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Egan, Farrey tabbed by county board

Neenah News

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors has a new chairman.

Veteran board member Thomas Egan of Omro, who had been serving as vice chair for the board, was named the new chairman at Tuesday night's organizational meeting. Egan, who has served on the board since 2008, takes over the position from Shiloh Ramos, who did not seek re-election for his Neenah seat in this past election.

Chuck Farrey, who represents District

30 in rural Winnebago County and has served on the board since 2002, was ultimately selected as vice chair.

Three other supervisors – David Albrecht, Bryan Stafford and Mike Norton – were also nominated for the position. The board took part in three rounds of voting to choose the vice chair with Farrey topping Stafford in the final ballot to earn the post.

After the election of the two leadership positions, the board had 30 resolutions on its posted agenda but the board was

only able to get through a portion of the items before ending the meeting just before midnight – almost six hours after it started.

The organizational meeting, which was the first completely in-person county board meeting since before the COVID-19 pandemic, welcomed 16 new members who were elected roughly two weeks ago.

The board members took their oath of office from Judge Barbara Key.

INSIDE



Terrific 10

Greene's Pour House to celebrate decade

Page 3

Zephyrs win

St. Mary Catholic softball team collects first victory

Page 11



Neenah News

Taking shape

The new Neenah High School is coming into form at Winchester Road and Clayton Avenue in Fox Crossing. The building project broke ground last June and is scheduled to be open for the 2023 fall semester.



Photo by Carol Patrizi

Firefighter recruits vent a roof as part of their recent training in Neenah.

Fire academy lets teams learn together

Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh recruits unite for training

By Carol Patrizi
 NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Seven firefighter recruits, two from Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue and five from the Oshkosh Fire Department, are taking part in a five-week training program now in its third year.

The trainees are using a city-owned building on Brien and Smith streets south of downtown Neenah. Among other things, crews are learning how to get someone out of a second-story room with the help of a 125-pound mannequin and how to vent a roof.

Neenah-Menasha Chief Kevin Kloehn says leaders of both departments created a training manual with job performance requirements. According to Kloehn, the manual covers everything from how to pull a ladder off a truck to how to rescue someone inside a burning building.

The only area of difference is in Emergency Management Services. Kloehn says they have paramedics in Oshkosh while Neenah-Menasha has Emergency Medical Responders Advanced Level. The departments split off when it comes to this portion of the training.

Kloehn believes the repetitive training will build muscle memory.

"That will allow their skills to become

automatic," he said.

He said before the Joint Recruitment Academy, firefighters received on-the-job training. Kloehn doesn't think that was the best way to teach new firefighters because it was often interrupted by other duties.

Several interns are also participating. Kloehn says they have seven this semester. They either attend Fox Valley Technical College in Grand Chute or Northwest Technical College in Green Bay.

Kloehn believes the intern program is popular because they often hire from within. He expects to hire another 10 or 11 recruits over the next few years and feels they will become a young depart-

SEE **Fire academy** ON PAGE 7

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Amcor gift boosts Fox Valley Tech projects

A donation to Fox Valley Technical College from an area employer will help fund several automation, electronics and empowerment/career exploration projects at the college.

Amcor Cares, the corporate giving organization for Amcor Flexibles North America, made three donations to the FVTC Foundation, totaling \$118,700. They include \$58,700 to support high school teacher and faculty training, \$50,000 toward new equipment in the Industrial Manufacturing Technician lab and a \$10,000 gift to support education for young women and single mothers.

The gifts are part of Amcor's workforce development efforts to broaden availability and talent of skilled workers for the area's manufacturing job market.

Prestigious scholarship goes to Neenah senior

Neenah High School senior Lauren Sturgell is one of 174 statewide recipients of the Herb Kohl Student Excellence Scholarship for 2022. The \$10,000 award is based on exceptional scholarship, leadership, citizenship and school and community involvement.



Sturgell

Sturgell, daughter of Jeff and Dina Sturgell, has a 4.0 grade point average and participates in the Touch of Class orchestra and Satellite student newspaper.

She plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the fall to study biochemistry.

"It has become increasingly clear that the pool of technical talent – not just for Amcor, but for the many manufacturing companies that operate here – will be integral to supporting successful operations," said Vanessa Wellens, human resources and communication vice president at Amcor Flexibles. "This is why now is exactly the right time for Amcor to support Fox Valley Technical College to deliver the trained, talented workforce we'll need for the future."

