



MWF News

**Midwest Federation
of Mineralogical and Geological Societies**

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**Member of the American Federation of
Mineralogical Societies**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Cheryl Neary, MWF President

Alice Morse Earle, an American historian, wrote, "Every day may not be good, but there's something good in every day." How true! There are some days that you feel are better than others. Perhaps you weren't feeling great or work was too crazy or something happened in your home – or perhaps it was the weather.

The extreme cold weather that most of us endured in February was due to a polar vortex, which sent frigid air from the Arctic into the northern plains and upper Midwest southward to the Gulf Coast. The wind chills brought temperatures to the minus 30s. One morning, nearly 87% of the contiguous US had temperatures below freezing.

So you may have been stuck in your home. That may not have been too good for you, but then again perhaps you had the time to read a book, catch up on a hobby, or just enjoy the day doing nothing! If so, the not-so-good day had something good in it! Personally I

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CONVENTION PLANS ARE UPDATED

A few changes have been made to the events occurring at the Midwest Federation's convention in Lincoln, Nebraska.

No biggies! It's still being held at the Sandhills Global Event Center at 84th and Havelock; the field trip to collect fishtail selenite and fossils will still be on Thursday, April 3rd; the meet-and-greet will still be Friday the 4th; meetings and the Awards Banquet will still be held on Saturday the 5th; the Lincoln Gem & Mineral Club's annual show will still be held on Saturday and Sunday, the 5th and 6th. The changes are just tweaks.

The people wanting to go on the field trip will meet in Parking Lot A of the Event Center, next to the Ag Society Hall. The trip will depart PROMPTLY at noon, so being there before noon will be a good idea.

The place of the meet-and-greet has been changed. Now it, too, will be held at the Event Center, specifically in the Ag Society Hall where the show is being held. Refreshments will be provided, and mineral expert Eric Fritsch will present a program about Nebraska minerals.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, CONTINUED

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find that, as I am getting older, every once in a while doing nothing is very appealing.

Many days, my car, it seemed, took forever to warm up. One day, I thought the car wasn't going to start at all, and I immediately starting having negative thoughts: I'll be late for work, what will this cost me? and so on. The car did start – and I quickly forgot about my negativity! That reminded me of another saying, "Count your blessings."

As I was writing this message, I, being intrigued by the origin of words and phrases, searched the internet for "Count your blessings." The phrase first appears in Google Books search results in "A Cheerful Chapter," by Old Alan Gray, in The Bible Class Magazine of May 1851:

"May-day is now come round again, and . . . Surely when nature is rejoicing around you, you would not carry a face of gloom. In such a course the sunny sky will bear witness against you; the trees will lift up their green-leaved boughs against you; and the glowing flowers will rise up in your path to reproach you. Be not behindhand to celebrate the general jubilee. Count your blessings, reckon up your mercies, so that you may mingle your note of thankfulness with those of the rejoicing spring. Let May-day be a day of happiness and praise."

So how appropriate that the term "Count your blessings" is from a writing dealing with May Day! May day celebrates the return of spring. Traditionally, May Day is the halfway point between the spring equinox and the summer solstice.

(Do not confuse May Day with mayday! The word mayday is from the French phrase "*M'aidez!*," which means "Help me!" If you hear "Mayday!" repeated three times, it is an urgent distress call.)

May Day, as with other holidays, is rooted in agriculture. May Day has a long history in England. Originally the maypole was a living tree. The ancient Celts danced around the tree, praying for fertility of their crops and animals. In the Middle Ages, all villages had maypoles and a May Queen. People would "bring in the May" by gathering wildflowers and green branches, and crowning a May King and Queen.

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Spring is my favorite time of the year. I look forward to seeing the signs of the season appearing – the blooming of flowers, the return of birds, and longer days! Coming closer to spring means that every day has "something good," and that's one more blessing to count. It is a time to learn and experience new things! Now is the time to plan on field trips or visiting geological wonders near you!

Speaking of field trips, I'd like to propose having a group in the Midwest Federation in which clubs host reciprocal field trips. The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies has a field trip sharing program called the DMC. Each club in the program plans a field trip, and invites the other clubs to take part. This allows each DMC member club the chance to take field trips all over the southeastern U.S. Please let me know your thoughts about this by writing me, ciervo.neary@gmail.com.

