

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS – BIOGRAPHIES



Brian Blesi | St. Croix Falls, WI | Active: 2020-Present

Brian Blesi grew up on a small farm near Albertville, Minnesota, the second of five kids. When they weren't working on the farm, he, his brothers, and friends spent their time fishing, exploring, and getting into whatever adventure they could find along the Crow and Mississippi Rivers. Family trips to Taylors Falls made an impression on him early on, and he vowed that one day he would live in the St. Croix River Valley.

After high school, Brian earned a degree in Biology from St. Cloud State University. His college years gave him the opportunity to travel and experience history firsthand, including time in:

- Gloucester, Massachusetts—founded in 1623, just three years after the Mayflower's landing, it is one of the oldest New England settlements and the birthplace of America's fishing industry.
- Philadelphia—where he worked on restoring a 1774 manor house, built just two years before the Declaration of Independence. Through this hands-on experience, he gained a deeper appreciation for colonial craftsmanship and architecture at a time when Philadelphia was the center of the American Revolution.
- Alnwick, England—where he lived in Alnwick Castle, the historic home of the Duke of Northumberland. For over 700 years, the castle was the political and economic hub for the Dukes of Northumberland, where they governed their vast estates and influenced regional affairs. In addition to its rich history, Alnwick Castle is widely recognized as a filming location for Harry Potter, serving as Hogwarts in the first two films.

In 1988, he got his chance to move to the St. Croix Valley when he entered the corporate world with an environmental engineering job in Stillwater. Settling in Marine on St. Croix, he quickly put down roots. By 2001, he and his young family moved to St. Croix Falls, where he became deeply involved in local public service.

Brian was elected to the St. Croix Falls City Council in 2007 and later served three terms as Mayor, beginning in 2012. During his tenure, he helped drive several major projects, including:

- Upgrading wastewater infrastructure by leading efforts to build a new wastewater treatment headworks facility and modernize existing systems to meet updated clean water standards.
- Developing the city's first capital plan, giving the Council and staff a structured approach to equipment replacement and infrastructure projects.
- Cross-training public works staff to reduce overtime costs, improve efficiency, and provide more job security.
- Overseeing the reconstruction of major streets, including deep sanitary sewers, water mains, and storm sewers. The project was strategically timed to align with the city retiring debt and securing new 20-year financing at 1.1% interest.

In 2020, Brian retired from a 32-year corporate career and took on a new entrepreneurial venture. He and his wife opened and operated a fine jewelry store in St. Croix Falls before passing it on to their daughter in 2025. They now represent an American-made fine jewelry line, working with independent jewelers throughout the Midwest.

Today, Brian lives near St. Croix Health, in the heart of the Valley. As a member of the St. Croix Health Foundation Board, he remains committed to the continued growth and well-being of the region.



Alec Mortel | Luck, WI | Active: 2018-Present

Alec Mortel is the General Manager of Lakeland Communications, a critical infrastructure provider and community pillar institution providing essential broadband and voice services to much of Polk County. He believes that volunteering is a vital responsibility and sees giving back as an essential part of a thriving society. In addition to his role with the St. Croix Health Foundation, he serves on the Board of Directors for both the Polk County Economic Development Corporation and the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Foundation. Alec holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Management from the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota. He resides in rural Luck, Wisconsin, with his wife and their three sons.

Fortunate to have a career that allows him to make an impact, Alec is committed to using his expertise to support the St. Croix Health Foundation. He recognizes that meaningful change starts with action, and as the Foundation enters a new chapter, Alec is motivated by its momentum and passionate about its evolution, ensuring that it remains a strong force for community well-being. "This foundation has a long history, and I am excited for what the future has in store as we continue to evolve and pursue our mission."



Joan O'Fallon, APR | Siren, WI | Active: 2022-Present

Joan O'Fallon serves as the director of communications for Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative and is a member of the co-op's senior leadership team. Passionate about the power of connection, she leads efforts to share the cooperative's story and build meaningful relationships with both internal and external audiences.

