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~ A year-round book festival ~

HAPPY 15TH ANNIVERSARY!



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS AND 290+ AUTHORS!

NWS SUMMER SEASON 2025

Jocelyn Benson • Lieutenant Kegan Gill

Adriana Trigiani • Katie Yee • Robin Wall Kimmerer

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their books to Traverse City
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inclusive & engaging.



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(231) 486-6868 • office@nwstc.org
NationalWritersSeries.org

TICKET INFORMATION

City Opera House Box Office
106 E. Front Street Traverse City, MI 49684
(231) 941-8082, ext. 201
CityOperaHouse.org

Program guide note: Author photos and book descriptions are generally provided by the authors' publishers.



ART IS AN EXPRESSION OF JOY & AWE.

~ DAVID MAMET

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organizations that infuse
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Ward & Mary Bevans Gillett

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BECOME A FRIEND OF NWS

The National Writers Series is best known for bringing great authors to the City Opera House, which has helped make Traverse City a cultural hotspot of the North. Our Raising Writers program supporting young writers provides **FREE** creative writing classes, poetry workshops, and Battle of the Books, a fun reading incentive program. In addition we award \$8,000 a year in scholarships to college-bound students. We invite you to become a Friend of NWS and help support all these endeavors. **THANK YOU!**

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP - \$50/year

- Purchase up to two (2) tickets/per event during advance purchase weeks

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP - \$100/year

- Purchase up to four (4) tickets/per event during advance purchase weeks

To become a friend, please go to **NationalWritersSeries.org**,
call 231-486-6868, or mail a check made out to the

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WELCOME BOOK LOVERS!

We are well into our **15th Anniversary** year, and what fun we've had already! We've come a long way. Back in 2010, the former NWS executive director held staff meetings above a bakery and kept the file folders in her garage. Even today, our office is humble, but, hey, we get our work done!

Speaking of frugality, I wanted to mention our **Book Champion** program in case you haven't heard of it. As you know, we sometimes bundle tickets with a book now, which has more than doubled our normal ticket prices of \$17 and \$27, which have held steady. Yet we understand book sales are monumentally important to touring authors who love being onstage, but also truly need help to sell books. Still, we want to keep our events accessible for everyone. If there is any reason you don't want to include a book in your ticket order, in-person or virtual, please type in the code of **"BookChampion"** (one word) and a generous donor will pay

for your book. If you'd like to donate said book, please email Hanna at operations@nwstc.org and let her know.

With that out of the way, let's talk about the exciting summer. **Jocelyn Benson, Michigan's Secretary of State**, kicks it off with her eye-opening memoir, **"The Purposeful Warrior."** One of her jobs after graduating from Harvard Law School was serving as the law school dean at Wayne State University. She vowed to raise the school's ranking from the bottom into the top fifty in the nation and was making swift headway, when the university's budget director asked her out for a drink to discuss her budget request. Then came the invite to a Tigers' game and incessant texting, including taking a secret photo of her in the hallway, followed by a text: "I'm watching you." He told her if she reported on his behavior, he'd cut her law school budget—by a lot. The last straw came in a text inviting her to run in a naked 5K road race with him.



JOCELYN BENSON



KEGAN GILL



ADRIANA TRIGIANI

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF GREAT CONVERSATIONS!

Time to speak out, Benson decided, and she did. The next day, the budget director slashed \$500,000 in scholarship funds, half the budget. She complained to her superiors with full documentation, but they did nothing.

Still, out of that experience, she learned how to be gutsy. And fearlessness would come in handy during the pandemic when President Trump wrongly accused her of mailing ballots to 7.7 million Michiganders. She immediately stood her ground and called him on his falsehood. He deleted his tweet several hours later. You will love Benson's stories and her encouragement to become a purposeful warrior yourself!

Please check out our entire wonderful schedule this summer, which includes an NWS favorite, **Adriana Trigiani**,

Katie Yee, a debut author with a highly anticipated novel, local author **Kegan Gill** with a jaw-dropping survival story, and **Robin Wall Kimmerer**, who speaks truth about humans and their duties to the Earth.