*May Issue
Submission
Deadline Is April
9th!*

TWO ILLINOIS CLUBS HONOR ROCKHOUNDS OF THE YEAR

The **Des Plaines Valley Geological Society** (DPVGS) of Des Plaines, Illinois proudly proclaims **Frank Lavin** 2025 Rockhound of the Year. A rockhound for life, seventy-five years ago Frank collected his first rock in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The late 1970s found Frank tumbling stones and forming jewelry.



There's a reason Frank Lavin is Des Plaines Valley Geological Society's 2025 Rockhound of the Year. He tends to have rocks on his mind. Photo courtesy of Connie Lavin.

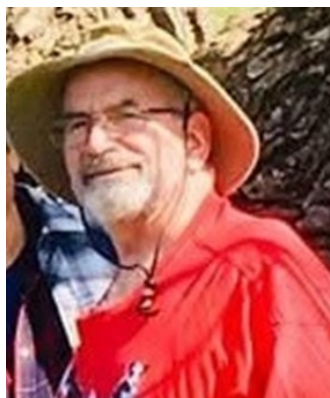
Fast forward to 1995: Frank worked at The Mine in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, where he learned how to facet gemstones. From there he returned to the Midwest, joined the Rock River Gem and Mineral Society of Rockford, Illinois, and taught faceting, both independently and at the community college in Rockford.

As a member of DPVGS, Frank has served as membership chair and on the publicity committee to promote the club's monthly meetings and annual show.

The owner of Lavin's Gems and Minerals, Frank has been a dealer and familiar face at shows across the Midwest. Thank you, Frank!



The **Northwest Illinois Rock Club** (NIRC) of Freeport, Illinois honors **Brian Green** as Rockhound of the Year for 2025. A decades-long member of the rock club, Brian is active as past President, the current Vice President, the chair of our annual rock show each November in Freeport, and the coordinator of our annual Geode Hunt to the Keokuk District.



Brian Green, Northwest Illinois Rock Club 2025 Rockhound of the Year, is an avid geode hunter. When he coordinates the annual hunt, everyone gets cracking. Photo courtesy of the Northwest Illinois Rock Club.

Brian and his wife Cindy are among the "rocks" of the club's membership. Whenever a helping hand is needed, you can rely on them to contribute the time and effort to the club. Thank you, Brian, for all you do for our organization. You more than deserve this honor.

CONVENTION PLANS ARE UPDATED (BUT JUST TWEAKS), CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

The theme of the show is "Petrified Woods of America." Besides dealers, the show will include demonstrations, mineral identification, a display of fluorescent rocks, and a Youth Booth with hands-on activities.

The only tweak that affects the meetings is an update about the entrance. The meetings and awards banquet will be held in the Lincoln Room of the Meeting Center at Sandhills. There are two entrances with green awnings on the north side of the Meeting Center; use the left-hand door, and that will get you to the right place.

The host club is still encouraging people to make a visit on their own to the University of Nebraska Museum, a natural history museum in Morrill Hall at the university. Exhibits include "Paleontology of Nebraska" and a Mesozoic Gallery. The museum is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m.

Full details about the convention are at the Lincoln club's website, lincolngemmineralclub.org. The website also includes a good map of the Event Center, pointing out the locations of the parking lot, the Meeting Center, and the Ag Society Hall where the show will be held. Have a great time!

OSHKOSH EARTH SCIENCE CLUB (WI) REACTS TO CAMPUS CLOSURE

For rock and fossil hounds, the two greatest delights are (a) a great place to search for both of those things, and (b) a good natural history museum nearby. But the official mineralogical museum of Wisconsin may be in danger of moving or even closing.

The Weis Earth Science Museum is located in Menasha, Wisconsin, on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh's Fox Cities campus. The Fox Cities (they're alongside the Fox River) include Menasha, Neenah, Appleton, and other towns. But UW-Oshkosh has decided to close the campus, leaving the future location of the museum in doubt.

Former Midwest Federation president Kevin Ponzio was interviewed by WLUK-TV of Green Bay about the Weis museum. The station quoted Ponzio as saying, "It keeps the specimens from the region, Wisconsin and the Midwest, that have been discovered and mined here for hundreds of years, in our area, instead of going to museums in Germany or somewhere else in the country."



Part of "Animals Through Time," a temporary exhibit at the Weis Earth Science Museum in Menasha, Wisconsin. Photo from uwosh.edu/weis.

The Oshkosh Earth Science Club, a member club of the MWF, is responding to this issue. Vice President Michael Lenz and other members of the club have distributed the following article:

"As you may have heard, the Weis Earth Science Museum's future is uncertain due to UW-Oshkosh closing its Fox Cities campus. At this time, it is not known how closure of the campus will impact the museum's character, existence, or future. The

museum could permanently close, have its collections moved to another location, or have its exhibits and programs dramatically changed.

