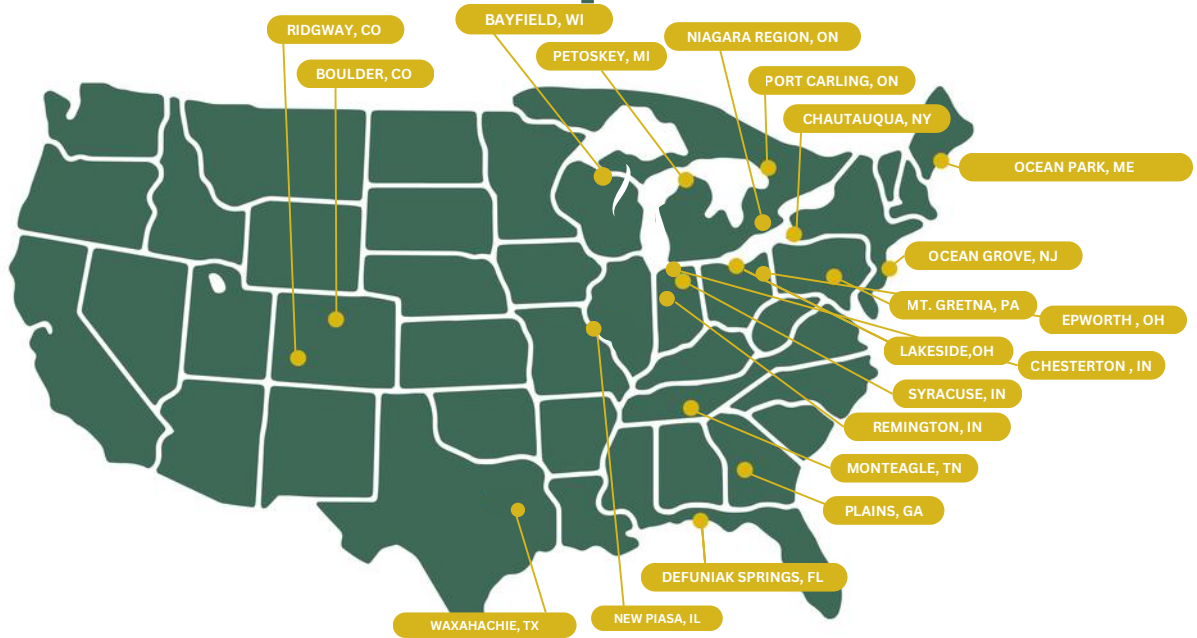


2026 Learning Lab hosted by Chautauqua Wawassee



March 10-13, 2026

Agenda

Directions:

*The Oakwood Resort Hotel, 702 E. Lake View Rd. Syracuse, IN
47 minutes from South Bend International Airport*

For Guest Convenience:

Breakfasts and lunches will be served in the Oakwood in the Morrison-Conklin Conference Rooms)

Questions:

*Gretchen Colon: gcolon@lakesideohio.com 419.202.3740
Michelle Hansen: giving@bayviewassociation.org 616.717.2220
Karen Kromer: karenkroemer66@gmail.com 317.531.9248*

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

*Arrival & Check In at any time.
Dinner/Welcome 6:30 p.m., Oakwood Resort, Pier and Porch
Restaurant-Charles Allen, CEO, Lakeside Chautauqua*

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast (*The Oakwood*)
- 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Housekeeping-Karen Kroemer
- 9:15 a.m. Behind the Scenes: Design Your Chautauqua Program-Michelle Hansen, Director of Donor Relations & Communications, Bay View, & Karyn Torigoe, VP of Programming, Lakeside Chautauqua
- 10:30 a.m. Marketing-Deena DuFour, Digital Social Media Director, & Karen Kroemer-Chautauqua Wawasee
- 12 p.m. Lunch
- 1:15 p.m. Recruiting & Training Your Board-Stephanie Overbey, CEO Kosciusko County Community Foundation
- 2:30 p.m. Fundraising & Branding Fundamentals-Gretchen Colon, VP Fundraising Lakeside Chautauqua
- 3:30 p.m. How to Dialog in Community-Cheryl Thompson, Gulfside Assembly & Charlie Yoost, Lakeside Outreach Coordinator
- 4:30 p.m. Tour of Chapel, 12-year History of Chautauqua Wawasee, Mary Moretto, Chautauqua Wawasee
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner, *The Channel Marker, 5793 Pickwick Drive, Syracuse, IN 46567*