The gift of \$58,700 will enhance automation education in the K-12 sector throughout the FVTC district and beyond. As the project gets underway, six schools have been chosen to receive curriculum development and teaching materials for instructors.

The gift of \$50,000 will help pay for laboratory equipment designed to evaluate

the skill levels and competencies of future machine operators. The equipment complements each of the four modules in the Industrial Manufacturing Technician apprenticeship program (safety, quality, production processes and maintenance awareness).

The \$10,000 gift will support the Starting Point 2.0 and EmpowHER programs at FVTC. Both of the pre-enrollment workshops for single mothers and young women without children are designed to help them identify and remove barriers to continuing their education.

"FVTC Foundation is proud to receive such a significant gift from Amcor for such a wide variety of programs," said Becky Boulanger, executive director of FVTC Foundation. "Amcor has been a partner to FVTC Foundation for more than 20 years."

FVTC, UWO collaboration on degree transfer program will benefit students

UW Oshkosh Today

Students in northeast Wisconsin have another path to a bachelor's degree thanks to a new partnership between the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and Fox Valley Technical College.

Under a new agreement approved by the UW System Board of Regents, students can earn a liberal arts transfer associate degree at FVTC and be eligible to transfer into a baccalaureate program at UW Oshkosh with junior status.

"This increases the educational opportunities and pathways for students in our region to complete a four-year degree at UWO," said Provost John Koker. "Offering additional pathways to a bachelor's degree, especially to nontraditional and returning adult students, is central to the mission of the University."

FVTC will offer associate of arts and associate of science degrees. Each will meet the requirements for general education courses at UWO.

The programs are made up of 60 credits, including 39 to 41 credits of general education and 19 to 21 credits of electives.

"UW Oshkosh has always been the top transfer destination for FVTC students," said Chris Matheny, FVTC president. "They have been strong partners

in creating multiple pathways from our technical degrees to bachelor's degrees. It was a natural fit that they are our first partner in this effort to expand transfer options for our students."

In recent years, a growing number of students have shown interest in beginning their college coursework at FVTC and then transferring to another school in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, said Jennifer Lanter, interim chief academic officer at FVTC.

"In fact, 6.8% of FVTC students last enrolled during the 2020-21 academic year pursued additional credentials at a four-year college or university," she said.

The two associate liberal arts degrees also were approved at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Moraine Park Technical College and Lakeshore Technical College and work is underway on transfer agreements between those schools and UWO.

Lang installed as Neenah's new mayor

Neenah News

Neenah's new Mayor Jane Lang was installed Tuesday night at the organizational meeting of the Common Council, at which three of its members also were sworn in to begin new terms after they all were re-elected in the April 5 vote.

"Thank you for putting your trust in me," Lang said after being sworn in. "My door will always be open to all of you."

Council members Kathie Boyette, Dan Steiner and Lee Hillstrom were returned to their seats, while several appointments were made to standing committees and special council committees for one- and three-year terms.

The council also had a preliminary discussion of the process for filling Lang's District 3 aldermanic seat that she held before her election.

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Greene's will celebrate a decade on tap downtown

By AJ Mikkelson
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

A popular downtown pub, Greene's Pour House, will celebrate 10 years in business downtown May 21 with an outdoor celebration to commemorate that milestone, closing off a block of Church Street

Bobby Greene believes that quality customer service "shouldn't be that hard: You treat people like my mother did, ask questions, make sure they are OK and their needs are met."

That is what motivated him to open Greene's Pour House in 2012 at Wisconsin Avenue and Church Street downtown. Greene and his family moved to Neenah when his wife, Mary, began teaching in the school district 17 years ago.

Greene believes they are in the oldest commercial building in Neenah, with a long and diverse history. Six months after opening in 2012, Greene began remodeling the upstairs.

Today, hosting parties and events in that upstairs space is a large part of his business. Greene averages 300 to 400 customers a day and has a staff of 47 people.

"Most of those are part time, but they are working 30 to 40 hours a week," Greene said.

His kitchen is normally staffed by at least seven. All customers are being served from the same kitchen that previous establishments used.

Before Greene's, the location had other restaurants that came and went quickly, but Greene has found a work-



Photo by AJ Mikkelson

Greene's Pour House will mark 10 years in downtown Neenah next month.

ing formula. At Mary's encouragement, Greene opened the front of the building with two large glass garage-style doors, something that was a benefit during the pandemic. "People felt safe," Greene said, with all that fresh air.

Beyond that, the doors helped connect the inside with the outside. Season-

ally, the outside seating is popular and enhances the overall atmosphere of the pub.