"There is considerable concern on our part that there seems to be little public discussion about the fate of this 'hidden treasure,' along with a limited understanding of its importance as a unique, innovative, and award-winning local educational institution. We believe that it would best serve the Fox Valley communities, along with all of Outagamie and Winnebago Counties, for the museum to remain in its current location.

"Equally it is important that the museum continues to operate following its original mandated mission of educational programs and exhibits based on community involvement and scientific research. There is no other museum in the state or region that focuses on Wisconsin geologic and mining history.

"The Oshkosh Earth Science Club hopes the Weis Earth Science Museum will continue in its same location for many years to come. The museum is centrally located in the state, in a metropolis between Oshkosh and Green Bay. The walls of fossils and Wisconsin Red Granite are unique and appropriate for its designation as Wisconsin's Mineral Museum. Its educational exhibits are unique and a benefit to the many school groups and home schoolers that visit. Exhibits of mining and building materials help express the role Wisconsin's resources have played in the state's history.

"The museum has well thought out and fun hands-on exhibits of Wisconsin's earth sciences, including a mine shaft, for easier understanding of industries associated with geology and earth resources. An impressive display of dinosaur fossils brings a better understanding of Earth's history and is especially enjoyed by children. Display cases of minerals are impressive and enjoyed by all.

"We hope this award-winning museum stays in Menasha, for the benefit of the community, for many years to come."

Those who want more information about the museum, or want to know who to contact to express interest in the museum's continuation, can write Michael Lenz, 2817@sbcglobal.net.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Date and Time	Organization	Place	Contact
March 21-23 Fri 4-8, Sat 10-7, Sun 10-5	Rock Hobby Club	Machinists Auditorium, 12365 St. Charles Rock Road, Bridgeton, MO	Roy Hurlburt, hurlburt@juno.com
March 22-23 Sat 8:30-6, Sun 9:30-4	Cedar Valley Rocks & Minerals Society	Hawkeye Downs Expo Center, 4400 6 th Street SW, Cedar Rapids, IA	Marvin Houg, m_houg@yahoo.com
March 29 Sat 10-5	Midwest Mineralogical and Lapidary Society	St. John's Lutheran Church, 13115 Telegraph Road, Taylor, MI	Louis Talley, ltalley1970@gmail.com
April 5-6 Sat 9-5, Sun 9:30-4	Black Hawk Gem & Mineral Club	Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds, 2815 W. Locust Street, Davenport, IA	Bret Henderson, reminerals@gmail.com
April 5-6 Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5	Columbus Rock & Mineral Society	Rhodes Bldg., Ohio Expo Center, 717 E. 17 th Ave., Columbus, OH	columbusrockandmineral society.org
April 5-6 Sat 9:30-5, Sun 10-4	Des Plaines Valley Geological Society	Park District Leisure Center, 2222 Birch Street, Des Plaines, IL	Mike Hanley, geodeguy@att.net
April 5-6 Sat 9-5, Sun 10-4	Lincoln Gem & Mineral Club	Sandhills Global Event Center, 84 th & Holdrege, Lincoln, NE	Charles Wooldridge, charles.wooldridgeii@ gmail.com
This show is being held in conjunction with the Midwest Federation's convention, which is being hosted by the Lincoln Gem & Mineral Club.			
April 10-12 Thur & Fri 9:30-9; Sat 9:30-7	Indian Mounds Rock and Mineral Club	Rogers Plaza Town Center, 972 28 th Street SW, Wyoming, MI	Kreigh Tomaszewski, kreigh@gmail.com
April 12 Sat 10-3	Langlade County Gem & Mineral Club	North Star Lanes, 400 Prosser Lane, Antigo, WI	Joan Ostermeier, jostermeier4@gmail.com
April 12-13 Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4	Anoka County Gem & Mineral Club	Crystal Community Center, 4800 Douglas Drive N, Crystal, MN	Martha Miss, martha@rock-biz.biz
April 12-13 Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4	Fulton County Rockhounds	Donaldson Community Center, Wallace Park, 250 S. Avenue D, Canton, IL	Cindy Guerra, cindygemrock@gmail.com
April 12-13 Sat 10-6, Sun 10-5	Southern Illinois Earth Science Club show and silent auctions	City of Marion Pavilion, 1602 Sioux Drive, Marion, IL	Michael Chontofalsky, chontofalsky@att.net
April 19 Sat 9-1	St. Croix Rockhounds	Valley Creek Mall, 1750 Weir Drive, Woodbury, MN	Dave Rusterholz, stcroixrock@gmail.com
April 26-27 Sat 10-6, Sun 10-5	Akron Mineral Society and Summit Lapidary Club	Emidio & Sons Banquet Center, 48 E. Bath Road, Cuyahoga Falls, OH	Cathy Milhoan, slcmembershipchair@ gmail.com
April 26-27 Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5	Cincinnati Mineral Society	County Fairground, 1715 Fairgrove Avenue, Hamilton, OH	Terry Huizing, tehuizing@fuse.net



