

Dear Partners Friends,

I am delighted to welcome you to our Partners of WHA Annual Conference. It's always a pleasure to come together to network, awaken our imaginations and nourish our creative spirits. No matter where you volunteer or who you are, know that you are always welcome and valued at our Partners conference.

"The Power of Partners" will be our ongoing theme for this annual gathering to emphasize our shared purpose and collaboration, enabling our local Partners groups to achieve more than individuals are able to alone. Working together we can overcome challenges in our local organizations, foster a sense of belonging and strength and accomplish more for healthcare around our state.

I know you will enjoy the speakers, workshops, CEO panel, WAVE award presentations and traveling gift shops that our Convention Co-chairs have arranged. None of this would be possible without the fantastic work of Linda Arentz and Linda Gillette and their helpers at Gundersen Partners. Please thank them personally when you see them. Megan Schams at Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center has been excellent to work with in helping to fulfill our conference wants and needs.

I'm confident that this year's conference will provide a meaningful and enriching experience. Thank you for joining us.



Julie Steiner, President
Partners of WHA



Questions? Contact the Conference Planning
Committee whaconf2026@gmail.com



**2026 Partners of WHA State Convention
Wednesday, October 14, and Thursday,
October 15, 2026**



Location:

Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center
3060 South Kinney Coulee Road
Onalaska, WI 54650

Room Rates:

\$139.00 per night plus taxes and fees

Same price for Deluxe King or Deluxe 2 Queen (2 queen beds)

Thursday continental breakfast included.

Block of rooms for Partners of WHA will be held until Saturday, September 12. All reservations should be made prior to that date. **Group block code: WHA2026**

Guest room reservations can be made directly with Stoney Creek Hotel, Onalaska by calling: 608-781-3060, press extension 2 for guest services. (Please note: ask for "Front Desk Direct")

Partners of WHA Conference Direct Online Booking Link:

Click here: [Details - Stoney Creek Hotel La Crosse - Onalaska](#)

Please include email and phone number for speedy precheck to avoid the line.

Standard check in time is 3 PM. Stoney Creek will do their best to accommodate guest check-ins beginning at 1 PM on Wednesday but cannot guarantee your room(s) will be ready until 3 PM.

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

- 10:00 AM Registration
Set Up Displays and Silent Auction Items, Turn in Raffle Tickets
- 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM Traveling Gift Shops
- 12 Noon Welcome, Presentation of Colors, Pledge of Allegiance, Reflection Lunch
- 12:45 PM Keynote Speaker, Patty Hendrickson, MBA, CSP
“Getting Beyond the Busy, Engaging Yourself and Those You Impact”
- 1:45 – 2:00 PM Break, Visit Traveling Gift Shops, Purchase Raffle Tickets!
- 2:00 – 3:00 PM Workshops – Session 1
#1 Before the After
#2 Dementia Live ®
#8 The Volunteer’s Role in Enhancing the Patient Experience
- 3:15 – 4:15 PM Workshops – Session 2
#1 Before the After
#4 Soothing the Spirit, an introduction to the use of essential oils and how their use can enhance wellbeing
#7 Nourish to Flourish for Healthy Aging
- 4:15 - 5:15 PM Round Table Discussions
➤ Please submit topics on the registration form
- 5:15 - 6:15 PM Social Hour
➤ Visit Silent Auction, Hospital Displays and Purchase Raffle Tickets!
- 6:15 PM Dinner
➤ 50/50 Raffle
➤ WAVE Awards
➤ Honor Points
- 8:00 PM **NEW!** District Meetings

Thursday, October 15, 2026

- 7:30 – 8:30 AM Special Interest Groups
- Community Health (Donna Nelson)
 - Local Leadership (Julie Steiner)
 - Public Policy (Sharon Scott)
 - Treasurers (Peg Larson)
- 9:00 – 10:00 AM Partners of WHA Business Meeting
- 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM Traveling Gift Shops and Vendor Marketplace
- 10:00 – 10:30 AM Break – Visit Traveling Gift Shops, Vendors, Silent Auction, Hospital Displays and Purchase Raffle Tickets!
- 10:30 – 11:30 AM CEO Panel
- 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM Lunch and Speaker
- 12:30 – 1:00 PM Break – Visit Traveling Gift Shops, Vendors, Silent Auction, Hospital Displays and Purchase Raffle Tickets!
- 1:00 – 2:00 PM Workshops - Session 3
- #4 Soothing the Spirit, an introduction to the use of essential oils and how their use can enhance wellbeing
 - #6 “Don’t Let Your Tank Hit Empty” – HeartMath
 - #7 Nourish to Flourish for Healthy Aging
- 2:00 – 2:15 PM Break – Visit Traveling Gift Shops, Vendors, Silent Auction, Hospital Displays and Purchase Raffle Tickets!
- 2:15 – 3:15 PM Workshops - Session 4
- #3 EmPATH (Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment and Healing)
 - #5 Chair Yoga
 - #9 Active Response Education
- 3:25 PM Wrap-Up, Raffle Drawings, 2027 Conference Invitation and Registration Drawing, Gift Card Drawings - Must be present to win!