While owning the popular pub has had its challenges, Greene chose Neenah to open his pub because "the community takes care of its own." Greene believes they had a rough start 10 years

ago but customers kept coming back, giving his pub another chance. As a response to that commitment, Greene returns that sentiment by supporting the community.

With his ability to buy in bulk, Greene supports the concessions at both Neenah High School and St. Mary's Catholic High School with the hot dogs they serve. Greene sees the schools as a great way to connect with the community.

The community support was also evident during the pandemic. Only being able to offer takeout, Greene's stayed busy with tons of local support.

"There's not a ton of mark-up on food," Greene said, so it took lots of sales to support his business through the pandemic. When things began to open back up, Greene was able to set up a temporary outdoor eating area behind the restaurant, along with the open air of the front doors. Greene's popularity returned quickly.

Greene's Pour House is also popular during soccer season. The FIFA World Cup begins in November and Greene is already making plans.

Like most businesses, staffing is one of the biggest challenges of 2022. Another challenge that Greene's and other restaurants are facing is a 40% increase in food and labor costs. He knows he's not alone - all of his competitors are seeing this. Greene continues to try to think differently to retain staff and keep his customers returning.

Greene's Pour House opened a second location at the Granary building in Oshkosh in 2019, where Bobby and Mary have family.



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Local beekeeper turns his hobby into honey

By Bethanie Gengler
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Several areas in Neenah and Larsen will soon be buzzing with bees thanks to beekeeper Rance Bennett's efforts to help pollinate trees, wildflowers and gardens.

Pollination is the process that bees use to transfer pollen between plants that results in fertilization.

Bennett, a Neenah resident, started beekeeping as a hobby about three years ago after visiting a beekeeping store in Greenville. This spring, he will be setting up collections of beehives – called apiaries – at several privately owned locations, in a mutually beneficial arrangement. The property owners benefit by increased pollination of their fruit trees, gardens and flowers, and Bennett benefits by producing honey.



Bennett

"These are people that don't want to be beekeepers, they just want the pollination," Bennett said. "For instance, I have a fellow that contacted me that has 37 fruit trees and he has been having problems getting them pollinated in the past and he asked if I would be so kind as to put some bees on his property to get his fruit trees pollinated."

Neenah allows beekeeping, with certain restrictions, as long as the hives are registered with the city. Outside city limits, where Bennett's apiaries are located, there are no restrictions.

Bennett purchases the hives and sets them up at the various locations. Each hive has up to three colonies with 10,000 to 15,000 bees per colony. Bennett said he pays about \$200 for each bee colony. After setting up the hives, Bennett completes hive inspections at regular intervals. In springtime, Bennett said he also has to feed the bees.



Submitted photo

Rance Bennett's beekeeping service gets residents set up with the hive hobby.

"In the interim what they do is they pollinate trees ... and of course the wildflowers and people's gardens," he said. "There's a wide range of things that they do."

The bees also produce honey. Bennett said his first year of beekeeping, the bees produced about 60 pounds of honey. His second year, the bees produced about 200 pounds. Depending on how many colonies he sets up and how they produce, Bennett said his apiaries could produce up to 400 pounds of honey.

"Each year, as your apiary gets bigger, you get more honey," he said.

As the season progresses, the type of flowers the bees pollinate changes the color and flavor of the honey they produce from a light-colored clover tasting honey, to a dark colored honey influenced by goldenrod and asters, he said.

Bennett calls the honey he produces Nature's Finest Wildflower Honey. He

takes pride in producing honey that is raw, unfiltered, and contains vitamins and minerals. Bennett does not have a business and any proceeds from the honey his bees produce goes directly into expenses related to maintaining his hives.

"Do you know how awesome it is to sit there and watch them fly in and out of that hive?" he asked. "It's just amazing what they do and people don't realize the intricate network that they have and how they go about business."

Bennett also operates a Facebook group called This Old Hive dedicated to

Bee-friendly yards

From Sustainable Neenah

1. Mow your lawn less often and set the blade higher.
2. Overseed your lawn each spring, a thick lawn will keep weeds at bay.
3. Dandelions provide the first pollen for bees in spring. Think twice before treating lawn.
4. Don't use pesticides unless you have a specific reason. Some lawn care applications include an insecticide. These kill insects that live in the soil, which many birds eat, making the birds sick and potentially killing them.
5. Plant native species.
6. Give water and shelter: Provide a shallow bowl, about an inch deep, of water near flowering plants so the bees can drink when needed. If you put some rocks in the bowl the bees can escape. Keep some areas of bare earth; some bees are ground nesters. Dead logs and small leaf piles provide cover for pollinators over winter.

helping new beekeepers in Wisconsin. As part of his group, Bennett posts beekeeping video tutorials, which include a do-it-yourself, solar-powered honey bee watering station that he invented.

