

Dr. Joanne Kluessendorf

Apr 8, 1949 — Jun 1, 2018

Joanne is the Founding Director of the Weis Earth Science Museum, Wisconsin's Official Mineralogical Museum, located at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley in Menasha, Wisconsin. Widely recognized for her work in creating the museum, Joanne started with an empty building and developed the innovative exhibits, collections, and educational programs for which it is widely known. She successfully created a museum in which all people regardless of their interest or educational background can learn something about the geologic history of Wisconsin, and the role geology has played in the state's development.



Joanne grew up in Milwaukee where she developed interests in both natural history and art. She started her undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and switched from taking classes in art to geology where her first instructor was the prominent Milwaukee educator and geologist Professor Kathrine Nelson. After spending several years as a research assistant and taking classes in the geology department at Oregon State University, she entered the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign geology department where in 1983 she received a B. S. cum laude with Distinction in Geology and in 1990 a Ph.D.

Between 1990 and 2001 her professional employment included work at the University of Illinois Natural History Museum, National Historic Landmarks Program of the National Park Service, the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, Purdue University, the Wisconsin Department of Justice, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, along with several private companies including BP Amoco PLC.

Joanne was a founding member of the Illinois Association of Aggregate Producer's (IAAP) Public Information and Education (PIE) Committee, working to educate the general public about the mining industry and its benefits to society. Beginning in 1997 and continuing until her death in 2018, she educated teachers about the geological history of the Earth, and Illinois in particular, during the IAAP's annual *Rocks, Minerals and Mining in Today's Society* workshop for Illinois teachers.

Over the last 30 years she also served in an official capacity for many professional and scientific organizations including the Association for Women Geoscientists, Geological Society of America, Paleontological Society, Wisconsin Geological & Natural History

Survey, Wisconsin Federation of Museums, American Associations of Museums, Society for Sedimentary Geology Great Lakes section, Wisconsin Geological Mapping Advisory Committee, and the Coalition of State Museum Associations. As a prominent Wisconsin geologist Joanne was also well-known for her scientific and historical research along with her numerous activities in public education, historic preservation, museum studies, and community service. Through her research several important Wisconsin geologic sites were discovered and described including the Waukesha biota fossil deposit which is one of the most important paleontological sites in the Midwest, and the Brussel Hill meteor Impact site in Door County. She has been very active in the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment in Wisconsin, and has been a passionate advocate of geotourism as a way to preserve geologic sites and help people understand how geology impacts their lives. As part of these efforts she was a member of several organizations including the Niagara Escarpment Resource Network and the Greater Escarpment Organization of Door County. Joanne was also instrumental in establishing five National Historic Landmarks in Wisconsin and had a primary role in the development of the Silurian Reef diorama at the Milwaukee Public Museum. In recognition of her many contributions, as a geologist, museum director and educator Joanne has received several awards for her work from both local and national organizations. Among the most noteworthy were from the American Geological Institute, the A. E. Seaman Mineralogical Museum, the Association for Women Geoscientist, and the Mid America Paleontological Society. She was also a Fellow in both the Geological Society of America and the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts, & Letters.

Joanne has been the author or coauthor of over 150 articles, abstracts, and brochures, chaired many sessions at professional meetings, a speaker at numerous events, and lead many field trips to locations around the Midwest. For many years, Joanne was involved with the planning of Quarry Quest and was a regular participant in the event. In 2008, she hosted the very successful Wonderful World of Agates convention which had over 4000 attendees.