UPCOMING EVENTS

Date and Time	Organization	Place	Contact
April 26-27 Sat 10-6, Sun 10-4	Miami County Gem and Mineral Club	Duke Lundgard Bldg., County Fairgrounds, North County Road 25A, Troy, OH	Dewey Buck, deweybuck12@gmail.com
April 26-27 Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4	Rockhounds of Central and Southern Illinois	The Venue, 2882 N. Dinneen Street, Decatur, IL	Rita Winter, ritasacfp@yahoo.com
May 2-4 Fri 4-8, Sat 10-6, Sun 10-5	Kalamazoo Geological & Mineral Society	Kalamazoo Expo Center, 2900 Lake Street, Kalamazoo, MI	Dave Haas, stonehouserock@cs.com
May 3 Sat, 10-3	Central Arkansas Gem, Mineral & Geology Society rock swap	Eldor Johnson Pavilion, Burns Park, 1 Eldor Johnson Drive, North Little Rock, AR	Bethany Lawhon, Roxxanneharte@gmail.com
May 3-4 Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4	Heart of Wisconsin Gem & Mineral Society	Central Wisconsin Convention & Expo Center, 10101 Market Street, Rothschild, WI	Kim Aschbrenner, moonstonesmystics@gmail.com
May 3-4 Sat 9-5, Sun 10-5	Northwest Ohio Rockhound Club	St. James Lutheran Church, 4727 W. Sylvania Ave., Toledo, OH	Suzanne Shimatzki, sshimatzki@gmail.com
May 9-11 Fri noon-7, Sat 9-5, Sun 10-4	Central Missouri Rock & Lapidary Club	Knights of Columbus Hall, 2525 Stadium Blvd., Columbia, MO	Mary Wozny, lmwoz@msn.com
May 16-18 Fri & Sat 9-5, Sun 9-3	Tri State Gem & Mineral Society	Joplin History & Mineral Museum, 504 S. Schifferdecker, Joplin, MO	Chris Wiseman, jmc-cwiseman@sbcglobal.net
May 17 Sat, 10-1 This rock swap occurs on the third Saturday of every month from May through September.	Des Moines Lapidary Society rock swap	DMLS Clubhouse, 2608 24 th Street, Des Moines, IA	Barbara Eshelman, beshdoodles@gmail.com
May 17 Sat, 10-2	White River Rock, Gem, & Mineral Club tailgate sale	Artisan Market Village, 8660 Water Street, Montague, MI	Chris Rogers, whiteriverrockclub092@gmail.com
May 17-18 Sat 10-6, Sun 10-5	Parma Lapidary Club	Soccer Sportsplex, 31515 Lorain, North Olmstead, OH	Ruth Sholtis-Furpes, showchair@parmalapidaryclub.com
May 17-18 Sat & Sun, 10-4:30	Wisconsin Geological Society	Forum Bldg., Waukesha Expo Center, 1000 Northview Road, Waukesha, WI	Paul Okruhlica, p.okruhlica@gmail.com
May 17-18 Sat & Sun, 9-4	Worthen Earth Searchers rock swap	Dahl Ford, 1210 E. Kimberly Road, Davenport, IA	Cindy Cottrell, cc31068@yahoo.com
May 30-June 1 Fri noon-6, Sat 10-6, Sun 11-4	State Line Gem & Mineral Society	Junior Fair Bldg., County Fairground, 8514 State Route 108, Wauseon, OH	Sherman Kardatzke, kardatzke@gmail.com

ROCKHOUNDING ACTIVITY FOR HUMAN HEALTH IS A SAFETY MATTER, TOO

Ellery Borow, AMFS Safety Chair
From the October, 2024 A.F.M.S. Newsletter

Safety is not just a list of incidents, reports to write, mathematical statistics, or numbers. Safety is not just a list of skill sets we encourage people to learn. While there are many skill sets in our shared hobby, such as first aid attention, show safety, field trip care, lapidary shop guidelines, safety with driving to our many activities, as well as a myriad of associated safety concerns, one big concern is rarely mentioned, that of our overall health and well-being. Where would we be in our hobby without our overall health and well-being?