"It is so much fun being a beekeeper," he said, adding a quote by garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence: "The hum of bees is the voice of the garden."

Arete Academy names its local heroes

Neenah News

Students from the Arete Academy at Neenah High School have chosen Paul Huxtable and Hollee McInnis as winners of the fifth annual Heroes of Neenah award.

Huxtable is a well-known pastor in the community and McInnis is an intensive-care unit nurse, both of whom are being recognized for making the community a better place to live and work.

Arete Academy consists of students who use curriculum from their CORE classes – English, math, science and so-

cial studies – to solve real-world problems with a direct approach. Students apply for membership in this educational group and are willing to be curious, self-directed, excited about learning and with a strong work ethic.

The inaugural honorees were Elmer Burr and Eileen McCoy. Burr died while saving fellow soldiers during World War II on Christmas Eve in 1942. McCoy was the longtime Neenah Parks & Recreation director. Other inductees include Bob Totten, Erin Stoffel, Jody Harrell and Pat Mahoney.

The student-driven ceremony that inducts Huxtable and McInnis into the Heroes Hall of Fame is scheduled for 10 a.m. April 29.

Anyone with questions about the event can contact Emily Bennett at ebennett@neenah.k12.wi.us.

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Facility opens arms to residents seeking healing

By Bethanie Gengler
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

A clubhouse in Neenah called Friendship Place offers a space for adults with mental illness to socialize, learn new skills and find support.

Friendship Place has been around since the late 1980s. In 2001, it was incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The facility has about 500 members and sees on average about 10 to 15 visitors per day at 220 N. Commercial St.

Kris Forster said the first time she came to Friendship Place she cried during her entire visit.

"My first day here was horrible," she said. "My parents were at the end of their rope so they forced me here and I was scared."

Forster's initial fear soon turned to appreciation.

"I met a lot of nice people," she said. "It's a place where other people have the same issues that you have so you can learn how to walk the walk like we walk the walk."

The amenities at Friendship Place include a large central location for socializing, a designated art room and a cafe. Membership is free and the only requirement is that prospective members bring in a form from a psychiatrist or counselor stating they're being treated for a mental illness. The facility partners with United Way to offer the free community resource.

Program coordinator Hope Hazel said Friendship Place offers a variety of activities for their members such as presentations, art classes, games and recreational activities. The different programs and activities are decided on by the members.

"We try to get our members out in the community doing things because a lot of times they don't have people to go and do stuff with and they don't want to go and do that alone," she said. "We'll go to The Little Farmer. We'll go bowling. We all go out to

eat together. We'll go to a movie."

The activities change depending on the season. At Thanksgiving and Christmas, Hazel said Friendship Place offers their members a traditional holiday meal. In the summer, they host a carnival with different games and prizes for their members. This month, they're holding a nutrition class.

"It's kind of like the whole body that we focus on; not just mental health," Hazel said. "We try to be active and also focus on healthy eating because all of that also affects our mental health."

Other recreational activities include visits to the YMCA.

"Sometimes we play basketball," Forster said. "Sometimes we swim. It just depends on what people want to do."

The people who visit Friendship Place experience a wide range of mental health issues including anxiety, depression, bipolar, schizophrenia and personality disorders.

Executive director Lori Hill said that the Friendship Place members are often receiving state disability benefits due to their disorders.

"We like the tough cases that they struggle fitting in in the community and with other counselors," she added.

Hill said Friendship Place partners with ThedaCare's Mental Health Day Treatment Program to offer aftercare to patients finishing day treatment.

"It's been a really good partnership with them and helping their individuals who often become our members then," she said.

Friendship Place employs three paid staff members. They also have interns that hold group therapy sessions. UW Oshkosh graduate student Mckayla Zellmer began interning at Friendship Place in February.

"We run weekly groups for six weeks on different topics; stuff like healthy relationships and boundaries, gratitude and things like that," she said. "Compared to a typical counseling place for mental health it's more



Photo by Bethanie Gengler

Executive director Lori Hill (left) and Hope Hazel are shown with a table of squares for quilting.

casual and kind of like a different side of mental health. It's more fun than just one-on-one counseling."

