

TGIF Taking Great Ideas Forward

Improving Northern Capital - Sustainable Development in the Northern Tier

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“ You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”

-Plato-

MEETINGS and EVENTS:

Links will provide additional information. Dates for recent additions are in **bold**.

<i>What</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Where</i>
Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival	Sept. 14, 15, 16	All Day	Cable
River Alliance Workshop	Sept 15 th	10am – 3pm	Spooner
River Alliance Workshop	Sept 22 nd	10am – 3pm	Rhineland
Black/Miller Energy Bill Hearing	Sept. 25th	TBA	Madison
BIO Mid America Venture Forum	Sept. 24-26	All Day	Milwaukee
Great Lakes Commission	Oct 1 & 2	All Day	Chicago
Inventors & Entrepreneur's Club	Oct. 4 th	5:30 pm	Iron River Community Center
Biotech & Medical Device	Oct. 18	All Day	Milwaukee
Bioneers	Oct. 19-21	All Day	San Mateo, CA
Making a Great Lake Superior Conference	Oct. 29, 30, 31	All Day	Duluth Convention Center
Inventors and Entrepreneur's Club	Nov. 1	5:30 pm	TBA
Wisconsin Early Stage Symposium	Nov. 14-15	All Day	Madison

The Brain Drain

Usually comments lamenting the Brain Drain are focused on our teenagers who leave for college and our college grads who don't return. But the drain of brains from our area is involving the older set, too. A pending departure is that of **Jane Silberstein**. Soon headed for the state of Washington, Jane will leave a legacy of contributions to our region. Formally she served as a land-use planning specialist with **Northwest Regional Planning Commission**, the US Coordinator for the **Lake Superior Binational Forum** and Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development (CNRED) Professor for Ashland County **University of Wisconsin Extension**. Less formally, but no less intelligently, energetically and effectively, Jane served on numerous non-profit boards and was a frequent and effective cheerleader for important local initiatives. Jane is author of "*Land Use Planning for Sustainable Development*" now used as a textbook at UW-Steven Point for a course offered by Dr. **Anna Haines** of the Center for Land Use Education (CLUE).

Jane will be greatly missed by many who will affectionately wish her the very best.

On a recent long road trip I enjoyed conversations with two other Chequamegon region bright lights that are now illuminating northeastern Wisconsin. **Fred Schnook**, former Mayor of Ashland is now living in Green Bay and finding ways to transform part, perhaps all, of the engineering firm, **Foth & Van Dyke**, into a leader in leveraging top flight engineering to serve community sustainability. **Jay Moynihan**, former Ashland attorney and always a thought leader, now serves **Shawano County** as CNRED agent. His current project and passion is a focus on climate change. His monthly seminars are well attended and are bringing a new level of awareness to community and business leaders. He, and Fred, commented that an impressive cluster of managers behind climate change assessments and initiatives collectively control \$41 trillion (yes! Trillion.) of assets. With that level of responsibility, these managers know how important it is to get beyond the confusion of uninformed, emotion laden argument and plan effectively for a future that will certainly be different – not business as usual – and loaded with opportunity.

Jon Baier, a **Northland College** grad, has become a "go-to" guy with a go-go software division of CDW in Madison. Over dinner we reminisced about his tenure with **LongRun**, the now defunct computer recycling project he helped start in Ashland. We couldn't pin down whether Ashland wasn't ready for LongRun or LongRun wasn't ready for Ashland, but agreed that **Mike Gardner** and **Kent Tenny**, who also supported this worthwhile effort, gave it a good shot. Jon is my icon for the brain drain. Jon may, after Northland, have found a home in Ashland but opportunity was not there. Now Madison is seeming too small for Jon. He, and his SO, a bright young woman finishing a PhD in chemical engineering, may be looking, in a couple of years, for new ventures in New England.

James Brew, the talented Duluth architect who contributed so much to sustainability projects at Northland College, has taken his skills and international reputation for green design (he prefers to say "high performance") to Colorado. Now with the **Rocky Mountain Institute**, James will stake claim to global clients and opportunity.

All we can do is wish our departed super-stars our best wishes. Then, we should pause for some reflective thinking about our northland future. It is creative brain-power that will make our futures brighter. We better keep working; using our remaining brain-power to create new opportunities.