Thursday, March 12, 2026

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Housekeeping
- 9:15 a.m. Teambuilding, the Power of Collaboration-Meg Johnson, CAO, Lakeside Chautauqua
- 10:30 a.m. Top 10 Tips for Thriving Communities-Laura Kunkle, Executive Director, America in Bloom
- 11:30 a.m. America at 250: Why Chautauqua and Camp Meetings Still Matter-Moderator: Charlie Yoost, Lakeside Chautauqua Roundtable
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Best of the Best Roundtable-Kara Chilcutt, Florida Chautauqua
- 2:30 p.m. ZOOM Chautauqua/Camp Meeting History-Doug Strong, Professor at Seattle Pacific University
- 4:00 p.m. Fundraising Best Practices - Gretchen Colon, VP Fundraising Lakeside Chautauqua & Michelle Hansen, Director of Donor Relations, Bay View
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner, *The Sleepy Owl Supper Club, 11374 SR13, Syracuse, IN 46567*

Friday, March 13, 2026

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast & Goodbyes
- Check Out at any time.

Schedule & Presentation Information May Change Slightly

Chautauqua Trail | Learning Lab

March 9-12, 2027

Colorado Chautauqua

Directions: *Boulder, Colorado; 40 miles from the Denver airport*



The Learning Lab – a place to ask questions; time to dialogue; space to construct new ideas; learning experiences; gather information; design a plan; construct the future; create thought-leadership, flourish together.

The **Chautauqua Learning Lab** brings together **staff, board leaders, and key volunteers from across the Trail** for a shared purpose: **strengthening our institutions and the communities we serve.**

Through **workshops, roundtables, and candid conversation**, we learn from one another's experiences—sharing **practical tools, hard-earned wisdom, and fresh ideas**. Together, we explore the questions that matter most: **governance, facilities, programming, engagement, sustainability, crisis response, and envisioning the future** of our historic communities.

In **2027, we gather in Boulder, Colorado**, where Colorado Chautauqua will host this national meeting. With recent experience preparing for large-scale global events such as the Sundance Film Festival, the organization brings valuable insight into **facilities stewardship, environmental sustainability, and year-round vitality**. Expect focused conversations on **infrastructure, adaptive growth, and responsible innovation**—grounded in the traditions that define the Chautauqua movement.

Please note: The cost of attending the 2027 Learning Lab will be significantly more expensive than in previous years, including travel to Colorado and overnight stay. We are working with Colorado Chautauqua now to set pricing and we will provide you with more details by May 1.

The Learning Lab rotates annually, allowing us to experience the **distinct character of each host community** while deepening our collective commitment to collaboration. By learning together, we ensure that the Chautauqua movement not only endures—but **flourishes for generations to come**. We invite you to join colleagues from across the country in Boulder for **meaningful dialogue, renewed connection, and shared leadership**.

**More Information about projected cost to attend
will be available by May 1, 2026**

2027 Chautauqua Trail Annual Meeting New Piasa Chautauqua

Directions: *On the banks of the Mississippi River in Grafton, IL*



Chautauqua Trail | Learning Lab



The Precious American Treasure: America's 250 Anniversary

As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, Americans are reflecting on the traditions, values, and experiences that strengthen the nation. Among the most enduring of these traditions is the Chautauqua movements.

As America approaches its 250th anniversary, camp meetings and Chautauqua communities stand as living reminders that the strength of the nation comes from people gathering, learning from one another, and nurturing their faith.

Former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt famously declared that *"Chautauqua is the most American thing in America."* These movements have transformed our nation into a classroom, a stage, and a place of worship, bringing people together for generations in the United States.