When we went to press, we still hadn't scheduled late August, when we will partner with Traverse City Tourism for their debut Food and Wine Festival. We are on the hunt for great chefs/cookbook authors and plan to announce our picks soon. Stay tuned and stay happy!

With warmest regards and gratitude,



**NWS Executive
Director and
Co-founder**



OUR MISSION

The National Writers Series of Traverse City is a nonprofit organization dedicated to holding great conversations with today's best authors and building the reading and writing skills of youth.



For tickets visit NationalWritersSeries.org

TODAY'S READERS - TOMORROW'S LEADERS



NWS RAISING WRITERS DOES IT ALL – from bringing mainstage authors to the classroom, encouraging students to read their work at author events, participating in the Battle of the Books program and making wonderful memories, publishing student work in a Poetry Collection and Literary Journal, to getting kids to read all KINDS of books!

WE ARE RAISING WRITERS!

My first year as the education director for the National Writers Series has flown by. Each joyful moment sits as its own bookmark. There was the sight of 300 kids cheering at our Battle of the Books. And our scholarship winners beaming as they received their awards. And the emails I received from high schoolers saying they were accepted into the college of their choice and thanking me for helping them with their application essays. There was the publication of our Literary Journal, compiling the stellar work of over 70 students in 320 pages. And finally, the many memories of teaching our elementary Poetry Workshops, where more than 200 elementary schoolers wrote poems that expressed their internal lives.

These programs give me tremendous hope. My wish is that you feel this too. You'll get a sense of it when you read the breathtaking poem written by Mya Lewis, a remarkable fifth-grade poet on page 11 in this program guide.

And you give me tremendous hope as well. Your financial support and attendance at our author events help make this good work possible. All of the proceeds from our ticket sales are donated back to our Raising Writers program. As you're enjoying one of our fabulous author events this summer, you're not just expanding your own mind and capacity for empathy, you're expanding the horizons of a young writer.

The free classes you've helped to provide this summer are:

- **A Whale of a Tale:** Writing a Tall Tale for elementary schoolers
- **The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of:** Screenwriting to Unlock Your Story for middle schoolers



Gracie Gregory reads her *Fractured Fairytale* at the City Opera House.

- **Gumshoe, Sleuth, Private Eye:** Create a Mystery Detective for middle schoolers
- **Stories on Stage!** From Anecdote to Art Form for high schoolers
- **College Admission Essay Writing** for high school juniors and seniors

Registration for these classes is open. I'm also thrilled to announce that we are also offering our first adult class in short story writing.

If you are interested in volunteering or supporting young writers, please contact me at education@nwstc.org. To register for a class, visit "Raising Writers" on our website.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Audrey".

Audrey Irontree
NWS Education Director



NWS 2025 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS



NWS 2025 Scholarship winners are pictured here with author Alua Arthur, on May 1 at the City Opera House. The winners are (from left to right) Keira Wesley, Lola Russell, Elyana Marschner, Katelyn Popp, author Alua Arthur, Annie Stempin, Elijah Flechter, Tess Tarchak-Hiss, and Sam Milks.

Congratulations to this year's outstanding scholarship winners! We are thrilled to recognize the fantastic talent of our area youth and so proud to see their accomplishments. This year the National Writers Series in partnership with the Grand Traverse Regional Community awarded scholarships to eight students. In addition, each first-place winner will receive a MacBook Air, compliments of Bill Unger of Northguard Technology Group! For more scholarship details, visit nationalwritersseries.org under Raising Writers.

Leslie Lee Nonfiction Scholarship

1st place (\$1,000):

KATELYN POPP

Junior/TC West Senior High

Dying Flowers

2nd place (\$500):

ELYANA MARSCHNER,

Senior/TC West Senior High

Behind Closed Doors

Robert & Marcy Branski Poetry Scholarship

1st place (\$1,000):

LOLA RUSSELL, Senior/Greenspire High

School and North Ed Writers Studio

Anti-Ode to Starbucks Drive-Thrus

2nd place (\$500):

ELIJAH FLECHTER,

Senior/TC West Senior High

Palimpsest

William Montgomery Fiction Scholarship

1st place (\$1,000):

ANNIE STEMPIN

Senior/TC West Senior High

Drowning in the Deep

2nd place (\$500):

SAM MILKS, Senior/TC West Senior

High and North Ed Writers Studio

Rabbit Trap

Judith Lang Journalism Scholarship

1st place (\$1,000):

TESS TARCHAK-HISS

Junior/TC West Senior High

Fostering New Female Spaces on the Net

2nd place (\$500):

KEIRA WESLEY

Senior/TC Central High

Kathy Kozachenko: Local Legend and Unspoken Queer Hero

GRIEF (AND HOPE.)

