

# PLHS secretary retires after 32 years

**By Travis Grimler**  
Echo Journal

PEQUOT LAKES — Barb Wallace, of Pequot Lakes, is quite a ways from where she started in Winamac, Indiana. The Pequot Lakes High School secretary for the past 32 years retired Thursday, March 31.

Wallace grew up in the Indiana town where she had a fairly typical life with two brothers who were five and six years older than her, so after a while it was just her and her parents.

She made friends in town, attended sporting events and when old enough she worked at the local movie theater.

“That was a good job for me, because you could see who was going out with who by who went to the movies together,” Wallace said. “And it was the ‘70s so we would just drive up and down on the main highway. That was a lot of fun.”

She had lots of friends, and on a few occasions she was invited to go on a vacation with friends.

“They had a cabin on Boy Lake (in Longville) and I got to go on vacation with them a few years,” Wallace said. “I had so much fun. That would have been in my early teenage years. I always said after that I was going to someday live in the cities and have a cabin on the lake up north.”

In 10th grade Wallace was in band, playing the clarinet, when she caught the eye of a trombone player, an 11th grader named Brad Wallace from the next town over. Before long they got to know each other and started dating. They were together from then on.

After high school they both attended Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She took

## LAKE COUNTRY FACES

a year of accounting and business classes before transferring to a business college in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where she completed another year. After that they moved around for a while. Her husband worked for Chi-Chi’s and they transferred him from town to town, including around Oklahoma, Chicago and the Twin Cities.

Eventually, her husband’s connections led them to northern Minnesota. As a child, he had vacationed in Grand Rapids regularly, and his parents and three younger brothers had moved to the Brainerd lakes area. In 1985, one of his brothers was working at Norway Ridge Supper Club in Ideal Township. They put in a good word for him and the couple fulfilled their shared dream of living in the lakes area.

“I worked at Breezy Point for about four years and then I saw there was an opening at the school,” Wallace said. “I had two young children. What draws a lot of people to jobs at the school is that their schedule is going to match their children’s school schedule. That’s why I was interested in applying for that position.”

During that time, her husband moved around a bit, including working in real estate.

The school is where Wallace remained until Thursday, March 31, when she officially retired. She initially planned to retire once she qualified for full Social Security benefits, but her husband suffered



Contributed / Brad Wallace  
Barb Wallace was surprised at the size of the retirement party that awaited her Friday at the Pequot Lakes American Legion.

a stroke and she decided to retire a year early so she could be with him as he recovers.

“He’s doing better every day, but he shouldn’t be home by himself,” she said.

When Wallace first started with the school she was the only person in the office.

“I did attendance and I was the principal’s secretary. Accounting never entered into it after that,” she said. “But it was fun. I enjoyed it.”

A lot changed during her years with the district. Eventually, her duties involved almost more interaction with teachers, administrators and parents than it did students, but she still met many of the kids.

“I did get to know some, especially those who were in

the office,” Wallace said. “The students that didn’t behave as well as others I got to see more often because they got sent to the principal’s office when they got in trouble.”

The building also changed. When she was first with the district, the office was near the current auditorium.

“You can’t even tell there was an office where it was,” Wallace said.

She also got to see the science wing of the building when it was new and watched as the district constructed the athletic center.

“The school has grown so much since I started,” Wallace said. “I would say we graduated 50–60 students in the early ‘90s and now it’s an average 120–125.”

On her last day they had a special lunch in the office to celebrate her years with the district, and on Friday, April 1, her husband threw her a retirement party at the Pequot Lakes American Legion. She knew they were celebrating, but didn’t expect the scope.

“It was awesome,” Wallace said. “I didn’t expect anything like that.”

The party included fond farewells from coworkers, a large cake and songs sung by her husband and another singer. Her family came, including a brother from Indiana and his wife.

“I’m going to miss the people,” Wallace said. “I’m going to miss the adults I worked with and the kids. They keep the place going. I enjoyed the job. It makes it a happy place to be because of the people you work with.”

Wallace doesn’t have much for hobbies currently, but she’s looking into how to spend her free time. For the time being she’s considering taking up gardening. In a year she might consider part-time work once her husband’s recovery is more complete.

She might spend more time with her son, his wife and their two kids who live only a short distance away, as well as with her daughter, who lives with her husband and two kids in Andover. She’s still in the planning stages.

“My friends and family who have retired have said just pick out a little project and get that done,” Wallace said. “Don’t spend all night and day on it, just do it little by little to get it where you want it to be.”

Travis Grimler is a staff writer for the Pineandlakes Echo Journal weekly newspaper in Pequot Lakes/Pine River. He may be reached at 218-855-5853 or travis.grimler@pineandlakes.com.



Photos by Dan Determan / Echo Journal  
From left are Miss Nisswa Madeline Ryan, Miss Congeniality Alexis Shaw and First Princess Brooke Krivich. All were crowned at the 50th annual scholarship pageant Saturday at Nisswa Elementary School.

## RYAN

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Outgoing royalty at the pageant included 2021 Miss Nisswa Samantha Jackson, 2021 Princess Carsyn Krassa and 2021 Miss Congeniality Sonja Palmer, as well as reigning Little Miss Nisswas Lucy Smith, Charlotte Halvorson and Olivia Waagmeester.

The event was emceed by Brainerd native and 2014 Miss Minnesota Savannah Cole.



For her talent, Pequot Lakes senior Madeline Ryan sang “Momma’s Song” by Carrie Underwood during the 50th annual Miss Nisswa Scholarship Pageant on Saturday.

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## Jenkins woman honored on 10-year anniversary of Outstanding Teen award

CHASKA — Bailey Wachholz (Landecker) was recently honored on the 10-year anniversary of her crowning as Miss Minnesota Outstanding Teen in March 2012.

Wachholz ran on the platform/social impact statement titled “Alzheimer’s Through the Eyes of a Child.” She traveled across Minnesota educating children and young adults about the disease that took her father’s life in 2015, serving as an ambassador for the MMOT scholarship program and the Alzheimer’s Association.

Wachholz was recognized during the 2022 Miss Minnesota Outstanding Teen competition in Chaska.

“That moment feels like it was both yesterday and an eternity ago,” Wachholz said.

Wachholz now lives in Jenkins with her husband, Luke Landecker, and their 1-year-old son, Berk, and their spunky puppy, Lucy.



Contributed / Pam Poston  
Bailey Wachholz (Landecker) reflects on her 2012 Miss Minnesota Outstanding Teen award 10 years later on March 31.

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