



Lyngblomsten Lifestyle

Spring 2026



*The 1911
Lyngblomsten
Board of Trustees*

1906

Celebrating 120 Years!

2026

STORIES OF LIFE:

A Closer Look at Some of
Lyngblomsten's Early Leaders

MORE IN THIS ISSUE:

What the Board of Directors Does
and How It's Evolved

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

We hear it often: the world is changing so fast. I agree. And yet, I can't help but smile deeply when I reflect on the constants ingrained in our organization—dedication, tenacity, vision, innovation, volunteerism, and philanthropy.

Lyngblomsten's early women leaders embodied these qualities, setting a course undergirded with those constants for 12 decades and counting.

My predecessor, Elizabeth Ekholm, taught me to cherish the history of Lyngblomsten, and surely I do. As we celebrate our 120th anniversary this year, our Marketing Communications team chose "then and now" as the guiding theme for feature articles in *Lyngblomsten Lifestyle* throughout 2026. The team has clearly enjoyed exploring the organization's past and sharing those stories with the community that shapes Lyngblomsten today.

Each spring, our nation observes Women's History Month and Volunteer Appreciation Month. In this edition, we highlight several of Lyngblomsten's early leaders—all women, all volunteers—along with the evolving role of the board of directors over the decades.

May you enjoy these stories and feel inspired to remain involved or to become involved in this remarkable 120-year-old organization.

Don't just live; leave a legacy!

Patricia A. Montgomery | Editor

Vice President of Communications & Stewardship



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Contents

Firm Foundation: Lyngblomsten's Early Leaders	3
The Board of Directors Offers a Guiding Hand	6
Support for Family Caregivers at Every Step	8
Remembrance Fund	10
Calendar of Events	11

On the Cover: Early boards of Lyngblomsten, like this 1911 Board of Trustees, were composed entirely of women drawn from each of Lyngblomsten's branches—groups of 10–20 women each—who supported the nonprofit through regular volunteering and fundraising.



How Firm a Foundation

A closer look at some of the individuals who laid the groundwork for Lyngblomsten

By Mara Gawarecki

When talking about the beginnings of Lyngblomsten, the focus is frequently on the group of 11 Norwegian women (pictured above) who started it in 1906. They're usually talked about collectively, and rightfully so; the work they did together raising funds, scouting for land, and running the home would have been impossible for any one person to achieve on her own. In honor of Lyngblomsten's 120th anniversary this year, here's a closer look at some of the individual founders and leaders from those early years.



ANNA QUALE FERGSTAD

*The first president
and spark*

Without Anna Quale Fergstad's impetus, Lyngblomsten would likely never have come to exist.

In 1902, she organized a Norwegian literary club. About a year later in October 1903, Anna shared her vision of a home for Norwegian elderly and became the driving force through the transition from book club to care of the elderly.

Building up what was then known as the Lyngblomsten Society was "her pet and dearest work during the last years of her life," wrote president Sophia Stearns in the August 17, 1914, issue of the *Lyngblomsten Herald*, "to which she gave her full strength and best efforts."

Born in Haugesund, Norway, in 1851, Anna immigrated to America in 1872. She lived in Chicago, Illinois, for a while as well as Hudson, Wisconsin, before moving to Minneapolis. She was married to Carl Fergstad and had one son. Anna was deeply involved in the temperance movement, especially among the Norwegian immigrant community.

Continued on page 4

She served as president from February 1906 to March 1907, when Carrie Fosseen was elected. She returned to the presidency in 1908, serving until Sophia's election in 1910.

Anna's family—her brother Sigvald and his wife as well as Anna's mother—were major donors, giving the initial tract of land for the home near the State Fairgrounds in the summer of 1909. Carl Fergstad would cover a month's worth of bills for Lyngblomsten during the home's first winter.

While seeing the cornerstone laid in July 1912 was one of her strongest wishes, Anna died unexpectedly on July 3, just days before the celebratory event.

"She had a very large circle of friends who dearly cherish her memory and greatly miss her as an ardent worker and congenial companion," Sophia wrote in the August 1914 memorial.



Laura Ringdal Bratager

Writer and one of the founding 11

Laura Ringdal Bratager was born in Hellesylt, Norway, in 1860 and immigrated to Minnesota in 1884. She married Lars Bratager in 1886 in Minneapolis, and the couple had five children.