By Mya Lewis

Grief is a thing no one wants to experience.

Even if it's inevitable.

Grief grows, like a vine, it keeps going.

Some days it's big,
other days it feels like it's gone.

But it never really is.

Hope is a thing everyone wants to experience,

Even if our world has so little.

Hope is like five suns, beaming on your face.

Some days it's large, like you're going to explode

other days you feel defeated,
like it's gone.

But it never really is.

Nothing's really gone -

one day you'll think it is;

Until it finds you on a sunny street -

in the middle of the day.



MYA LEWIS

5th Grader/

Traverse Heights

Elementary School



NWS Poetry Workshop students enjoy reading their work aloud to classmates.

**“Activism is my
rent for living
on the planet.”**

ALICE WALKER

**Proud to support the National Writers Series
and the Jocelyn Benson event**

**Lola Jackson & Dilys Tosteson García
"Community Building" Author Conversations**

“

The future is ours to win.
But to get there we can't
just stand still.

~ Barack Obama

”

LITERARY UNDERWRITER

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sponsorship a privilege."**



JUNE 3, 7PM • CITY OPERA HOUSE + LIVESTREAMED

JOCELYN BENSON

Supported by Dilys Tosteson Garcia & Lola Jackson
"Community Building" Author Conversations

Fighting for what's right

We are honored to welcome Jocelyn Benson, Michigan's Secretary of State and one of the nation's most courageous defenders of democracy, to discuss her powerful and inspiring new book, *The Purposeful Warrior*.

Drawing from her own story and those of other bold changemakers, Benson shows that even in moments of fear, frustration, or despair, we have the power to act with integrity, grit, and grace.

Join us for an unforgettable evening with a national leader whose story will leave you inspired to lead with purpose, speak up with courage, and fight for a better future.



Guest host is Doug Stanton, *New York Times* bestselling author and NWS co-founder.

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Event Sponsors: **Traverse Indivisible**
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Literary Underwriter: **A Generous NWS Friend**
Livestream Underwriter: **Nancy Davy**



**Together we can do so much
to make our area
a better place for everyone!**

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traverseindivisible@gmail.com

Leelanau Indivisible
leelanauindivisible.com
leelanauindivisible2022@gmail.com

SENSORY-FRIENDLY ROOM

The City Opera House and the National Writers Series have joined forces to create a sensory-friendly space for guests who require a soothing and comfortable environment during our author events.

Please see a National Writers Series volunteer for assistance.

NWS works with The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards as a designated Certified Autism Center™ (CAC).



“The National Writers Series is one of a kind - a chance for readers and writers to talk and tell stories and laugh together, surrounded by beauty and a pervasive and energizing goodwill. I enjoyed every moment of my visit and would do it again tomorrow.”

~ Leif Enger, #1 New York
Times bestselling author

Summertime
THE RIDING
IS EASY
WITH AN
EBIKE!



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LT. KEGAN GILL

Overcoming immense odds

National Writers Series presents Lt. Kegan “SMURF” Gill, a decorated U.S. Navy fighter pilot, ultra-endurance athlete, and motivational speaker, to discuss his extraordinary debut memoir, ***Phoenix Revival: The Aftermath of Naval Aviation’s Fastest Ejection.***

During a dogfight training exercise, Lt. Gill was forced to eject from his F/A-18E Super Hornet at a speed of 695 miles per hour. It was the fastest survived ejection in naval aviation history. The explosion shattered his body, and he woke up in a hospital with catastrophic injuries.