When you step through the entrance of a Chautauqua experience, you step into the heart of an American Treasure.

These cherished communities remain essential to a thriving nation. They are living laboratories where faith deepens, lifelong learning flourishes, creativity is encouraged, and the connections and wisdom that have sustained America for 250 years continue to guide the next 250.

Learning, Connection, and Lake Views at the Chautauqua Learning Lab | March 10 - 13

Leaders from Chautauqua communities across the country gathered March 10-13 for the 2026 Chautauqua Learning Lab, hosted by Chautauqua Wawasee in Syracuse, Indiana. Held at the charming Oakwood Resort on Lake Wawasee, the event brought together representatives from eight Chautauqua organizations spanning Mississippi, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

The Learning Lab began with an inspiring welcome from Charles Allen, CEO of Lakeside Chautauqua, who challenged us to reflect on the deeper purpose of the Chautauqua movement. Charles encouraged us to **center** ourselves in the founding mission of why Chautauqua communities exist. While many of us have family histories tied to these places, he reminded us that each generation must also discover its own personal connection to the mission. When we center ourselves in that purpose, our identity—and our work—becomes clearer.

Learning, Connection, and Lake Views at the Chautauqua Learning Lab

Radical Hospitality & Inspiring Sessions

He spoke about the importance of **centering, connection,** and **continuity**, reminding us that Chautauqua communities do more than gather people for seasonal programs. They carry forward shared values across generations. Charles encouraged the group to think about legacy:

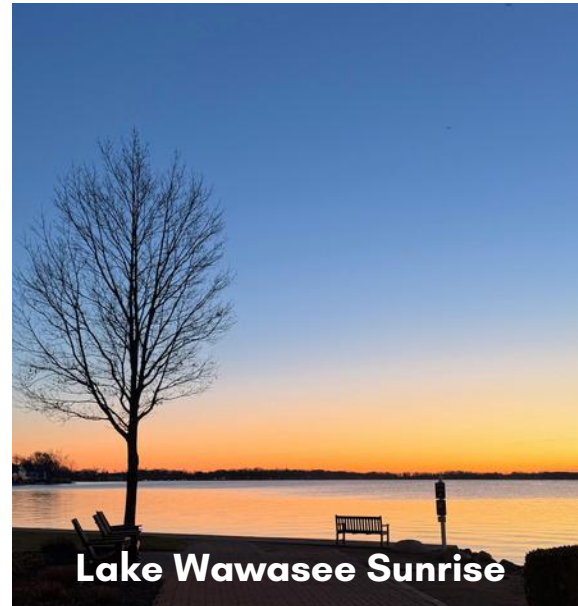
*“Write the vision; make it plain,
so he may run who reads it.”*

Habakkuk 2:2

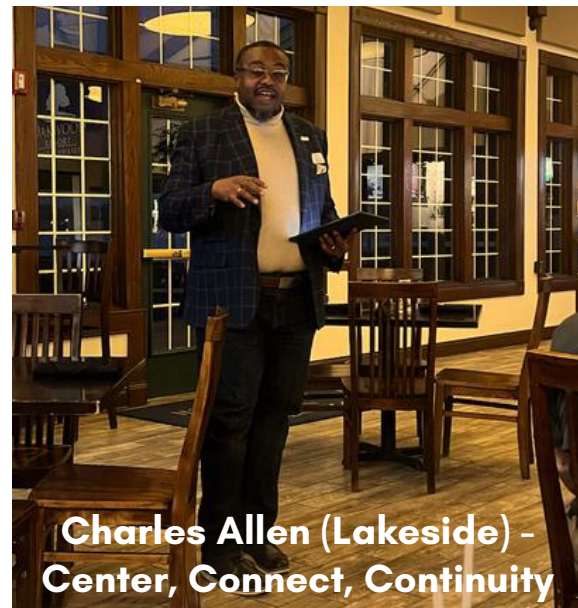
He concluded with a powerful challenge—to think beyond the immediacy of today’s culture and instead focus on the long arc of leadership that carries the Chautauqua movement forward.