Laura was a gifted writer, publishing at least two books, including an account of her travels and philanthropic work. Her skill with a pen meant she frequently contributed original poetry and reflections to Lyngblomsten gatherings. She also wrote a songbook for Lyngblomsten, with lyrics in Norwegian celebrating their Lutheran faith and the work the women were doing caring for older adults. When Lyngblomsten celebrated the 30th anniversary of the first 1903 meeting, Laura helped assemble the 1933 historical booklet which celebrated and recorded many of the earliest happenings of the organization.

Always proud of her Norwegian heritage, Laura was very involved with the Daughters of Norway, possibly helping found the nation's first chapter in Minneapolis in 1897. She also served as president of the Daughters of Norway in the 1920s. She was part of committees who planned the Norwegian American Centennial for the Twin Cities in 1925, commemorating the arrival of the first Norwegian immigrants in America.

A portrait of Laura was hung in the home at the Mid-Summer Festival on June 17, 1934, in "recognition of her long and untiring effort in the interest of the home and the Lyngblomsten Society," according to an article in that day's *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. She died later that year.

CARRIE S. FOSSEEN

The second president and campaigner



Carrie Fosseen was born in 1875 to Norwegian parents and grew up largely in the southeast part of Minnesota.

Although she wasn't one of the original 11 founders, she joined Lyngblomsten early on. Her husband, lawyer Manley L. Fosseen, and her father, Ole Jorgens, helped with the paperwork for Lyngblomsten's incorporation, which became effective February 17, 1906. Manley also served in the state legislature and as a state judge. The couple had two children, both sons.

Before her term as president, Carrie helped organize a number of the early branches. She was elected president at the very first annual meeting, held March 12, 1907, at Bethany Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

Outside of her work for Lyngblomsten, Carrie was a fierce campaigner for women's suffrage, both in Minnesota and at the national level. When the 19th Amendment went into effect in 1920, she was the first female delegate to the Republican National

Convention. She remained active in the Republican Party at the state and national level for many years.

In 1954, Carrie reminisced about the early days of Lyngblomsten, especially the difference that technological developments made in the society's work. "What a wonderful day it was," she told a *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reporter, "when we were able to let the telephone eliminate our transportation problems."

Carrie died in Minneapolis in 1963.

SOPHIA STEARNS BENSON

The fourth president and editor



Sophia Stearns was most likely born in 1868 in New Richland, near Albert Lea, in southern Minnesota, as one of 13 children. Her parents, Halvor and Bergit, were early Norwegian immigrants. Her mother had come to Wisconsin as a child in 1846 or 1847, and her father (who immigrated in 1849) farmed for a while before running a general store in New Richland. Sophia spent time teaching in Albert Lea in her 20s before moving to Minneapolis sometime before the 1905 census.

Also not one of the 11 founders, Sophia was elected president at the Annual Meeting in March of 1910. The original building, under the name Lyngblomsten Home for the Aged, was built and opened during her tenure in late 1912.

The next years were busy ones for Sophia. In addition to her work as president, she traveled around the state as a field agent, drumming up new members and donations. She started publishing and edited the monthly *Lyngblomsten Herald*. While it only ran from 1914 to 1916, it was a valuable resource. She used its pages to track business matters, report meeting minutes, profile residents of

the home, and chastise grumblers or those who weren't pulling their weight.

Sophia resigned in October 1916 for unclear reasons. One possible cause was the ill health of her mother, who had been living with Sophia since 1914 (her father had died in 1905). Her mother died in 1917, and Sophia married Edward Benson in March 1919.

She was a guest of honor when the paperwork for the paid-off mortgage was ceremonially burned on June 20, 1920, at the Mid-Summer Festival. "She was ardent and untiring in her efforts for Lyngblomsten," the program said. In the years that followed, she continued her involvement with Lyngblomsten Branch No. 4, although she moved to Seattle, Washington, at some point before her death in 1947.