Kegan shares his journey from the cockpit to the edge of survival—and back again—with courage, vulnerability, and hope.



Guest host Ron Jolly is an award-winning journalist, author, and voice in northern Michigan media for over three decades.

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ADRIANA TRIGIANI

Paying homage to family roots

The National Writers Series welcomes *New York Times* bestselling author Adriana Trigiani to the City Opera House stage. She will discuss her fresh new novel, *The View From Lake Como*, a contemporary, intergenerational must-read. It is everything an immersive novel should be—funny and heart-wrenching, with perfectly imperfect characters that readers will feel deeply connected to.

With its vivid depiction of the complexities of familial relationships, the story is a love letter to big Italian American families, Old World roots, and daughters who learn to live life on their own terms. It's for anyone who finally wants to start living the life they've always dreamed of.



Guest host is Doug Stanton, *New York Times* bestselling author and NWS co-founder.

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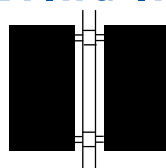
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KATIE YEE

Spinning tragedy into comedy

The National Writers Series is thrilled to welcome Katie Yee, a bold new voice in literary fiction, to discuss her darkly funny and deeply moving debut novel, ***Maggie; Or, A Man and a Woman Walk Into a Bar***.

In this wry exploration of grief, heart-break, and healing, a Chinese American woman's world falls apart in a single night—first learning her husband is having an affair with a woman named Maggie, then receiving a breast cancer diagnosis shortly after. In a defiant twist, she names her tumor Maggie, too.

Told in inventive fragments, Maggie follows its narrator as she navigates motherhood, identity, and survival.



Guest host Ellie Katz works as an environmental and science reporter for Interlochen Public Radio.

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Livestream Underwriter: Nancy Davy



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celebrating the power of storytelling and culture.**



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ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

Supported by Karen & Clark Bunting
"Natural Wonders" Author Conversations

A bold and inspiring vision

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is also the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Serviceberry* and *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

Come hear about Robin's message of a "gift economy," a shift from scarcity toward abundance, much like the serviceberry that generously distributes its fruit to the ecosystem around it. She writes about humanity's inextricable relationship to the planet and the joy of receiving nature's gifts and giving back to the Earth with thanks.

Guest host is Matthew L.M. Fletcher,
Professor of Law and Professor of American



Culture at the University of Michigan.

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Event Sponsor: The Herrington-Fitch Family
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Livestream Underwriter: Nancy Davy

“Only if we understand, can
we care. Only if we care, we
will help. Only if we help,
we shall be saved.”

JANE GOODALL

Proud to support the National Writers Series
and the Robin Wall Kimmerer event

Karen & Clark Bunting "Natural Wonders" Author Conversations

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NWS WINTER / SPRING SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



A LOOK BACK

- 1 NWS board member Isiah Smith on stage with author Jonathan Eig.
- 2 Miriam Pico sings her heart out.
- 3 Jennifer Weiner signing lots of books.
- 4 Alua Arthur & Dana Black talk life & death.
- 5 Traverse Indivisible / Leelanau Indivisible information table.
- 6 Author Leif Enger & guest host Doug Stanton.
- 7 Cheers for volunteers!
- 8 *The Griffin Sisters* themed cookie.
- 9 Alua Arthur book fans!
- 10 Jacki Lyden & Geraldine Brooks.



RUTH WARE



CHASTEN BUTTIGIEG



SHELBY VAN PELT

LOOK WHO'S BEEN HERE!

2009

Elmore Leonard
Peter Leonard
Doug Stanton

2010

Amy Alkon
Rhoda Janzen
Tom Brokaw
Thomas Lynch
Mary Karr
Audrey Niffenegger
Mario Batali
James Bradley
Peter Matthiessen
Karl Marlantes

2011

Janet Leahy /
Lisa Albert
Sara Brokaw
Mitch Albom
Paula McLain
Bonnie Jo
Campbell/
Jack Driscoll/
Michael Zadoorian
Roy Blount, Jr.
Sebastian Junger
Richard Ford
Elmore Leonard
Daniel Silva
Gretchen Holt Witt
Tom Perrotta
Jeffrey Eugenides
David Sedaris
Chuck Klosterman