The setting was memorable as well. When participants first arrived, the weather was temperate and pleasant, offering sweeping lake views from the resort. Over the next few days, spring storms rolled through with wind and rain, giving everyone a dramatic glimpse of Indiana’s early spring. A few brave participants—including Charlie and Shirley Yost—kept watch on the lake during one particularly intense storm, like seasoned storm watchers.

Inside, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming. The Chautauqua Wawasee team offered remarkable hospitality, greeting guests upon arrival and guiding the group to memorable local dining experiences throughout the week. One highlight was dinner at the Sleepy Owl Supper Club, where the hosts surprised everyone by covering the appetizers—an act that perfectly captured the spirit of generosity and fellowship that defines the Chautauqua movement.



Lake Wawasee Sunrise



**Charles Allen (Lakeside) -
Center, Connect, Continuity**

Radical Hospitality & Warm Welcomes

WELCOME!

CHAUTAUQUA LEARNING LAB GUESTS

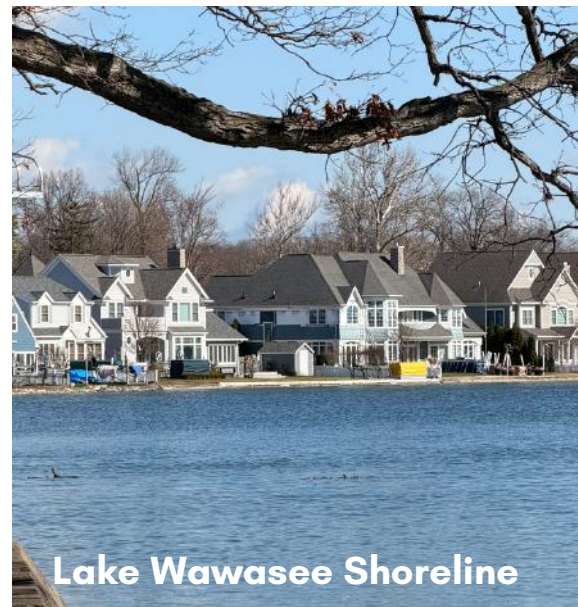
Tonight's Menu:

• **STARTERS**

- Spinach Dip **\$ 17.00**
Served with Oakwood house made chips
- Goat Cheese Bruschetta **\$ 17.00**
Goat cheese, tomato, basil, on a baguette with balsamic glaze
- Bourbon BBQ Ribs **\$ 17.00**
Topped with sesame seeds, served with coleslaw

• **SALADS**

- Oakwood Cobb **\$ 18.00**
Iceberg, bacon, egg, tomato, cucumber, pickled red onion, avocado, and cheddar cheese, served with buttermilk ranch
- Spinach & Strawberry Salad **\$ 17.00**
Spinach, strawberries, grape tomatoes, pecans, avocado, fried goat cheese balls, served with a raspberry vinaigrette



Lake Wawasee Shoreline

Learning, Connection, and Lake Views at the Chautauqua Learning Lab



Mary Moretto (Wawasee) shares about their Chautauqua



The Little Chapel

Participants were also treated to a tour of the Chautauqua Wawasee chapel and heard the story of how the community came to life.

At just 12 years old, Chautauqua Wawasee is the youngest Chautauqua in the movement.

Mary Moretto shared how the organization has grown in both spirit and programming during that short time. Chautauqua Wawasee is a meaningful reminder that the Chautauqua tradition continues to evolve as new generations carry the movement forward.

The Learning Lab itself was filled with meaningful conversation and shared learning. Participants especially appreciated the opportunity to move tables during sessions, allowing them to meet new colleagues and build relationships across the movement. This annual gathering continues to strengthen the bonds between Chautauqua communities while offering new ideas to bring home.



Karen Kroemer (Wawasee) Learning Lab Host Organizer

“Some of the best learning happened in the conversations around the table, especially as we moved seats and met new chautauquans.”

“Networking with other Chautauquas is invaluable.”

Ideas Worth Bringing Home at the Chautauqua Learning Lab

The Learning Lab was designed to spark ideas that participants can carry back to their own Chautauqua communities—and this year's sessions delivered.

