

PSW Presidential Address

by Ryan Miller, PharmD, BCPS



Editor's Note:

The PSW Presidential Address was presented at the 2025 PSW Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 24, 2024 at the Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells.

Welcome to all of you. I hope your conference has so far been inspirational, rejuvenating, and fulfilling! This has always been a place I can consistently go to refill my own batteries and build relationships, and I can only wish the same for all of you. It's an absolute honor to stand in front of all of you today to talk a bit about myself and, more importantly, PSW. There are times, even right now, where it honestly doesn't quite feel like it's real, and I want you all to know how grateful I am for the opportunity that I've had to serve you both over the past years and for the next few years to come.

Gratitude

With gratitude in mind, I'd first off like to thank God for the opportunities that we've all been afforded to live life to the fullest; practice in a challenging and unique field; and leave our marks on the world and people around us. We should all be proud of the deep well of leaders in our state, representing all areas of pharmacy practice within PSW. That's a testament to seeds planted and tended since PSW's inception by the visionary leaders who chartered our course of One Voice, One Vision, and the many leaders who have served PSW in the past. We're here thriving today because of the excellence you saw years ago.

I need to take some time to recognize a few key individuals, as well. First, my wife, Katy, and my children, Jackson and Grace, your support for me being off "doing my thing" for well over the past decade has been a big ask that none of you have ever complained about. Giving up dad time is a big deal, even if it doesn't always feel like it—so know how much it means to me to be able to be standing up here today.

To Adam Gregg, my residency program director, colleague, and friend: Thank you for years of encouragement, mentorship, promotion, and pushing me outside of my

comfort zone. Your investments in me are a huge part of who I am today. I'm privileged to be able to serve on the Board with you currently and look forward to what the future holds for both of us.

To Terry Audley: thank you for your selfless investment of sharing your time and connections with other people that have helped me form amazing relationships all over the country. I value our friendship more than I can appropriately express in words. You've made me reconsider so many thoughts and opinions and have helped me be a better person and leader. The endless string of shenanigans and laughter didn't hurt either.

I could spend this entire speech telling you about all the people who have impacted me over the years, from fellow students, preceptors, pharmacists, and technicians I've worked with as an intern, and countless others I've had the privilege to work with over the years. You've impacted me and

my life, and I thank you all. I'm terrible at keeping up with people if I don't see you at a conference; please know that you've all had a massive impact on who I am today.

My Story

I stand before you, humbled, as the next president of PSW, but how did a person like me end up here? I'm "just an informatics pharmacist." Do you ever find yourself downplaying yourself and what you do like that? Are you "just a pharmacist," or "just a technician," lost in a sea of people who you believe are more important than you are? I'm here to tell you today that I think that assertion is wrong.

My story starts with saying yes. A classmate of mine invited me to the Annual Meeting in 2004. I said yes, though I had no idea to what. This afforded me the opportunity to start interacting with my classmates outside of school and getting to know them as people in addition to

Below: Ryan Miller giving his PSW Presidential Address at the PSW Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 24, 2024.



colleagues. I then got invited to meet the parents of one of my classmates, Lindsay Sutter, who were both PSW presidents. That invite led to me meeting the celebrities of Wisconsin pharmacy at the time. I said yes. I was just a student with a big mouth. I had no idea what I was going to talk to these people about—but I said yes, and went anyway. I'm not entirely sure I made a positive impression on the folks there, but I was hooked, and my journey in PSW officially started. I've had a hard time not saying yes ever since—though sometimes it has still taken some pushing from colleagues. That conference was lightning in a bottle for me. I've been trying to recapture that feeling and advocating for others to try to experience it firsthand for 20 years now.

From that first meeting, I've always felt that I belonged in PSW. I feel like I'm at home here and that I'm always surrounded by great people. As a result, I've made it a priority to invite other people in the same way I was invited. I know that not everyone is into the social scene like I am, but that feeling of being welcomed, being home, is one that I want all of you to experience in the same way that I do. You deserve to feel at home in PSW. There's a place for you to find belonging in PSW, even if you have no aspirations for formal leadership. Don't be afraid to say, yes, and get involved or seek out opportunities to contribute because your engagement makes us better.

You Belong

It's my firm belief that every pharmacist and every pharmacy technician in Wisconsin belongs in PSW. Let me re-emphasize that: YOU have a place in PSW, whatever that looks like for you. I know that the topic of Diversity, Equity, and inclusion can be uncomfortable to discuss, primarily due to the politicization of some of the terms and ideas involved. While that's a reality that we're all living with, One Voice, One Vision requires that we hear and understand as many voices in our profession as we possibly can. From the executive suite to the front line, that means all of you. This isn't something we should be uncomfortable with, but something we should be committed to ensuring.

