



Bringing Digital Equity to All Students in the Community

A Crucible of Practice Salon **March 14, 2023 / 12:30 – 2 pm EST**

PRESENTERS



Nicole Brua-Behrens
Executive Director
Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation

Nicole Brua-Behrens has been engaged in the nonprofit sector since 1994. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation in Grinnell, Iowa. Prior to that, Nicole served as the director of an early childhood literacy program, a program coordinator at Des Moines Area Community College scheduling college credit courses for high school students, as a grant writer for Kirkwood Community College, and finally as a planner for a regional agency in northwestern Iowa. In her role at Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation, Nicole connects with donors and nonprofit program partners and helps support many community projects. The Grinnell Education Partnership is one of those important community projects. Nicole has the pleasure of working with 20+ organizations as they work towards accomplishing several community education goals. Nicole lives in Grinnell, Iowa with her husband, two children, a dog, and a fish.



Steve Burnett, MBA
General Manager
Mahaska Communication Group

Steve Burnett is the currently the General Manager of Mahaska Communication Group (MCG). MCG is a telecommunication company based in Oskaloosa, Iowa and provides high-quality communication services to communities in south central Iowa. Services also include rural wireless connection to residents of Marion, Mahaska, Poweshiek, Keokuk, and Wapello Counties. Steve has an MBA from the University of Kansas.



Monica Chavez-Silva
Vice President of Community Engagement and Strategic Planning
Grinnell College

Monica Chavez-Silva leads strategic and operational activities with the office of Community Partnerships, Planning, and Research at Grinnell College. Her work includes assessing campus and community needs, collaborating with college and community leadership, overseeing local grant-making activities, stewarding outreach programming, and driving collective impact initiatives to enhance the social and economic vitality in Grinnell. She also currently serves on the board of the International Town and Gown Association, the Advisory Council for the Anchor Institution Taskforce, and most recently appointed by Governor Reynolds to the Iowa

Commission on Volunteer Service. Prior to Grinnell College, Monica served as consumer research specialist and brand strategist at Leo Burnett Chicago, including a gap year in South America to establish a research office for Leo Burnett in Santiago, Chile.



Liz Hansen, M.A.
Program Co for Collective Impact
Office of Community Partnerships, Planning, and Research
Grinnell College

Liz Hansen serves as the Program Coordinator for Collective Impact in the Office of Community Partnerships, Planning, and Research. She is also the Executive Director of the Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation.

Her duties include collaborating with community partners on the focus areas of equity, family engagement, digital equity, and literacy. Working closely with Grinnell Education Partnership (GEP) partner Jill Harris, they design training and convene the GEP Summer Learning program. Before joining the staff in 2017, Liz completed a 32-year career teaching high school English and speech in the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District. A graduate of Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in speech and theatre, she also holds a master's degree in education from Viterbo University.



Jill Harris
Project Coordinator
Grinnell Education Partnership
Grinnell College

Jill Harris is the Project Coordinator for the Grinnell Education Partnership (GEP). Jill's duties include assisting Grinnell College to fulfill its backbone role for the GEP by making connections and collaborating with partner

organizations to identify emerging needs. She also initiates project planning, assesses and moves relevant partner projects towards sustainability, supports equity alignment, and assists with communications pieces. Before joining the staff in this capacity, Jill was a public educator for 32 years. After retirement, she served as an AmeriCorps VISTA Skills Gap Taskforce Coordinator for GEP. As a retired teacher, Jill continues to advocate for equitable and excellent educational opportunities for children from cradle to career. Jill graduated from William Penn University with a bachelor's degree in music education.



Melissa Strovers, M.A.
Director of Collective Impact
Office of Community Partnerships, Planning, and Research
Grinnell College

Melissa Strovers is the Director of Collective Impact at Grinnell College in the Office of Community Partnerships, Planning, and Research. Strovers directs the College's collective Impact initiatives to drive systems change by supporting area changemakers in co-

creating solutions for common goals. Using strong project management skills and strategic doing, Strovers convenes stakeholder teams to align resources toward systemic issues that affect the community, such as early childhood literacy, food security, and transportation. Prior to Grinnell College, Melissa served as the Executive Director of Imagine Grinnell, a local non-profit focused on quality of life and other placemaking initiatives. In the fall of 2019, Strovers was presented with the Outstanding Volunteer or National Service Manager Award by the State of Iowa. This award recognizes one who demonstrates excellence in program management and innovation in maximizing resources. Strovers currently serves as a co-chair of the United Way of

Grinnell. In January of 2023, Strovers was appointed to serve on the Poweshiek County Local Board of Health. She holds a B.A. in communications from Oklahoma Christian University and an M.A. in public administration from Drake University.



Janet M. Stutz, Ed.D.

**Superintendent
Grinnell-Newburg School District**

Dr. Janet Stutz has worked in education in varying capacities for nearly 39 years. She served as a teacher, assistant principal, athletic director, principal, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, and superintendent at several area districts in the State of Illinois. She will begin her eighth year as the Superintendent in Grinnell this fall.

Moving to Iowa was one of the best moves in her educational career. She enjoys the many partnerships developed within the community to support the district's students and their learning. Collaboration between Grinnell College, Ahrens Foundation, Cultural Arts Center, AmeriCorps, the Grinnell Education Partnership, and many more have come together to support summer learning, enrichment classes, teachers, music, and cultural awareness. She and her husband have made Grinnell their home and enjoy being a part of the school community. She holds a B.A. from Elmhurst College, a Master's in Educational Leadership (Type 75 Endorsement) from Aurora University and a Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration from Aurora University. She has been an adjunct professor in the Doctoral Program at Aurora University has taught the Facilities and Learning Environments required course for future superintendents for ten years. She has served on many dissertation committees. She has also taught in the Master's Program at the University of St. Francis, specifically Quantitative and Qualitative research and School Community Courses as an adjunct professor.

She has been married to her husband, Kevin, who retired from Kane County as a Lieutenant, for the last 37 years. They have two grown children: Brian, who resides in Lincoln, Nebraska, with his wife Lanie, and Jennifer resides in Madison, Wisconsin, with her three children. Janet and Kevin have a miniature Australian Shepherd, Aussie. Janet enjoys music, and is a singer/songwriter, writes poetry, and enjoys attending sporting events. Her attributes include publications through Hanover Research and the Illinois Association of School Boards. Janet recently completed a collection of poetry and photography pieces to be published later this fall.