Workshop Descriptions

#1 – Before the After

Wednesday 2 – 3 PM, Wednesday 3:15 – 4:15 PM

Developed in 2012 as a combination of Planning Sessions, a Planning Packet*, and years of insight that is shared with attendees so they can “Prepare. Copy. Communicate.” their final wishes with loved ones. This workshop is for anyone, any age, to convey their wishes. A packet of state specific planning forms will be provided. *May request your state of residence prior to session.

Presenter: Sara Wrobel, Executive Director, Causeway Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, Inc.

#2 – Dementia Live ®

Wednesday 2 – 3 PM

Dementia Live ® offers an ‘inside-out’ understanding of the changes experienced with dementia by immersing participants into what it may be like to live with it. By “walking in their shoes,” gain a heightened awareness and leave with valuable tips and tools to improve communication and connection.

Presenter: Becky Kamrowski, Dementia Care Specialist, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of La Crosse County

#3 – Building Wisconsin’s First EmPATH Unit: A New Path for Behavioral Health Crisis Care

Thursday, 2:15 – 3:15 PM

Josh Court and Mandy Richardson share the journey of how Emplify Health by Gundersen brought Wisconsin’s first EmPATH Unit to life. What began as an idea to better serve patients in mental health crisis has become a place where behavioral health care has been transformed thanks to the power of generosity.

Presenters: Josh Court, Clinical Operations Director for Behavioral Health at Emplify Health by Gundersen, and Mandy Richardson, Director of Philanthropy at Gundersen Medical Foundation

#4 – Soothing the Spirit, an introduction to the use of essential oils and how their use can enhance wellbeing

Wednesday 3:15 – 4:15 PM and Thursday 1 – 2 PM

Essential oils are concentrated plant extracts valued for their natural fragrance and their calming, uplifting, and restorative qualities. In this presentation, you’ll learn what essential oils are, how to safely use them, and how their emotional and therapeutic properties can support everyday wellness.

Presenter: Denise Nicholson, BSN, RN, Registered and Certified Clinical Aromatherapist

#5 – Chair Yoga

Thursday 2:15 – 3:15 PM

Chair yoga is an accessible, low-impact practice that adapts traditional yoga poses using a chair for support. It delivers remarkable physical and mental benefits, including improved flexibility, increased muscle strength, enhanced balance, and a calmer mind. (Harvard Health)

Presenter: Bernice Olson-Pollack, M.S., American Council and Exercise certified personal trainer, fitness instructor and yoga teacher

Workshop Descriptions (continued)

#6 – “Don’t Let Your Tank Hit Empty” ~ HeartMath

Thursday 1 – 2 PM

HeartMath helps us understand the role emotions play in our overall health and well-being. Those who attend will learn skills and in-the-moment techniques that help us decrease stress and build resilience.

Presenter: Christie Harris, Wellness Education Specialist, Emplify Health by Gundersen, La Crosse, Wisconsin

#7 – Nourish to Flourish for Healthy Aging

Wednesday 3:15 – 4:15 PM and Thursday 1 – 2 PM

Aging is a natural part of life, but how we age is influenced by many factor within our control. Join Megan Berner, RD, for an engaging discussion on the physical and nutritional changes that occur as we grow older, what aspects of aging we can influence, and what we can't. You'll learn practical nutrition and lifestyle strategies to support energy, strength, brain health, and overall well-being so you can flourish through every stage of life. Leave with realistic tips and tools you can start using right away.

Presenter: Megan Berner, Registered Dietitian (RD)

#8 – The Volunteer’s Role in Enhancing the Patient Experience

Wednesday 2 to 3 PM

Emplify Health by Gundersen volunteers play a vital role as part of the Patient Experience team. Eileen Wiltinger will provide insight in leading volunteers in a healthcare environment, encouraging their commitment to providing exceptional experiences for patients, visitors and staff. As volunteer roles continue to evolve in healthcare organizations, learn the importance of recognizing the impact your volunteers make on a patient's overall experience.

Presenter: Eileen Wiltinger, CAVS. Manager of Volunteer Services, Emplify Health by Gundersen, La Crosse, Wisconsin

#9 – ALICE Active Response Education

Thursday 2:15 to 3:15 PM

The world is a different place, and you could be presented with the need for civilian active response training. Equip yourself with the skills to survive an active shooter emergency using the ALICE method (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) to improve a Run-Hide-Fight strategy. You will be able to define when enhanced situational awareness is needed as a prevention strategy, ways to increase safety during Run-Hide-Fight and learn how “alerting and informing” improve your chances of survival.

Presenter: Tom Wright, Emergency Manager, Emplify Health by Gundersen, La Crosse, Wisconsin