Making the Northern Tier attractive for the creative class is essential if we are to find a new social and economic future. The attraction of our fabulous lakes and shores, forests and streams can be matched in Seattle, Colorado and Maine. Growing our intellectual capital will not be for the faint of heart or the small minded. Tolerance for new ideas and alternative life-styles may challenge even the entrenched hippies who escaped here in the 60s. Protecting our lakes from development and overuse is not simply a function of limiting growth. Protection of life supporting ecosystems with growth – planned, smart growth – is not only possible, it is essential.

PLAYING and BRAINS

Outdoor play for children has become, or is becoming, lost in urban environments. An [article](#) in the BBC highlighted some issues that deserve serious attention from those concerned with growth, productivity and the education of our next generation. Our rural kids are positioned to gain some serious advantages over their urban counterparts if only we could really understand and act on that advantage.

Junk food has been linked with childhood obesity. Junk play, too many over hyped “learning toys,” including computer games and video “entertainment”, are being blamed for childhood mental problems. Maybe? It ought to be checked out. Children need unsupervised play; physical, imaginative and, yes sometimes dirty, risky, play. Great big piles of sand probably provide more creative, imaginative play than a box full of (unleaded) plastic toys from China. Small kids need to be road safe and water safe but eventually parents need to loosen the reins. More experience fending for themselves will help with confidence and competence when they get older.

Older kids need a place to play also. Physical stuff – kayaks and sailboats, backpacking and bicycling – will attract for weekends or weeks. Intellectual challenge and a resource-rich environment (schools? ... but don't get me going) will have staying power. My passion for possibilities inherent in maintaining a research function at the **Ashland Agriculture Research Station** facility was anchored by both the innovations that could drive economic growth and by the ability of a research facility to attract brain power. Building a resource-rich research institute would not be for the faint of heart because ROI is dicey at best; no guarantee or warranty. But those freshly minted PhD's from Madison and Minnesota, New England and California, might find a great, green research opportunity just what the Doctor ordered. If given a chance to play both indoors with bright playmates and outdoors in our fields, waters and woods, these talented young folks would attract both research funds and other bright minds. Whatever happened to the [Chequamegon Institute](#)? Jane and Jay, who helped hatch this great idea, are going and gone, along with Jon, James and Fred, but it may be time to tidy up the paperwork and start filling in the blanks.

LIGHTER SIDE:

As with most jokes the original author is unknown. Whoever you are; “Thanks!” Names have been added to tease the innocent.

Bill DeVries, a maker and shaker in general, and champion of the [Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival](#) this weekend in Cable, is also an efficiency expert. He concluded a recent lecture at a BCEDC Board meeting on the subject with a note of caution. "You need to be careful about trying these techniques at home."

"Why?" asked **Tom Gordon**, who was in the audience.

"I watched my wife, **Barbara**'s routine at dinner for years," Bill, the expert, explained. "She made lots of trips between the refrigerator, stove, table and cabinets, often carrying a single item at a time.

One day Bill told her, 'Honey, why don't you try carrying several things at once?'

"Did it save time?" Tom asked.

"Actually, yes," Bill replied. "It used to take her 30 minutes to make dinner. Now I do it in ten..."

Take care and have a great weekend!

/BRUCE

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Bruce Lindgren is Principal of [B.Lindgren CONSULTING](#). The consulting practice serves small business, local government, school districts and non-profits providing support for research, grant development, technical writing, marketing support and project management. Bruce brings his background in biological sciences, education, small business and media technology to generate and implement ideas contributing solutions to mission critical challenges.

In addition Bruce maintains the following affiliations:

[Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation](#), (BCEDC) Director

[Inland Sea Society](#), (ISS) Director

[Lake Superior Binational Forum](#), (LSBF) US Delegation Co-Chair

[Raindrop Garden Gallery](#), (RGG) Co-owner

[IDEA Consortium LLC](#), Owner

[Chequamegon Institute, Inc.](#) Initial Registered Agent

[Coalition for Eco-Industrial Development](#), (CEID) Work Group Member

[Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board, \(WIB\) Member](#)

The encircled fractal triangle represents an integrated cluster of seven ideas – economics, ecology, equity, ethics, experience, education and energy – that may be considered a core for sustainability studies. Bruce is available to present illustrated lectures and facilitate discussions about role of education in Industrial Ecology, Sustainable Development and the Sustainability Revolution.