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Erin Burns, Shannon Westblade Elected, Wendie Keen Appointed to Mackinac Associates Board of Trustees

MACKINAC ISLAND, MICH. — Erin Burns, a life-long resident of Michigan, and Shannon Hahn Westblade, a third-generation owner/innkeeper on Mackinac Island, were unanimously voted to the Mackinac Associates Board of Trustees at its annual meeting August 12. In addition, at its regular



Friends Preserving and Sharing Mackinac's Heritage

meeting August 25, Harbor Springs resident and St. Ignace native Wendie Keen was appointed to the board.

Burns has been a frequent visitor to Mackinac Island since childhood. A graduate of Michigan State

University, Burns has held sales and marketing jobs with the Campbell Soup Company as well as Time Warner, followed by several years with the American Cancer Society, specializing in planned giving. She transitioned to association management after spending time raising her sons, and is currently the Executive Director for the Michigan History Foundation. Erin and her husband Jeb have been members of Mackinac Associates for almost 2 decades and have passed on their love of history and the Straits region to their twin sons, Thomas and Conor (aka “Dock Boy” with the Fort Mackinac Never Sweats “base ball” team).

“It's an honor and a privilege to serve on the board of Mackinac Associates. It's a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community that has brought so much joy to my family.” Burns said. “I look forward to working with such a talented group, to preserve the history of Mackinac.”

Westblade is the owner/innkeeper of Haan's 1830 Inn on Mackinac Island. Growing up in a historic bed and breakfast on Mackinac Island inspired Shannon's love for history and the natural world and her passion to preserve it. Her degree in history, with a focus on American frontiers has amplified this passion. Shannon and her husband Lucas have two kids, Gideon and Heidi.

“I am excited to be a part of Mackinac Associates, with the goal of inspiring others to join in the mission of preserving our parks for generations to come,” Westblade said.

Keen's love of the Straits of Mackinac began early on. Her first visit to the island was when she was four years old and as a teen she spent summers working on the island. Keen shares her love of Michigan with her husband, Brad, six grown children, their spouses, and eight grandchildren. Wendie and Brad were married on the island and continue the tradition of visiting as often as they can.

Professionally, Keen has served in leadership roles in the resort industry at historic Californian Resorts; The Claremont, Sonoma Mission Inn and Ranch Las Palmas. Returning to Northern Michigan in 2008, Wendie now dedicates her talents as vice president of spa and owner services with Boyne Resorts, supporting resorts in Michigan, Maine and Montana. She also has a passion for real estate and has restored numerous historic homes within Northern Michigan.

“Mackinac Island is one of my favorite places in the world,” Keen said. “This sacred area with its rich history and natural beauty is so very important, and I am honored to join this board and dedicate time to its preservation and enhancement.”

Burns and Westblade replace Jeb Burns, who was term-limited off, and Natalia Wohletz, who chose not to run for reelection. Jeb Burns served as board president in 2022, among other board leadership roles. Keen fills the seat of Kathy Lieder, who resigned from the board to focus on family commitments.

“Erin, Shannon, and Wendie will make excellent additions to the Mackinac Associates board,” said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director. “All have deep connections to Mackinac Island and the Straits of Mackinac area and bring unique skills and backgrounds to the board.

“We thank Jeb, Natalia, and Kathy for their dedication to the Mackinac Associates board,”
Brisson continued. “We look forward to their continued involvement with Mackinac Associates in the future.”

The annual meeting was held at Wawashkamo Golf Club, which is celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2023. The meeting included a presentation from Phil Porter, former Mackinac State Historic Parks Director and current historian at Wawashkamo. Members were also invited to test out hickory stick putters on the putting green. Jeb Burns highlighted the summer events and the generous support of members over the past year. Burns, Wohletz, and Lieder were presented plaques for their service on the board.

At the regular board meeting August 25, the board elected the following officers: Todd Callewaert, president; Skip Young, vice president; Brian Bailey, treasurer; and Nancy Porter, secretary. Other members of the Board of Trustees include Nicole Doud, David Levy, Heather Martin, Stephen Murray, Joan Slater, and Sheldon Smith.

More information on Mackinac Associates can [be found on its website](http://mackinacassociates.com), mackinacassociates.com, or at (231) 436-4100. A downloadable version of this release can be [found here](#).

Mackinac Associates, founded as a 501(c)(3) in 1982, was created to support the mission of Mackinac State Historic Parks by providing funding to do projects and implement programs the park would otherwise not be able to afford. Mackinac Associates has supported needed projects in every area of museum operation and make possible interpretive programs, publications, exhibits, natural history education, park improvements and more. Since its inception, Mackinac Associates has provided more than \$2,000,000.00 in funding for projects throughout Mackinac State Historic Parks sites. Mackinac Associates has provided support to the education outreach program since its inception in 1987 providing over \$700,000 in funding to support staff and interpreters to visit area schools throughout the region during the winter months with the Historic Mackinac on Tour and Winter in Michigan’s North Woods: Amazing Animal Adaptations programs. Included in these funds are scholarships given to local schools to help defray the cost of visits to Mackinac State Historic Parks sites. More information is available at (231) 436-4100 or online at mackinacassociates.com.

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