



WAUBONSEE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026

Dr. Brian Knetl



60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Waubonsee Community College welcomed approximately 1,500 guests to its Sugar Grove Campus on Saturday, August 22, for a milestone celebration marking 60 years to the day since the college's first Board of Trustees meeting on August 22, 1966.

The 60th Anniversary Celebration, themed "Back to School! Back to Cool!," brought generations of the Waubonsee community together for an afternoon filled with live music, food, family activities, a petting zoo, alumni pride and opportunities to reconnect and make new memories. One of the day's biggest attractions was an impressive Cruise Night display featuring more than 100 vehicles.

Students, alumni, employees, families and community members filled the campus, creating a fitting tribute to Waubonsee's history and the people who have shaped it. The celebration honored six decades of opening doors to education and opportunity while showcasing the vibrant community that continues to move Waubonsee forward and strengthen its connections throughout District 516 for generations to come.

THE GROVE RIBBON CUTTING



A packed Student Center celebrated Waubonsee's growing commitment to student well-being as the college officially cut the ribbon on The GROVE Student Food Pantry and unveiled The GROVE EXPRESS Care Cabinet, created by veterans in partnership with non-profit A Call to Shoulders!

Opened just three weeks earlier, The GROVE had already assisted nearly 100 students with food and other essentials. The Waubonsee Community College Foundation provided \$15,000 to help launch the initiative and committed continued support as it grows.

The ceremony recognized students from the Science Club and Student Garden who grow and donate fresh campus produce to the pantry, along with alumni Ebony Tillis and Scott Eaves for helping plant the seeds for the food pantry and Student Garden.

A highlight was the unveiling of The GROVE EXPRESS, a refurbished china cabinet transformed into a mobile pantry by local veterans through A Call to Shoulders. Community supporters, including the Sugar Grove Fire Department, also donated food to support Waubonsee students.

ARTIST TALK: DR. CHARLES SMITH

A standing-room-only crowd filled Waubonsee's Arrowhead Gallery for an Artist Talk with acclaimed artist, historian and Purple Heart Vietnam veteran Dr. Charles Smith, 85.

His exhibit, *The Art of Dr. Charles Smith*, features handcrafted "works of heart" telling powerful stories of the Black experience, struggle and resilience. The longtime Aurora resident returned home to share his art, history, humor and wisdom with a cross-generational audience of students, employees and community members.

Smith reflected on the experiences that shaped both his life and his art while encouraging the audience to preserve history by passing it forward.

"You don't give it away. You teach it away!" Smith said.



FACULTY DEVELOPMENT DAY



Waubonsee faculty gathered Friday, September 11, for Faculty Development Day, a day dedicated to learning, collaboration and student success. Dr. Kim Chavis welcomed faculty before an inspiring keynote presentation set the stage for a full day of professional development.

Breakout sessions focused on High-Impact Practices, Instructional Technology, and Faculty Accomplishments and Programming. Faculty also had access to drop-in support with Porsche Adams, Canvas Administrator Consultant. Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon coffee break provided additional opportunities for colleagues to connect, exchange ideas and build community while preparing to support students throughout the academic year.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING



Members of Waubonsee's Executive Leadership, President's Cabinet, MarComm and Incident Management Team recently completed a full-day Crisis Communications Workshop designed to strengthen the college's emergency preparedness. Following months of planning with global crisis response vendor Social Simulator, participants navigated a high-pressure simulated crisis requiring collaboration and rapid decision-making.

The training progressed through four phases: Assessment & Planning, Live Simulation, Cross-Team Coordination and Media Readiness. Participants evaluated risks, responded to evolving developments, coordinated internal and external communications, refined key messages and prepared a spokesperson for a mock media interview. The hands-on experience strengthened collaboration and readiness across teams throughout the college.

HISPANIC PIONEERS BREAKFAST



Aurora Alderwoman Juany Garza hosted her 21st Annual Hispanic Pioneers Breakfast, bringing together more than 300 guests to celebrate first-generation college graduates from immigrant families in Aurora. Guest speaker Judge Bianca Camargo, a Waubonsee alumna and East Aurora High School graduate, shared her journey from Waubonsee to Northern Illinois University and the NIU College of Law.

Two current Waubonsee students received scholarships: Alejandro Nicasio, a Music major, and Nan May Su Maung, a Business Administration major. The annual breakfast provided an inspiring celebration of culture, community, education and achievement while recognizing students and graduates building pathways for future generations.

LATINX HERITAGE MONTH AT WCC



SOMOS WAUBONSEE: September 16 at 11 a.m., celebrates the college's identity as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and the vibrant Latinx community shaping Waubonsee through music, food, activities and connection.

On **October 2**, award-winning author **SONIDO REYES PRESENTS OUR STORIES, OUR VOICES, OUR FREEDOM TO READ**, exploring diverse stories, representation and access to books. Conversations will be held at 10:15 a.m. at Sugar Grove and 5:30 p.m. at Aurora Downtown as part of Aurora First Fridays, extending the celebration across our campuses and communities.

ON THE HORIZON

SEPTEMBER 28

Waubonsee Foundation Golf Outing

OCTOBER 2

All-College Picnic
Sugar Grove Campus

OCTOBER 9

Staff Professional Development Day

OCTOBER 14

Board of Trustees Meeting
Aurora Downtown