

Meet the Stan Hywet Staff

Jennifer McDowell
Director of Public Programs
Staff Member since 2016



What is your job at Stan Hywet? As Director of Public Programs, I coordinate and execute our larger programs and events at the estate, including (but not limited to) the annual Egg Hunt and Breakfast, Founders' Day, Father's Day Car Show, Off the Vine, Ohio Mart, Murder in the Mansion and Deck the Hall. I also work on collaborative programs with many community partners. In addition to the behind-the-scenes prep, you'll see me executing event logistics on the grounds including installing signage, setting up tables, or even selling beverages!

What do you enjoy most about working at Stan? Definitely the staff and volunteers dedicated to the mission and preservation of this beautiful historic estate! The volunteers I am privileged to work with are absolutely amazing and integral to the success of our programs and events.

Tell us about one unusual or interesting day at work? When Stan Hywet was the starting line for the Akron Marathon in 2019, I opened the estate at 3am to coordinate final logistics with the Marathon team and Akron Police Department. It was amazing to see the pieces fall into place, then watching the runners run down the front drive and out the front gate at North Portage and Garman.

What would you tell someone who's never been to Stan to entice them to visit? Stan Hywet is unique, and a tour of the Manor House truly transports you back in time. Our horticulture team does an outstanding job maintaining the beautiful gardens and grounds, so the rest of your visit could be spent enjoying the natural world around the estate.

Where is your favorite place on the estate? The bridges in the Lagoons are beautiful, and a nice place to relax. I enjoy watching (and listening) for wildlife around the area – song birds, raptors, frogs, turtles, and water fowl.

If you could go back in time and meet with one of the Seiberling family members, one of the paid household or grounds staff, or one of the architects or landscape designers, who would it be and what would you talk with them about? I would love to meet Gertrude and talk to her more about her love of the arts. I am a musician, so I'd like to hear about her efforts with the National Federation of Music Clubs, Ohio Federation of Music Clubs and incorporation of the Tuesday Musical Association. I'd also like to talk to her about all the performances they hosted in the Music Room, including a performance by the von Trapp family singers!

What do you like to do in your free time, away from Stan? My husband, two children and I love to camp in state parks where we can hike with our dog, bike, fish, canoe, go horseback riding, cook on the campfire and look for other outdoor adventures. I am an active 4-H advisor in Lorain County and love working with our club members (ages 5 to 19) on their projects, especially at county fair time. I have also been on the staff of the Ohio Expositions Commission and All-Ohio State Fair Band for over 25 years. The Band is a tradition at the Ohio State Fair, comprised of over 200 high school musicians from across the state who entertain fairgoers every day. I typically spend my vacation at the fairgrounds in Columbus helping this amazing youth organization.