2012

Vince Gilligan
Jodi Picoult
Geraldine Brooks
Michael Sandel
Anna Quindlen
Natalie Bakopoulos
Janet Evanovich
Lee Child
Maggie Stiefvater
Ayaan Hirsi Ali
Benjamin Busch
Michael Connelly

2013

Chip Johannessen
Buzz Bissinger
Blaine Harden
Gillian Flynn
Nathaniel Philbrick
Jason Matthews
Colum McCann
Temple Grandin
Mitch Albom
Benjamin Percy
Michael Paterniti
Jamie Ford
David Finkel
Nikki Giovanni
Sara Paretsky

2014

Kelly Corrigan
George Packer
Steve Luxenberg
Anchee Min
Emily Giffin

Daniel James
Brown
Karin Slaughter
Greg Holmes/
Katherine Roth
Diana Gabaldon
A.J. Baime/
Bryce Hoffman
Nancy Horan
Sophie Kinsella
Rita Mae Brown
Brian Castner/
Brian Turner

2015

Tess Gerritsen
Garth Stein
Debbie Macomber
Jeff Shaara
Harlan Coben
Hampton Sides
Mardi Link
Vanessa
Diffenbaugh
Ben Sidran
Bonnie Jo Campbell
Paula McLain
Sarah Chayes
Susan Casey
John U. Bacon

2016

James Rollins
James Tobin
Tui Sutherland
Laurie R. King
Brian Castner

David Ebershoff
Lucy Kalanithi
Jim & Lynn Kouf
Paola Gianturco
David Maraniss
Margaret Atwood
Ann Patchett
Jodi Picoult
Kyle Mills
Daniel Bergner

2017

John Donvan
Beth Macy
Gordon Korman
Greg Iles
Eric Fair
Elizabeth Strout
Andrea Petersen
Mary Roach
Julia Glass
W. Bruce Cameron
Sarah Shoemaker
Doug Stanton
Alice Waters
Terry McDonell
Dan Gerber
Murray Howe
Sebastian Junger/
Phil Caputo

2018

Doug Stanton
Peter Heller
Nikki Giovanni
Peter Brown
Anna Quindlen

Drew Philp
Eileen McNamara
Samantha Irby
David Grann
Richard Russo
Adriana Trigiani
Annie Spence
Beth Macy
Mona Hanna-
Attisha
Joe Hill
Amy Goldstein
Tayari Jones
Alice Walker
Richard Clarke
John U. Bacon

2019

Jen Sincero
Tommy Tomlinson
Keith Gave
Grace Lin
Lisa Scottoline
Elizabeth Berg/
Elizabeth Letts/
Lynne Olson
Marie Benedict
Daniel Pink
Bryan Gruley
Steve Hamilton
Douglas Brinkley
Tanya Anne Crosby
Karl Marlantes
David Maraniss
Aarti Shahani
Randall Sullivan
Susan Orlean

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS & 290+ AUTHORS!

Mitch Albom
Nelson & Alex
Demille

2020

Nicholas Kristof/
Sheryl Wudunn
Steve Luxenberg
Peter Heller
Terry McMillan
Bob Giles
Scott Turov
Elaine Weiss
William Kent
Krueger
David Blight
Miles Harvey
Brad Thor
Karen Dionne
Molly Wizenberg
Susan Goldberg
Chasten Buttigieg
Ruth Ware
Yaa Gyasi
Kate Walbert
Christopher Haugh
& Jordan Blashek
Alice Hoffman
Larissa Fasthose
Albert Woodfox

2021

Dwight Garner
Alan Lightman
Martha Teichner
Diane Rehm
Shelley Pearsall
Imbolo Mbue
Chris Bohjalian
Karla Cornejo
Villavicencio
Rochelle Riley
Mary Doria Russell
Robin Wall
Kimmerer
Emily Henry
Megan Miranda
Dax-Devlon Ross
Susie Yang
John U. Bacon
Pam Houston
Afghanistan Today
International Panel
Mary Roach

Anthony Doerr
Alex Michaelides
Joshua Prager
Jason Reynolds
Omar El Akkad
Angeline Boulley

