



If elected as a member of the NSS Board of Governors, I will bring a unique perspective to the organization. I have a master's degree in Geosciences and Ph.D. in Biology with a focus in paleontology. I began caving in 2010, almost exclusively for research purposes, studying giant ground sloth fossils in Tennessee. Throughout my 13 years in academia, most of my research revolved around caves and karst natural traps, but it was not until starting my career at The Mammoth Site that I heard mention of the NSS. Since joining the NSS, I've used my experience as a researcher and educator to make a difference. I took up the Environmental Education Committee Chair position and have worked to create new materials to help the NSS educate the public about caves and karst.

Since my first paleontological excavation, I have found my life surrounded by karst. The intermixing of caves/karst, paleontology, and educating the public have become my career's focus and have spilled over into my hobbies. Professionally, I am the Curator of The Mammoth Site, an Ice Age sinkhole where 60 mammoths and numerous other species became trapped over 140,000 years ago. My Ph.D. research combined education and 3D scanning of specimens from another sinkhole, Thomas Farm. Obtaining and participating in multiple National Science Foundation grants allowed me to bring teachers and students to this site to educate them about karst geology and paleontology. This sparked interest in science in my students and further ingrained my passion for education. Today, my work allows me to bring the conclusions drawn from our research to more than 100,000 visitors annually at The Mammoth Site. The NSS has the potential to reach even more people with its message. The NSS could be and should be an integral player in the world of cave paleontology, as well as the many other fields where scientists are entering caves to study the wonders found underground. Under my help with leadership, we would continue to look for ways to enter the realms of study, show them value of the NSS, and make our organization relevant to them.

Each year, the platform statements are full of platitudes about membership decline. The best way to help the NSS grow and evolve is to find new and innovative ways of bringing in quality new members. I believe that strengthening our impact in K-12 education as well as education to the general public are both keys to the longevity of the NSS. When a child learns about caves in school, we want them to gain their knowledge through the lens of the NSS. When a person picks up a pamphlet about fragile underground environments at a visitor's center, we want that to be NSS branded material. When most of us think of space exploration, we think about NASA; our goal should be to have that same brand recognition for caves and the NSS.

I have worked in paleontology for nearly 20 years, with numerous karst and cave excavations. During that time, no colleague mentioned the NSS; this should not be the case. Cave paleontology is essential for understanding ecological and climatic changes throughout time. Caves provide a fundamental environment needed for undisturbed sediments and, in many instances, proper fossil preservation. There are caves in the Southwest that have fossil mammoth dung that still smells fresh. There are caves in Tennessee that have giant ground sloth remains that even have mummified tissue on them. The remains of preserved small animals can help us date the layers of sediments in the cave and give a clear picture of environmental changes. Currently, I am helping move The Mammoth Site research and education into the exciting world of caves/karst. By bridging sciences like this, the NSS will be able to bring in more members.

Our future lies in being more available to researchers of all fields and making our presence known. Let us be the group that helps support all cave and karst research. Let us be educational trailblazers and bring the passion we have for caves to all. As an NSS Director, I can be a leader to bring this vision to life through the NSS.