

It's Area 7 Election Time!



The Treasurer, Secretary, and Chair-Elect are voted upon by the membership, and the results are typically announced at the Area 7 festival. ***Information on the electronic ballot will be coming soon.***

The nominating committee has presented another excellent slate of nominees for these positions.

You will receive information on this election from the National Handbell Musicians of America shortly. There will be clear instructions and deadline dates along with the link to your ballot.

Please take the time to read about these six fabulous candidates and make an informed decision about the Area 7 leadership for the next several years.

If you are interested in running for one of the elected positions or any of the Area Board positions, please contact the Past Chair. All of the Board positions can be seen on the Area website and the last page of this newsletter.

For the Office of Chair-Elect

Marilee Anderson



Marilee Anderson is Director of Music Ministries at First Lutheran Church in Red Wing where she has served since 2010. Her responsibilities include Joyful Ringers, Praise Team, playing organ and piano, planning worship, and the myriad of other administrative duties as a

member of the staff team at the church. She has a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Marilee has a long history of being a handbell ringer and director. She was Handbell Director at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Hastings, MN from 1982-

2010 where she directed a graded adult handbell program as well as working with children's handbells. As director of music, she developed other music programs at the church.

From 1996-2009, Marilee was a charter member of the Twin Cities community handbell ensemble Bells of the Lakes. She has attended many handbell festivals as both a ringer and teacher. She has directed children's handbell festivals and community handbell festivals. Bells of the Bluffs was started in 2013 as the culmination of a dream to establish and invite ringers from around the area to come together to ring and to Ignite Passion for Handbells. This dream still continues 11 years later.

Marilee has been enthralled by handbells since the first time she heard them. She knew this was a calling and had learned all she could. Her passion is directing, and she loves it when a piece comes together to express the story it conveys.

She looks forward to the possibility of serving on the Area 7 Handbell Guild.

Monica S. McGowan



Monica S. McGowan took her music education background - Bachelor of Science, Music Education, Chadron State College, Chadron, Nebraska, NE and found her musical life's passion in handbells. Almost four decades later, she has become the consummate

handbell musician: accomplished ringer, seasoned director, internationally recognized clinician/conductor, adjudicator, and master technician at Ringing Restorations.

Her ringing career began in 1986 with the Ding Dong Dollies of Aldersgate United Methodist Church, St. Louis Park, MN. In 1999 she became the founding artistic and music director for Twin Cities Bronze, (Minneapolis-St. Paul), and now serves as the music and artistic director for Bells of the Hills in Rapid City, SD. She is an alumni ringer at Distinctly Bronze East,

Distinctly Bronze West, and more recently the Bay View Week of Handbells in Petoskey, MI.

Monica has served as director of handbells in Methodist, Episcopal, and Lutheran churches from Minnesota to Louisiana. She is an instructor at the International Music Camp Summer School of Fine Arts and in 2004 was named its handbell coordinator when she succeeded its founder, Fred A. Merrett.

Monica received Accreditation in Massed Conducting at the first AGEHR Master Classes on Conducting and has completed studies with Dr. Donald Allured, Dr. Paul Rosene, William Griffin, David Davidson, and Dr. William Payn. She has conducted festivals and workshops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Puerto Rico, and Hong Kong. In 2017 Monica was selected to conduct the All-Star Choir at the Handbell Musicians of America National Seminar in Anaheim, CA, and conducted Reaching for Bronze in New Bern, NC in March 2020.

Monica has served in a variety of leadership roles for the Handbell Musicians of America (formerly the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers). She served on the Area 7 Board of Directors (1994–2002), the National AGEHR Committee for Handbells/Chimes In Music Education (CHIME), Area Representative to the AGEHR Executive Committee (1997–1998) and was Special Interest Department Chair for the National Board of Directors.