A growing body of evidence indicates that just by participating in our hobby we generally experience various combinations of the following:

- Lower levels of stress
- Increased amounts of healthy physical activity
- Improved memory
- Motor skill and eye/hand coordination improvements
- Improvements to our emotional health

All that sounds like a pretty good return just for participating in a hobby.

Other healthful aspects of our hobby include meetings, field trips, picnics, swaps and shows. Why are such activities healthy? Glad you asked. Our in-person activities are vital to the social needs of our being human.

We may broaden our horizons and improve our knowledge and understanding of our hobby with great programs, and we may fill our bellies with fine feasts at a great club picnic, but we very much improve our health and well-being when we participate with the social aspects of in-person activity, with our friendships in the hobby.

Far be it from this report to merely be a plea to increase the number of members attending a meeting. It is a plea, however, for those who are able to attend meetings, picnics, shows, and field trips in order that they may benefit from the most human things of sharing smiles, handshakes, warm greetings, and hugs. In the process of that in-person time, one experiences the benefit of released feel-good endorphins in the

brain, lower cortisol levels (stress associated chemistry), lower blood pressure, and a healthier cardiovascular system.

Studies indicate that our enjoyable hobby time helps with our cognitive abilities, improves our memory, keeps us exercised (with improvement to bone density), and likely improves the quality and longevity of our lives. On top of all that, it is likely we also experience better sleep, less depression, lower stress levels, less loneliness (another serious and under-appreciated issue), increased problem solving skills, greater feelings of well-being, and better opportunities to tell bad jokes. What is not to like about all that?

Attending meetings can be good for one's health. There are those who say that virtual attendance (such as via Zoom) at club events will be the future of the hobby. There are times and places where Zoom meetings are advantageous, although Zoom will not replace a hug, or improve one's bone density.

In-person club activity is no health cure-all, but the evidence of in-person health aspects are clear. Hope you can attend an in-person club event soon, for your health safety, because your health safety matters.

THE SHALE OF PENN DIXIE IS FOSSIL-RICH

By Richard Rock
Earth Science Club of Northern Illinois
From the February, 2025 Earth Science News

Penn Dixie Fossil Park and Nature Center is located at 4050 North Street, Blasdell, New York. It is about 10 miles south of Buffalo, and closer to Hamburg, New York. There are several hotels in Hamburg, and camping can be found too, nearby.

The 54 acres were once Federal Cement and Bessemer Cement, two companies. In the 1950s to the 1970s, it was owned by Penn Dixie Cement Corporation. In 1980, Penn Dixie filed for bankruptcy.

Collecting is from Memorial Day to Labor Day. If you are a member, you can collect at other times. So check with the office to find out if you can collect on days that you want to collect. There is a small entrance fee.

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THE SHALE OF PENN DIXIE IS FOSSIL-RICH, CONTINUED

(Continued from page 7)

This is a wonderful place to collect fossils. The Devonian Black Shale holds an abundance of marine fossils. Once this area was at the bottom of the sea. So many groups of fossils are found. I have not seen any type of minerals found.

On my first trip of five, a grade-school boy found a complete *Eldredgeops rane* enrolled trilobite, the most common one, just perfect. I didn't find any complete ones myself, but many parts. My second trip, I found 12 complete trilobites. My son, Pete, found a slab 12 x 12 inches with 12 trilobites enrolled on the black shale. There are at least five different trilobites found at Penn Dixie. Most are rare.

Fossils include crinoids, cephalopods, gastropods, bivalves, bryozoans, brachiopods, corals, cnidarians, some plants, and others. Lots of varieties. There are also some unknown fossils.

You will need to bring your own working tools – hammers, chisels, a pick for popping up shale, pry bar, etc. There is a lot of shale laying around everywhere.

It's easy to move wheelchairs through the grounds. From the parking lot to the collecting area



Photo from the park's website, penndixie.org.

there is a blacktop road. There are port-a-potties too. A visitors' area shows many of the fossils for identification. Also, they sell a number of related things, including a box of identified fossils. Each individual receives a paper with many pictures of many fossils so you can identify them.

This park is the number one best fossil park anywhere. There are usually one or more experts on the grounds every day, so help with identifying anything is easy. Schools have field trips to Penn Dixie.