Everyone involved in the first decades of Lyngblomsten's existence played a vital role. In the years before telephones or the internet bridged physical distances with ease, these four women and many others toiled to provide care and dignity for older adults. At a time when women couldn't vote in elections or open a bank account without a male co-signer, these Norwegian women successfully raised and managed thousands of dollars—paying off the mortgage on the home in only eight years. Whether their names are known to us or hidden by the passage of time, their example serves as a testament to the importance of the mission Lyngblomsten still operates under today. Indeed, they laid a firm foundation to support Lyngblomsten for 12 decades and counting! **L**

PHOTO CREDITS:

- Anna:** Photo of Anna in 1876, printed in the Summer 1986 edition of *Life at Lyngblomsten*.
- Laura:** Photo of Laura dated 1930, printed in the January 1987 edition of *Life at Lyngblomsten*.
- Carrie:** Photo of Carrie dated June 16, 1920, courtesy of the Hennepin County Library.
- Sophia:** Photo of Sophia printed in the March 23, 1914, edition of *The Minneapolis Journal*.

A Guiding Hand

By Mara Gawarecki and Patricia Montgomery

Decade after decade, the Lyngblomsten Board of Directors provides strategic oversight

The impact a nurse or housekeeper makes in the work of caring for older adults is fairly obvious. But what does a board of directors do for an organization like Lyngblomsten? And how has that changed in 12 decades? Throughout its 120-year history, Lyngblomsten has been led by a board of directors that has shepherded the nonprofit through its beginnings and a great number of changes.

THE EARLY YEARS

For its first five decades, Lyngblomsten was run by an all-female board, such as the one pictured on the cover from 1911. Those early boards had one representative from each of Lyngblomsten's branches—groups of 10–20 women each—who volunteered and fundraised. While serving as strategic thinkers, those first-decades directors were also hands-on leaders who managed construction, maintenance, and the daily needs of residents. They navigated the impacts of world wars and other societal challenges on the home. This intensive involvement became unsustainable as those leaders aged and their daughters entered the workforce, leaving that next generation unavailable for daily duties at Lyngblomsten. Additionally, increased government regulations made it difficult for volunteers to manage the operation. At the time, the Lutheran church was looking to expand into elder care.

THE MIDDLE YEARS

In the late 1950s, the board navigated a major decision that brought major changes:

to gift the entire organization with its assets to what is known today as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). With the reincorporation that was finalized in 1961, congregations became members of the organization and had board representation. Men served on the board for the first time.



▲ The 1960–1961 Lyngblomsten Board of Directors included six representatives from the Lyngblomsten branches and six from member congregations. This is the first time the board included men.

In the years that followed, the boards made major decisions that transformed the property, including construction and expansion of the care center, adding HUD-subsidized apartments, and demolishing the original building to make way for modern apartments. Staff were hired to run daily operations, and corporate membership was extended to non-ELCA congregations.

THE BOARD TODAY

Today, the board has a similar structure: volunteer directors from member churches as well as the wider community, with 51% drawn from ELCA congregations.

Two recent board chairs, Debra George (2023–2025) and Michael Lovett (2025–present), agree the board's primary role is to focus on big-picture, long-term elements rather than the day-to-day details. This



▲ The 2021–2022 Lyngblomsten Board of Directors who voted to proceed with building a second campus in Lino Lakes.



▲ Board chair Michael Lovett holds an employee's baby while visiting with Como Park staff at the 2025 employee Years of Service celebration.

includes providing oversight of the president and the organization's overall financial health.

Debra joined the Lyngblomsten Board in 2020, having chaired the Mid-Summer Festival prior to the pandemic and served on the board of the Lyngblomsten Foundation for several years. During her two years as chair, Debra oversaw a number of key projects, making excellent use of her background in financial services and project management. These projects included the opening of Lyngblomsten's second campus (the decision to build having been made by a previous board), developing the strategic plan for 2024–2029, and formalizing board

processes which will be stored on the new online portal Debra is helping develop.

"I told Jeff [Heinecke, Lyngblomsten's President & CEO] when I took on the role that I was carving out time in my personal life to make sure it was done well," Debra said.

Debra's efforts helped ensure a smooth

transition to Dr. Michael Lovett. After spending almost four decades in school administration, including as superintendent, Michael brought his robust skillset to Lyngblomsten. He started in 2017 on an advisory committee for community services and joined the board in 2022.

In his year as chair, Michael has focused on guiding directors to focus on strategy—not operations—and ensuring all directors are integrating their skills and knowledge.