In 2004 Monica opened her independent small business for handbell and handchimes repairs and refurbishments: Ringing Restorations. She has achieved the distinction of Master Technician through her exemplary and detailed service in the repair, maintenance, and refurbishment of handbells and handchimes.

Monica brings her extensive training, passion, knowledge, and enthusiasm for handbells and handchimes to every forum and venue, providing a challenging, successful, and fun experience for its participants. "It is an honor to be nominated for Area 7 Chair-Elect. It would be a privilege to serve the members of Area 7, 'paying it forward' for the opportunities I have received in this unique and treasured musical art form."

For the Office of Secretary

Diane LaFontaine



Diane is the incumbent running for her second term as Secretary.

I didn't grow up in a musical family but I fell in love with handbells the first time I heard them. It wasn't the right time for me to join a handbell choir then, but I knew my time would come. I've been playing bells for about 30 years, and it never gets old.

For a time my church had two choirs, and I played in both, and also played with another church for a few years after subbing with them and realizing I liked how they rotated positions.

I love learning new techniques and attending seminars and events when possible. I think the most fun I've ever had with bells was playing with over 700 ringers at the Mall of America for the "Big Ring" in November 2016, and playing "Love Runs Out" by OneRepublic at Anthornis Central in 2019. I look forward to playing bells for many years to come!

I work-full time for a local school district, and I'm the mother of two girls and grandma of five, with two young great-grandsons. They all live close by, so I'm fortunate to see everyone on a regular basis. Work, family, bells, and hobbies keep me busy.

Deb Madel



Deb Madel, an active handbell ringer for many years, currently rings with Encore! Handbell Ensemble of Fox Valley, WI. She was a founding member of Encore! in 2008 and served on its board most of those years. She is also active with A Little Encore! a small group ensemble that plays for

special occasions. Deb is a recently-retired high school special education teacher and when not ringing, can be found singing with the Oshkosh Chamber Singers and her church choir, or traveling somewhere. Deb is active in Area 7, attending Area 7 and National events and, in the recent past, serving on the Area 7 Board as Secretary and as Membership Chair.

For the Office of Treasurer

Theresa Jacobson



Theresa was first introduced to handbells in high school and was part of a small youth handbell group at her home church of Our Saviors in Duluth.

Theresa, is a lifelong Duluthian, received a BA in Speech Communications from UW-

Superior in 2010. With her love for all things music, Theresa was asked to join the Northern Bell Chimes and has been a proud member for over five years.

Theresa has worked in banking for over 12 years with experience in retail and lending, as well as accounts payable and reconciliation. Her current job title is Electronic Payments Manager, where she works closely with the ever-evolving changes to electronic payments. She is currently studying to receive two certifications this year (NCP and AAP).

Theresa currently serves on the NE MN Synod Council and has recently been appointed to serve on the MN Lutheran Social Services Board of Directors. In her free time, Theresa enjoys bowling and serves as the Duluth Area's United States Bowling Congress Association Manager. She also plays volleyball and pickleball during the summer.

Gwendolyn Woerpel



Gwen was first introduced to handbells while an undergraduate student at Bethany College in Lindsborg, KS, where she earned a BA in Psychology in 2015.

A Kansas native, Gwen moved to Duluth with her husband in 2021. One of the immediate priorities

after settling in was finding a handbell group to join, and she was happy to find a place in Strikepoint, a well-established Duluth ensemble. Gwen has now played with Strikepoint for two touring seasons.

Gwen has worked in banking for almost eight years. Her current role is related to risk management, but prior responsibilities have included accounting and operational functions such as account reconciliation and accounts payable. She holds two professional accreditations (AAP, APRP) which demonstrate her expertise with payments and risk, as well as her commitment to gaining knowledge. She is currently a part-time student at the University of Minnesota Duluth working toward an MBA degree, and an active member of the Junior League of Duluth.

In her free time, Gwen also plays the piano and accordion. She enjoys reading, cross stitch, computer games, and staying in on snowy days.