One of the most appreciated presentation, offered thanks to Seattle Pacific University Professor of Christianity Doug Strong, explored the history of Camp Meetings and the Chautauqua movement, beginning with the First Great Awakening and continuing through the Second Great Awakening. Participants reflected on how these spiritual and educational traditions shaped the communities we serve today.

Other sessions focused on practical tools and strategies. A presentation on teamwork and collaboration offered helpful approaches for strengthening relationships among staff and guests.

Participants also engaged in hands-on fundraising workshops, where they began developing practical messaging and branding strategies they can continue refining within their home Chautauquas. Thanks to Gretchen Colon and Michelle Hansen, these sessions provided a strong foundation and tools to help participants brand their work, communicate their mission clearly, and approach fundraising with greater confidence.

The marketing session was another highlight. Thanks to Deena Dufour of Chautauqua Wawasee, attendees received a detailed handout with strategies to strengthen digital visibility and storytelling across Chautauqua organizations.

One especially inspiring presentation came from Laura Kunkle, Executive Director of America in Bloom, who shared ideas for building thriving, welcoming communities through thoughtful placemaking, volunteer engagement, and civic pride. Many of her ideas were low-cost, and chautauquas had the opportunity to share ideas that are already working for them. Her presentation sparked immediate action—Syracuse, Indiana was inspired to join America in Bloom as a result of the conversation. Several Chautauqua communities are already part of the America in Bloom network, including Lakeside Chautauqua in Ohio, Colorado Chautauqua in Boulder, and Bay View in Michigan.



"The teambuilding session was especially valuable, reminding us that our coworkers and volunteers deserve the same care and service we offer our guests."

"I thought I knew the story of how the Chautauqua movement began, but the history presentation on camp meetings and Chautauqua opened my eyes to so much more."



Meg Johnson (Lakeside) shares the Power of Collaboration

Ideas Worth Bringing Home at the Chautauqua Learning Lab



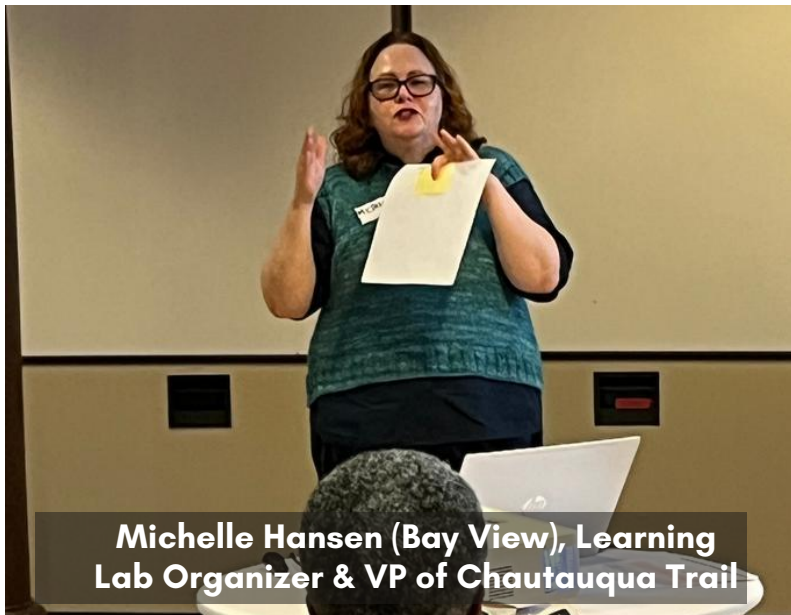
Waterfront Dining & Fellowship

These exchanges are at the heart of the Learning Lab—providing inspiration, building strong inter-chautauqua relationships, practical solutions, and renewed energy for the work ahead.

The Learning Lab continues to demonstrate how much Chautauqua communities can accomplish when we gather, share ideas, and learn from one another.



Gretchen Colon (Lakeside), Learning Lab Organizer & President of Chautauqua Trail



Michelle Hansen (Bay View), Learning Lab Organizer & VP of Chautauqua Trail