When people struggle with mental health they often isolate which makes it difficult for them to leave their home, according to Hazel.

"Friendship Place is just a safe place to come when you're struggling or to come when you're not struggling to just not be home and to be around other people who understand what you're going through," she said.

Forster said she finds that Friendship Place offers a distraction from everyday life.

"Most of us don't necessarily bring their problems in the front door because you learn after awhile how to control them or try to leave them outside," she said. "Otherwise we'd all be crying. But, on the other hand, if somebody has a problem there's staff to talk to or there's us to talk to so

somebody usually can come up with some type of strategy to deal better with whatever we're facing."

Member Juke Cardo echoed Forster's sentiments. "While we're here the outside world doesn't exist," she said.

Cardo showed off several projects that members were working on at the clubhouse including patches spread across a table for quilt making and watercolor art that adorned the walls.

Friendship Place is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.

For anyone in the community that struggles with mental health issues and is looking for support, Forster said Friendship Place will welcome them.

"It's really scary walking in the door here but everybody tries to make you feel at home and inclusive," she said. "People can be themselves here and not be afraid."



Photo by Bethanie Gengler

Program coordinator Hope Hazel lays out quilt squares while member Juke Cardo watches.

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New principal named for Hoover Elementary

Neenah News

Lyzette Maroszek, principal at Hawthorn Hills Elementary School in Wausau for the past three years, has been named the new principal at Hoover Elementary School in Neenah.

Maroszek will replace Lexi Foerster, who will depart Hoover after the school year due to a family move.

The hire was approved Tuesday by the



Maroszek

Board of Education at its regular meeting.

Hawthorn Hills is designated a Title School with 72 percent of its population coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Maroszek previously worked eight years in the Howard-Suamico School District, teaching in third, fourth and fifth grades from 2011-15 and serving as a gifted and talented teacher for four years.

Before her career in education, Maroszek worked in the business field in the Green Bay area.

“My experience as an elementary prin-

icipal in Wausau was priceless and it has provided me with a wealth of knowledge and experience that I am excited to share and continue to grow here in Neenah,” Maroszek said. “While moving to Wausau was an incredible experience, I am even more excited to come back to the area that I know and love with my family.”

She has a degree in business finance from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and master’s degrees in curriculum and instruction from Concordia University Wisconsin and educational leadership from Viterbo University.

School employee manual updates approved by school board

Neenah News

The Neenah Joint School District’s 2022-23 employee policy manual was approved Tuesday by the Board of Education, with many of its policy changes clerical in nature and updating existing policy.

District officials said the main changes were allowing employees to continue receiving a \$1,000 annual post-employment benefit after 30 years of service and no longer providing insurance benefits in retirement for employees hired

after July 1, 2022.

The proposed changes allow all 12-month, building-level employees to take up to five days of vacation on days when students are present. This benefit was previously only afforded to employees with eight years of completed service.

Personnel changes included hiring Lyzette Maroszek as principal at Hoover Elementary and teachers Alyssa Tourville and Kristin Dolan at Washington, Derek Olson at Shattuck, Sylvia Parker at Wilson, William Westphal at Taft,

Ashley Davis at Roosevelt and Gary Bradshaw at the high school.

Samantha Powers was hired as an elementary school psychologist and Emma Mitchell will serve as a speech and language pathologist at the high school.

End-of-year resignations were approved for psychologist Ann Hatch, Lakeview and Coolidge ILTS Shelley Ropella, nurse Amy Geiger and Horace Mann, Shattuck magnet teacher Morgan Volkman and Wilson Educational Assistant Morgan Seyfert.

Energy groups discuss emergency planning for Wisconsin

Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) and the Office of Energy Innovation (OEI) hosted a discussion this month with multiple state agencies on energy security. Key stakeholders were presented with a hypothetical but realistic scenario in which a weather event disrupts the natural gas and electrical

distribution systems across a large area of the state.

The session was part of the OEI’s Statewide Assistance for Energy Reliability and Resiliency (SAFER2) initiative, which began in 2019. WEM helped to conduct a survey of tribal and county emergency managers across the state and found that 58.1% of respondents have no energy emergency response plans (62 of 84 emergency managers responded to the survey). SAFER2 is focused on helping Wisconsin’s counties and tribes implement their own plans, while strengthening the state’s own planning efforts.

“One of the goals of this initiative is improving our response to energy emergencies,” said Drew Werner, critical infrastructure planner with WEM. “Each exercise we do helps key agencies have a better understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and resources available should an energy emergency

occur.”