2022

Daniel Lieberman
Michael Schur
Honorée Fanonne
Jeffers
Vanessa Riley
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Jack Cheng
Ellen Airgood
Brad Meltzer
Joy Harjo
George Saunders
Paul Holes
Daniel Bergner
Angie Morgan
Jerry Dennis /
Dave Dempsey
Benjamin Gilmer
Fredrik Backman
Margo Price
David Sedaris
Alice Wong /
Stephanie Foo
Pete Souza
Anna Quindlen

2023

Keith Gave/
Tim Rappleye
Nina Totenberg
Alvin Hall
Dan Egan
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- NWS proudly broadcasts select author events on IPR and YouTube, and makes them available to public radio stations around the country.
- We are honored to have awarded \$78,000 in scholarships to 54 college-bound students in partnership with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation.
- We've hosted 290 author events for onstage conversations over the past 15 years.
- Our Raising Writers program engages some 1,000 students each year from a six-county area and beyond.
- Every year dozens of teams are engaged in a creative and fun Battle of the Books. Fourth- and fifth-graders enjoy reading and being quizzed on eight books.
- Each spring, we host poetry workshops at Traverse Heights and Blair elementary schools. Last year we added Courtade and Cherry Knoll elementary plus Manistee County.
- NWS staff are all certified in autism training, and Traverse City is now a Certified Autism Destination by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards.
- We publish an annual *Literary Journal* of student writing from our Raising Writers programs, including poetry workshops, creative writing classes, and more. You can find it at Horizon Books and the NWS website.
- Co-founder Doug Stanton a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, is a Stephen E. Ambrose Oral History Award winner and past Michiganian of the Year.
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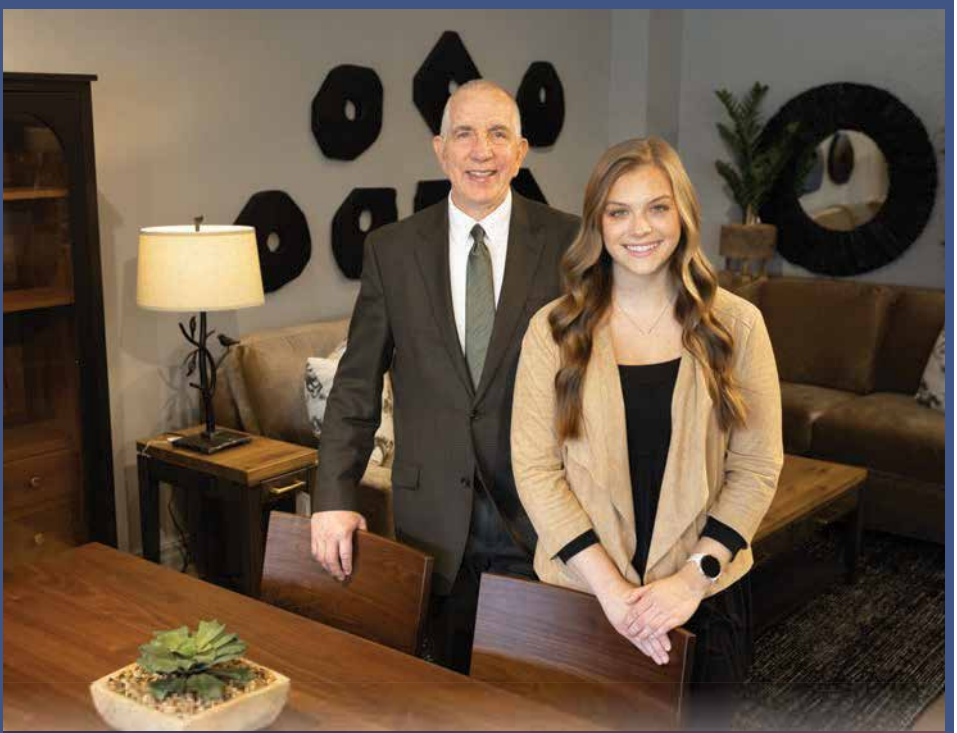
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