed, eventually leading to Chair of the department, so also did her involvement in university and community circles. Educated at Mills College and the University of Oklahoma, raised in Oklahoma with Mississippi roots, Angelena brought intelligence, wit, grace, and generous hospitality to her many volunteer activities in Madison. She served actively in University League, Madison Symphony Orchestra League, Friends of the Elvehjem, Shorewood Hills League, and Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. As President of University League, she helped procure federal tax exemption status for University League.



Angelena died too soon in 1989. She is remembered fondly for her devotion to her husband, her pride in her daughter Roma, the generosity of her service, the elegance of her hospitality and an exquisite crab dip never yet equaled. Through the thoughtfulness of her daughter and friends, a scholarship in her name was established by University League in 2000.

Roma Lenehan

Roma is well known to University League members. Like her mother, Roma is a University League Past-President (2010-2011) and has held multiple executive and leadership positions within our organization. She currently serves as Assistant Newsletter Editor and co-leader of the Birding and Movie Groups. Roma also carries on her mother's legacy through her generous support of University League scholarships as well as selfless devotion of her time and talent through service and active participation in several community organizations.

Interview with Roma Lenehan:

What inspired you to honor your mother by establishing an endowed scholarship in her name through The University League?

University League was my mother's home base and the center of her Madison community. Her focus was always education. Therefore, I honored her through the endowed scholarship program that she helped set up.

How does The University League mission align with your personal values and your mother's legacy?

Our family has supported education and volunteerism for generations.

We say that this scholarship is a gift that keeps on giving. What is your vision for how University League endowed scholarships can have a critical impact on student success?

Scholarships enable students that could not afford the University of Wisconsin to attend and allow students to work fewer hours and take out fewer loans. In this way, scholarships make the students' time here better because they have more free time to be a student and participate in university activities. Scholarships also allow students to leave the University with more choices because they do not have to worry as much about excessive loans.

If you are interested in establishing a University League endowed scholarship, contact President John Shanda (j2shanda@att.net), Scholarship Chair Peggy Wiederholt (peggywiederholt@sbcglobal.net) or Endowed Scholarship Liaison Sally Lorenz (sallylor67@gmail.com)

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:
Recipients of the 2025-26 University League Mrs. Angelena Frensley Lenehan Scholarship

Numerous students have benefitted greatly from The University League Mrs. Angelena Frensley Lenehan Endowed Scholarship in the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Letters and Science. Four students have been awarded scholarships for the 2025-26 academic year: Audree Brunke (Political Science), Julia Gray (Biology), Zoey Jiang (Journalism) and Vicky Mei (Biology). University League Scholarship Committee members Peggy Wiederholt and Nancy Gondzur met Audree and Julia at the College of Letters and Science Fall Undergraduate Scholarship Reception, both remarkable young women.

Audree Brunke



Audree grew up in Madison and has long dreamed of attending the University of Wisconsin. Now that dream is a reality as she begins her freshman year after graduating with an associate's degree from Madison College at the age of 15!

She says, "This scholarship will help make college more affordable and brings me one step closer to achieving my goal of studying Political Science." Audree plans to use her undergraduate degree to pursue a career in law or public policy, with a focus on human rights and environmental advocacy. In her impact statement, she expresses well-deserved pride in her extensive volunteer work, which includes founding Happy Feet of Madison when she was just 12 years old.

Happy Feet of Madison is a nonprofit that provides socks and necessities to people experiencing homelessness <https://www.happyfeetofmadison.org>. Audree looks ahead optimistically to her time at UW-Madison stating, "I am excited to engage with the vibrant campus community, explore research opportunities, and grow both as a student and a leader."

Julia Gray

Julia is from Rhinelander, WI, and is majoring in Biology. UW-Madison was her first choice when considering college. She points out that the University of Wisconsin provides amazing academic and world-renowned research opportunities that will help her pursue her ambition of becoming a physician. In addition, she embraces the diversity of the Madison community.

Choosing a major was not difficult for Julia due to her work as a Personal Care Assistant / Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) in a Long-Term Care facility caring for residents with dementia, depression and end-of-life illnesses. Julia notes that the bonds she developed with residents was impactful. She is confident that her experiences as a CNA will truly influence future aspirations in healthcare. She says, "Being a caregiver has taught me patience and emotional intelligence that I never thought of having before." Julia gratefully emphasizes that "this scholarship has made a significant difference and will help me pursue my passion for healthcare and medicine."



IN MEMORIAM

Mary Susan Nebel Hansen - former UL President
Nancy Webster

University League Candlelight Concert
Thursday, December 18th, 2025: 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Maple Bluff Country Club

Program: Avanti Piano Trio

Reservation deadline: December 10th, 2025 (No refunds after this date)

Member: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Additional member: _____ Phone: _____

Guest(s) name(s): _____ Phone: _____

____ Reservations @ \$40 each (includes dinner and program) \$ _____

General scholarship (IHO/IMO name): _____ \$ _____

For donations "In Honor of" or "In Memory of," please circle IHO or IMO above and provide contact information below. General scholarship only please.

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Menu (list any dietary restrictions below):

____ **King Salmon:** Pan seared, rice pilaf, broiled asparagus, Bearnaise sauce

____ **Chicken Pesto:** Herb linguine, cherry tomatoes, pesto cream sauce

____ **Eggplant Parmesan:** Herb panko crusted eggplant, fresh mozzarella, pomodoro,
parmigiano reggiano, linguine, fried artichoke

Dietary restrictions: _____

Need a ride? _____ Can you offer a ride? _____

Make checks payable to: **The University League, Inc.**
(Note: Your check will be cashed a few days following the event)

Mail to: Betty Zeps, Cardinal View, 3820 Tribeca Dr. #212, Middleton, WI 53562

***Reservation form and payment must be in hand by December 10th, 2025**

Questions? Call Betty Zeps at (608) 698-1414



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Madison, WI 53705-0064

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Quasquicentennial Trivia.....

* In 1952 we awarded \$25 to the newly organized Madison Friends of International Students.

* In 1970 we adopted our first logo design. The current logo was developed in 2014.

Our Quasquicentennial will be celebrated in May, 2026