



CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

2026 Conference on Servant Leadership

Theme: *Resilience and Revival*

Viterbo University's Fine Art Center, La Crosse, WI

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

5:30 p.m. Pre-Conference Gathering at Leo & Leona's

Thursday, June 25, 2026

7:15 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast

8:15 a.m. Welcome and Opening Reflection – *Resilience & Revival*

Tom Thibodeau, Distinguished Professor of Servant Leadership at Viterbo University

Anne McGee Cooper Spirit of Servant Leadership Award Presentation to Rick Kyte

8:45 a.m. Dr. Tonya Wagner – *Cultivated in Challenge: Lessons from High Altitude Leadership*

9:30 a.m. Q&A

9:45 a.m. Break

10:10 a.m. Misty Lown – *Leading So Others Can Flourish*

11:00 a.m. Interaction

11:15 p.m. Dr. Walé Elegbede – *The Courage to Serve: Leadership, Trust, and Revival in Divided Times*

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. Breakout Workshops

1. Clara Gelatt – *The Show Goes On: Resilience at the Rivoli* (LaCroix Black Box Theatre)
2. Jon Reiner – *I Am Becoming Me: Calling, Cancer, Ceilings, & Careers* (FAC-Main Theatre)
3. Maya Roberts – *Why Love is the Foundation of a Resilient Community* (NRC Rm 196)
4. James Mis – *Organizational Resiliency in the Face of Adversity* (Nola Starling Recital Hall)

2:15 p.m. Break

2:30 p.m. John O'Leary – *Live on Fire*

3:30 p.m. Book Signing and Happy Hour with Cash Bar

Friday, June 26, 2026

7:15 a.m. Gathering and Continental breakfast

Authors' Tables

8:15 a.m. Dustin Luecke and Fr. Conrad Targonski – *Faith in the Journey*

8:45 a.m. Gerard Vriens – *Sparklers and Resilience*

9:30 a.m. Q&A

9:45 a.m. Break

10:10 a.m. Ryan Crain, Bethany Redbird, and Tom Redbird III – *Resilience and Revival: The Ultimate Act of Servant Leadership: A Story of Courage, Care, and the Power of a Second Chance*

11:00 a.m. Interaction

11:10 a.m. Dr. Amit Sood – *How to Get More Mileage from Your Brain*

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m. Breakout Workshops

1. MaiVue Xiong – *Come Back. Give Forward. Lead Boldly* (LaCroix Black Box Theatre)
2. Ryan Clark – *Building Trust During Times of Leadership Transition* (FAC-Main Theatre)
3. Tammy Gilkes – *When Life Gives You Lemons, Earn a Degree in Servant Leadership* (NRC Rm 196)
4. Tom and Nicole Thibodeau – *HR Resilience and Renewal* (Nola Starling Recital Hall)

2:15 p.m. Break

2:30 p.m. Heidi Siefkas – *Resilience, Rewired: Look Up, Adapt, & Rise Through Community & Courage*

3:30 p.m. Closing Remarks – Tom Thibodeau – *Global Resilience*



The hall was once a ballroom owned by Leo and Leona Cavadini. The story of the tavern has been told before in OnMilwaukee.com Beyond columns. Leona Cavadini lived above the tavern and helped operate it for more than 60 years. Her parents first owned it, and then she and her late husband, Leo, ran it.

The bar became a hangout for many of the NFL football players who trained in Wisconsin during the Cheese League days. One of the best stories about those days concerned former Bears Dick Butkus, who frequented the place.

Leo and Leona were huge Packers fans and sold a T-shirt with the familiar saying, "Da Bears Suck." After he had been coming into the bar for quite some time, Butkus asked Leo if he could remove the shirt, since, after all, he'd played for the Bears.



Leo, a former WWII bomber pilot, reportedly got into Butkus face and said, "Hell no; it's my best seller, and the Bears do suck!" Butkus backed off with a smile.

The legend of the bar goes well beyond those Cheese League days and tells the tale of a place that really did become an institution in the region of the state and for people from eastern Minnesota and Iowa.

The new owners, made up primarily of people who loved the old place and couldn't stand to see it go, bought the bar after Leona decided to retire. They fixed it up and opened the bar in 2008.

With the help of Amish craftsmen, they renovated the ballroom, which had become a storage room for some great sports, tavern and other memorabilia. Much of those items have been sold via an auction and a La Crosse collectibles store. But, some of it has been returned to the walls of the concert hall.

The place has a real feel of a traditional roadhouse. It also is right on the road, off Highway 33, east of La Crosse, in a tiny place called Newburg Corners.