

Self-Sufficiency Program

Locally Grown Scholarship Breakfast

October 9, 2026, 7:30 a.m.

**The Bluffs, Student Union
UW-La Crosse**



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Graduating from Grit to Grace: A Single Mother's Real World Masterclass

Heidi Svec, 2026 Keynote Speaker

Heidi Svec is Director of Development and Strategic Initiatives at New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, where she brings more than a decade of nonprofit leadership experience in fundraising, strategic planning, advocacy, program development, and community collaboration.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Self-Sufficiency Program, Heidi knows firsthand the determination, challenges, and resilience it takes to pursue education while building a better future. Her journey from Self-Sufficiency Program participant to nonprofit leader has shaped her passion for creating opportunities and helping others recognize their own potential.

Outside of work, she can usually be found with a good book, tending to her ever-growing collection of plants, exploring a hiking trail, or searching for a great thrift-store find.

Breakfast Program

Gathering	The Driftless Dulcimers, Musicians Erin Hussey, Cindy Selin, Beth Sullivan, Gwyn Calvetti
Welcome	Marie Moeller, Dean of the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities
Gratitude	Holly Larsen, SSP Director
Music	<i>Skyscraper</i> By Demi Lovato, Performed by Zoe Gibson
Inspiration	Heidi Svee – “Graduating from Grit to Grace: A Single Mother’s Real-World Masterclass”
Celebration	The Future of SSP, Opportunity to Support, Scholarships

Thank you to the entire staff of the UWL University Centers, Campus Dining and Catering Services.



SSP is a community engagement program of the Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Making College Possible

Written by: Kjerstin Lang for Campus Connection, Posted 1:21 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18, 2026

"Everyone wants to make a better life for themselves. SSP is such a good place to start doing that. We give you tools to help you grow."

New opportunity: earn one college credit for free

This spring, SSP is offering participants the opportunity to earn one college credit for free by participating in the program – a change Holly Larsen hopes will make the program even more appealing while giving participants a chance to take an early step toward a college degree. By enrolling as UWL students, SSP participants also gain access to student resources that were previously unavailable to them, including bus passes and UWL Student Support Services. The program is open to adults who are considering college, whether they plan to attend UWL or another institution.

Larsen has been taking that message into the community, attending events such as the Ho-Chunk Family Healing Camp and back-to-school events to talk with prospective participants about SSP and the new college-credit opportunity. She's been encouraged by the response. "I'm working to change people's ideas of how attainable higher ed is, and I like being able to tell people that there is something to support them," she says.

Turning education into action

Larsen grew up in Sparta and earned a bachelor's degree from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota, before earning a master's degree from the University of Brighton in England. Her education helped shape her understanding of systems of inequality and her desire to work toward greater access and opportunity.

"It comes down to knowing that the world is systemically set up against certain people – the poor, people of color, anyone who is a gender minority," Larsen says. "The world is not set up for people like that, and that is unfortunate, to say the least."

She keeps a quote with her that reflects her approach to these issues: "Educated women have a right and responsibility to lead and influence for a more just society."

"This role is all about taking action – preparing people who want to make a change in their life and to do it in a way that helps them be educated and prepared."

A heartfelt thank you to all our donors who help turn dreams into degrees!

We are grateful to the visionaries who created the Locally Grown Scholarship Fund and all who have given so generously over the years. Each donation, referral, encouragement, and advocacy for college accessibility matters more than you know!

We appreciate every gift and every giver. Every donation provides help, builds hope, and warms hearts. Your generosity inspires and encourages us. Thank you.

A special note of gratitude to Ron and Jane Rada who established matches for gifts through *One Day for UWL*. Thank you!

We are grateful to our SSP Advisory Board for their commitment and support

Jan Eriksen, retiring fall 2026
D.A. Ferguson, Honorary
Susanne Koehler, retiring fall 2026
Sandi Krajewski
Betty Kruck

Sue Lee
Barbara Pollack
Joan Schoenfeld
Melissa Baca
Darlene Geiger

Thank you to our 2026 Breakfast Sponsors



New Director, Big Changes, & Heartfelt Gratitude

I want to sincerely thank everyone who has continued to support this exceptional program. You have shown your determination to help change lives of your fellow community members time and time again. It is an exciting time that SSP participants will now be getting [perhaps their first] college credit – starting a journey of education and positive change for themselves and their families.

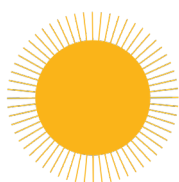
On behalf of SSP, our advisory board, our students, and RGSS, thank you.

Community strength is more important than ever. We must take care of each other, be good neighbors, and know that we succeed only when all of us succeed.

“Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.”

-bell hooks

With hope,
Holly Larsen, SSP Director



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UW-La Crosse, RGSS 4300 Centennial Hall,
1725 State Street | La Crosse, WI 54601

www.uwlax.edu/ssp

Contact: hlarsen2@uwlax.edu