Directors come from many different backgrounds and provide expertise on a variety of topics, from financial protocols to regulatory know-how in the healthcare industry to human resources, real estate, and management. Getting directors acquainted and engaged was a high priority for Michael. "Quality conversations and the open exchange of ideas lead to the strongest guidance," he noted.

"The direct care staff as well as those who handle the daily administration of Lyngblomsten are very good at what they do," Michael said. He sees the role of the board as providing encouragement and guidance to those who do the hands-on work.

"In some respect," Michael continued, "we're cheerleaders who have a fiduciary responsibility to make sure Lyngblomsten continues in the tradition that we've seen since the early 1900s." **L**



▲ In her role as board chair in 2025, Debra George emceed the Lyngblomsten Corporate Annual Meeting in the Newman-Benson Chapel.



FAMILY CAREGIVERS: Find support every step of the way with Lyngblomsten

An increasing number of people are caring for someone at home who is living with memory loss. These family caregivers work around the clock every day, and Lyngblomsten is here to walk alongside them. Below are a few of the resources available to equip and support caregivers.



A Short Break

The Gathering, our weekday respite program, has been serving older adults with early- to mid-stage memory loss for 25+ years. Participants enjoy four hours of brain-stimulating activities and socialization while you run errands, catch up with a friend, or simply take some time for yourself.

Find more information at www.Lyngblomsten.org/TheGathering or by calling (651) 632-5320.

An Extended Break

Need a longer break, perhaps to attend an event out of town or tend to your own medical needs? Lyngblomsten offers overnight respite at our Lino Lakes campus. Older adults aged 62+ can stay up to 30 days, and secured memory care is available. Staff assists with activities of daily living and healthcare needs while participants enjoy a variety of social activities.

Four service packages are available depending on needed levels of care. Preadmission paperwork is required; please allot two weeks to complete.

For information on openings, contact Angie Quick at (651) 515-1727 or aquick@lyngblomsten.org.



Keep Connected and Informed

**Caregiving
Compass**

Lyngblomsten Community Services can deliver insights and resources directly to your inbox four times a year through its quarterly e-newsletter, the *Caregiving Compass*. Sign up and receive articles with caregiving advice from our staff experts, news about events friendly to adults with memory loss, and resources for in-person and digital offerings.

View a sample edition and subscribe by filling out the form at www.Lyngblomsten.org/Publications.

To learn more about these and all of our many resources for family caregivers, visit www.Lyngblomsten.org/CaregivingResources today!

**Reach
Out!**

For additional resources, including support groups and education, contact Lisa Brown, MSW, LISW, Caregiver Services Program Coordinator, at (651) 632-5320 or caregiving@lyngblomsten.org.

Threads

News & Opportunities
from Lyngblomsten

Threads keeps you connected

Threads is a new quarterly e-newsletter which will help you keep in touch with Lyngblomsten. Find short news stories, get to know some of

the people of Lyngblomsten, keep up with the latest events, and more.

To view a sample edition or fill out the subscription form, visit www.Lyngblomsten.org/Publications.



Spark Joy for Others

Wherever your skills and interests lie, there's a volunteer opportunity with Lyngblomsten that's just right for you! Play cards with residents, help out at events, cashier at the café/gift shop, assist participants at activities, or share your musical talents.

Visit www.Lyngblomsten.org/Volunteer to learn more or fill out an application.

(651) 632-5464
volunteer@lyngblomsten.org

Find a way that lets you share your spark today!



Enjoy Well-being & Peace of Mind

The Lyngblomsten Care Center in Como Park offers thoughtful, person-centered care from dedicated staff on a beautiful campus. We'll tend to your medical needs while you focus on enjoying purposeful activities and a fulfilling social life.

Long Term • Transitional • Memory Care

For more information and to schedule a tour, contact Sarah Andrews in Admissions at (651) 632-5301 or admissions@lyngblomsten.org.



Live Vibrantly in Lino Lakes



Lyngblomsten at Lino Lakes has openings in assisted living and memory care. Experience our person-centered care while living your best life. Enjoy an abundance of social activities, lifelong learning and arts opportunities, and memory care programming tailored to resident needs. Move in long-term or come for overnight respite.