Practicing pharmacy is hard work. Many of you are struggling in your practices to get the work done, safely and effectively balancing doing a good job as employees



Above: Ryan Miller presents Hannet Tibagwa Ambord with the commemorative PSW President plaque at the PSW Annual Meeting Awards Banquet on Saturday, August 24, 2024.

and entrepreneurs while also taking good care of the patients we serve. While it's ultimately rewarding work, it also takes a toll on us as people. I think sometimes we forget that we're people first. We're also spouses, partners, parents, and many other things. Don't forget that, when we gather and connect here, we're a group of people connected with a common interest. I'm fascinated by the connections between people. Who does what and where, where they've worked, whom they know, where they went to school, and the journeys people have traveled to get to today excite me. While some might see my zeal for this as speed networking and possibly power name-dropping, it's these connections that I've formed during my PSW journey. And it all started with the first meeting in 2004. I cannot underscore enough how impactful having real personal connections with other practitioners can be on your professional trajectory, outlook, and overall attitude.

PSW is a great connection point for people from all walks of pharmacy life. I've had the opportunity to get to know many people in this organization whom I never would have crossed paths with if I hadn't

been a little vulnerable and made these connections. Many of these people have impacted me professionally and personally over the years as I've grown as both a person and a leader. I quite literally wouldn't be the person I am today without those connections, and for me at least, that's what PSW is all about. It's what gets me through tough days, long meetings, and the extra commitments I have in volunteer leadership. Use PSW to lean on your peers and create the support you need to continue to find value and meaning in the hard work we do taking care of patients and our teams every day. The challenges will always be there, and through PSW we'll continue meeting them head-on together. Find your place here and use it to fill you up both personally and professionally. Times are tough, and for me, it's people I've connected with in PSW who help me get through those times. PSW has been the centerpiece of that for my entire career. If you haven't plugged in, stop in me in the hallway and talk to me about how to do it—it can quite literally change your life.

To that end, I'd like to encourage everyone to not be afraid to be your authentic self. Yes, I know that sounds

incredibly fluffy and utopian. But being “just a pharmacist” is a far more important thing than I think we give ourselves credit for. Some of us lead in formal leadership roles and some of us don’t, but there’s a lot of gray area in between. Everyone on that spectrum has big and great ideas, and we need to hear them from you. You may be tempted to think, “I need to be like this leader or that person to make an impact.” While having aspirations, mentors, and role models is incredibly healthy, your thoughts and ideas don’t matter less if you haven’t achieved some level of formal leadership in your professional workplace or within PSW. The reality is that we all lead in ways that are sometimes big, but more often in ways that feel insignificantly small. It all matters. Give yourselves the space to reflect on the value that you add now, with who you are now, as you continue to grow. One Voice, One Vision is the foundation PSW stands upon, and that means we need to hear from everyone, from the executive level to the front lines. We are better because of you, the people in this organization. Use PSW as the conduit to find the people who make you feel human and empowered, can challenge you, and make you think from where you are in your life. Share your ideas, think big, and, most importantly, funnel that energy back into PSW and help create the best possible future for pharmacy in Wisconsin that we can. Say, yes when the opportunity arises. I’m “just an informatics pharmacist,” but I want you to know that regardless of

where you’re at, your PSW journey can start with just saying yes, too.

Closing

Circling back to where we started with gratitude: I’m grateful for this moment and I’m grateful I get to share it with all of you. I didn’t want to spend this time talking about a call to action or to trumpet everything we’ve done in PSW or will do in the next year. PSW is hard at work to do those things—rest assured. I wanted this talk to be about you and how fulfilled you all make me feel, personally and professionally. With all the challenges of life, it’s very easy, and sadly very common, for us to get bogged down in all the trials and trauma we endure on a daily basis. While I’m not suggesting you paint over it all and put a smile on your face—that’s not healthy either—I do believe that spending time to refocus yourself on what you’re grateful for in your life can have a positive impact on your outlook and the lens through which you view the world. As we chart the course for the future, we must acknowledge the trials, but we should also recognize and appreciate the good. It may be people or things in your life for which you’re thankful; it may be an upcoming vacation or career change; or it may be something as simple as not having a booked schedule on a Saturday. Remind yourself of what truly brings you fulfillment and work to fill whatever available space in your life you have with those things.

To wrap this up, I know that this

has been a rather squishy, non-scientific discussion. This organization is about us. It’s about the great things we can and do accomplish, but it’s about us: pharmacy practitioners, yes, but also people. Yes, the tactical and strategic work PSW will do in the next year is extremely important—and don’t worry, I have very strong feelings about a lot of what we’re doing, too. But I believe that being you isn’t something that gets enough attention these days and you rarely get permission to spend time on yourself. I’m giving you that permission now. I know society is asking a great deal from us and, for many, every day sometimes feels like an insurmountable challenge. I want you to also know that you have strengths that are unique to you, and those strengths matter. You have roles that are unique to you, and those roles matter, regardless of where you work or what titles you hold. We’re pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. We’re all in this together, both as people and as professionals. You all make a difference, and you all matter. Take a leap and don’t be afraid to say yes. It will only lead to new opportunities that you don’t even realize are there for you now. I’m looking forward to continuing to make a difference with all of you in the coming year and creating a better tomorrow together.

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