She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations from the University of South Florida and a master's in strategic communication from the University of Minnesota, where she also teaches as an adjunct professor. Joan has also earned her Accreditation in Public Relations (APR), a mark of distinction in the field.

A proud resident of Siren, Joan feels blessed to serve both her local electric co-op and the St. Croix Health Foundation board—two organizations that make a meaningful difference in the community.



Elizabeth Ebensperger | Chisago City, MN | Active: 2020-Present

A pharmacist by day and cat mom by night, Elizabeth loves supporting her community both in and out of work. She grew up in Balsam Lake, WI, and graduated from Unity High School. After receiving her Bachelor of Science degree in biochemistry from Carroll University, she attended pharmacy school at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Elizabeth is happy to be back in her hometown area, working and giving back to the community that gave so much to her. In her free time, she can be found reading or working in the garden.

As an active member of the Foundation, Elizabeth is especially passionate about its scholarship program, which provides funding for local students pursuing careers in healthcare. She values the opportunity to help future healthcare professionals take their first steps toward meaningful careers. Elizabeth enjoys being involved in the Foundation's mission and looks forward to finding new ways to contribute.



Jeanette Rochford | Dresser, WI | Active: 2021-Present

Mike Rochford | Dresser, WI | Active: 2014-Present

Jeanette Rochford has a strong commitment to service and community engagement. In the 1970s, she contributed to the U.S. space program, wiring rockets for the Space Shuttle Enterprise. A Milltown native, she has always been deeply connected to her community and dedicated to making a meaningful impact.

For nearly 20 years, Jeanette has served as Treasurer for the American Legion Auxiliary in Milltown, helping support veterans and their families. She also spent 18 years working at a quilt shop in St. Croix Falls, where she assisted customers with their projects and fostered a welcoming environment for creativity and connection.

Jeanette is actively involved in the Wisconsin Old West Shootists club, where she helps organize events that bring people together. A testament to her natural skill and competitive spirit, she has earned state champion titles in single-action cowboy action shooting for her age bracket multiple times. She also contributes her talents to fundraisers for the St. Croix Health Foundation and other local initiatives, where she shares her enthusiasm and attention to detail to help make each event a success.

With three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, Jeanette values time with family and enjoys quilt retreats where she can immerse herself in her craft. She believes deeply in the power of giving back, stating, "I like to help; it makes me feel good." Living in Dresser, she remains an active and engaged member of her community.

Mike Rochford has spent his life serving others, whether through emergency medical services, addiction recovery support, or community involvement. Born in California and raised in the Twin Cities, he moved to Dresser, Wisconsin, in 1970 to help out with his family's recently purchased ski resort, Trollhaugen. That same year, he became one of the region's first EMTs, helping to shape the local emergency medical system at a time when most people relied on funeral home services for transport to the hospital. He was part of the community's effort to bring the first ambulance service to the area, a movement that gained momentum with his father as the first person to donate funds toward purchasing an ambulance. His commitment to emergency care has continued for over 50 years, driven by a desire to ensure strong, reliable healthcare services in the community.

Mike is a natural storyteller, and his life is full of experiences that have shaped his outlook. One of the most defining moments came in 1980 when a near-death experience left him with a renewed sense of purpose. That perspective became even more profound in 1984 when he achieved sobriety, a turning point that changed his life in ways he never expected. He went on to work at Hazelden for 25 years as a licensed drug and alcohol counselor, where he helped others navigate their own journeys of recovery. His time there reinforced his belief in patience, resilience, and the ability to change. Mike has remained committed to his own recovery, attending AA meetings every week since 1984.

Outside of his professional life, Mike has a passion for craftsmanship and history. For over 20 years, he has been a dedicated knife maker, blending skill and tradition to create handcrafted pieces. He has a deep appreciation for well-crafted and antique items, including tractors, knives, and collectible and sporting arms—many with unique stories behind them. A longtime participant in cowboy action shooting, he enjoys the sport's combination of precision, history, and camaraderie.

Through his service on the St. Croix Health Foundation Board, Mike remains dedicated to strengthening healthcare access and ensuring that the community continues to thrive.