Contact Angie Quick to **schedule a tour today** at aquick@lyngblomsten.org or (651) 515-1727.

www.Lyngblomsten.org/LinoLakes



Gifts to the Remembrance Fund

In Memory or Honor of a Loved One



In Memory of

December 1, 2025, through February 28, 2026

Leona Cervin	Lois Elaine Laurence	Martin and Mary Ellen Tollefson
Lon Helgen and Shirley Swenson	Margaret Lowe	Mary Ellen Tollefson
Alice and Bill Hydukovich	Gail McGillis	Lois Wattman
Maureen Kelly	Louise A. Smith	

In Honor of

Melanie Ounsworth

For information about making a gift in honor or in memory of your loved one, please contact Carrie Godfrey at (651) 632-5358 or cgodfrey@lyngblomsten.org.

Create a Lasting Tribute through the Remembrance Wall

Honor someone special with an engraved plaque on the Lyngblomsten Remembrance Wall. Single or cumulative gifts totaling \$750 or more are eligible for a plaque. For details, contact Carrie Godfrey with the Lyngblomsten Foundation at (651) 632-5358 or cgodfrey@lyngblomsten.org.

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	Wold Architects & Engineers

Supporting

St. Paul Lino
Wellington Management



Mark Your Calendars!



Wednesday, April 8

Lyngblomsten Foundation President's Luncheon

11:30 AM gathering; 12:15 PM lunch at Midland Hills Country Club, Roseville

A gathering with Lyngblomsten President & CEO Jeff Heinecke for donors in the President's Club and Heritage Society, past recipients of the Anna Quale Fergstad Distinguished Service Award, board directors, and annual corporate sponsors. Invitations have been mailed.

Tuesdays, April 14, 21, and 28

WOOP Group #2 for Family Caregivers

4–5 PM online via Zoom

WOOP for Dementia Caregivers is an online program in which participants attend three sessions and learn a simple, evidence-based strategy called WOOP, which stands for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan. WOOP helps caregivers focus on what they can control and turn their important wishes into action plans. An optional virtual information session will be held Tuesday, April 7, from 4–5 PM.

Registration required by April 8. To learn more or register, visit www.Lyngblomsten.org/WOOP.

Tuesday, May 5

Lyngblomsten Corporate Annual Meeting

Lyngblomsten at Como Park

6 PM dinner; 7 PM meeting. Details will be mailed to delegates, board directors, and committee members.

Monday, May 11–Friday, May 15

Homes for the Aging Week

Join in the fun each day as Lyngblomsten celebrates with summer-themed festivities during Homes for the Aging Week! Residents, participants, family members, employees, volunteers, and campus visitors are invited to participate in activities held on both campuses.



OUR MISSION:

Influenced by Christ, Lyngblomsten provides a ministry of compassionate care and innovative services to older adults in order to preserve and enhance their quality of life.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

For our **participants**, Lyngblomsten promotes dignity through informed choices for living options, respecting individuality, and orchestrating the best life possible.

For our participants' **families**, Lyngblomsten supports their needs through careful listening, traveling alongside them as they walk the journey with their loved ones.

For our **employees**, Lyngblomsten strives to foster an environment that encourages compassionate caregiving, innovative thinking, problem-solving, and opportunity seeking.

Through our **community** of donors, volunteers, member congregations, and socially responsible corporations, Lyngblomsten encourages the individual to live one's personal ministry by enhancing the lives of older adults.

OUR PROMISE

Lyngblomsten strives to provide unmatched person-centered experiences, valuing: who you are, where you are, and your rights to make choices and decisions.

OUR PILLARS:

Influenced by Christ
Innovation & Leadership
Resources & Support
Person-Centered &
Dignity-Enhancing Experiences
Engaged Lifestyle

www.Lyngblomsten.org



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March is Women's History Month & April is Volunteer Appreciation Month!

*Lyngblomsten
was founded by
visionary women
who served
in every role,
establishing
a legacy of
volunteerism
that has
endured for
decades.*

1906-2026



Pictured: Co-chairs of the 1946 Mid-Summer Festival Mrs. Henry Dahl (right) and Mrs. M. R. Keith in the kitchen of the Lyngblomsten Home for the Aged making floteerot, a sweet cream pudding. This special Norwegian dish was traditionally served at each year's event, except during World Wars I and II, according to an article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* dated June 9, 1946.