Over a three-year period, WEM and OEI worked with state agencies, the petroleum industry, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other partners to develop a new Wisconsin Petroleum Shortage Contingency Plan, which considers gaps in existing plans.

The new plan includes fuel conservation measures, procedures for waivers and a request process for distributing fuel and backup generators to support critical resources during an energy emergency.

The final phase of the SAFER2 initiative will be an exercise in June involving a regional response to a long-term energy emergency. WEM and OEI intend to begin sharing templates and best practices for local and tribal energy emergency plans before the end of the year.

Summer school registration opens for all grades

The three-week summer school enrichment courses for students entering kindergarten-grade 5 as well as the weeklong music and art courses for grades 1-9 in fall are available for registration.

Go to neenah.revtrak.net/Summer-School for sign-up information.

High school courses are also available. Registration ends April 29 for most courses.

Chess champ

Neenah High School varsity chess player Darin Clark went to the 2022 High School Nationals in Memphis, Tenn., recently to compete, where he took first place in his section to become the 2022 Unrated National Champion.

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NEENAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Photo from Neenah Historical Society

Clark legacy

C.B. Clark Jr., the son of C.B. Clark, one of the four founders of Kimberly Clark Corp. and the younger brother of Theda Clark Peters, passed away April 6, 1949. He served as mayor of Neenah for eight years in addition to serving as third vice president of Kimberly-Clark, and president of Riverside Paper Co. Clark was a beloved resident of Neenah, and Mayor Kalfahs declared a citywide state of mourning for his passing.



Photo by Carol Patrizi

Firefighter recruits are shown outside a training site in Neenah recently.

Fire academy

FROM PAGE 1

ment.

Besides top-notch training, Kloehn said working together makes the job easier for training officers. Fire chiefs from each department don't always have to be on scene at the same time.

Recruits from Grand Chute also have joined the training in the past, and Kloehn said participation is sometimes based on whether new firefighters are being hired. He said leaders in the Appleton Fire Department are also considering joining the program but it comes down to similar training.

"Everybody has to agree this is what we are going to do," he said.

The cost for the five-week training class is split between departments and typically held in spring. Participating recruits will graduate April 29 and be assigned to a fire station next month.



Photo by Carol Patrizi

One of the mannequins used in training exercises for firefighter recruits.

Heart of Jesus Award, Spiritus honor resident

Neenah resident John Gillen is receiving the 2022 Heart of Jesus Award from Spiritus Ministries honoring the impact that he and his late wife, Ann, have had on the organization over the past 17 years.



Gillen

Spiritus Ministries is hosting an event with a live program at 6:30 p.m. today (April 22) that can be viewed at givebutter.com/HeartofJesus2022.

The Gillens began supporting Spir-

itus' Mount Tabor Center in 2005. Through the years, John shared his experience of running successful businesses that encouraged leadership at Mount Tabor Center to strive for bigger goals, including the establishment of the Spiritus missionary team.

The Gillen family helped inspire more than 60,000 young Catholics and formed more than 130 missionaries.

"One reason we got involved is because we wanted to support vocations and see the young people at church. We challenged Spiritus to do something about it and they did," John explained.

Volunteer needs

Avid bicyclists: Cycling Without Age is looking for bicyclists to provide free trishaw bicycle rides to older adults and those with differing abilities so they can enjoy the outdoors and interact with their community. The Wisconsin Bike Federation is providing new pilot training. To enroll, visit volunteerfoxcities.org, click on "Programs" and follow the "Cycling Without Age" link or contact Jan at 920-832-9360 or rsvp@volunteerfoxcities.org.

Fox Cities SCORE: Seeking an experienced working or retired restaurant management professional to be a business mentor to small business owners in the Fox Valley and help them succeed. Mentor training is provided. Contact Keith. keller@scorevolunteer.org or visit foxcities.score.org/volunteer.

Rebuilding Together Fox Valley: Looking for volunteers to perform house repairs. Skilled volunteers are preferred, but we encourage volunteers of all skill levels to help improve our community. Contact Shelah at Shelah@rtfv.org or 920-730-2156, ext. 101.

Watershed cleanup day volunteers welcome

The 2022 Fox-Wolf Watershed Cleanup set for May 7 at lakes, rivers and streams throughout the Fox River and Wolf River basins is continuing to accept volunteers in its goal to have 1,500 registered volunteers to take part.

Cleanup locations in the Neenah area include Fritse Park and the Rydell Conservancy, the kayak site at Herb & Dolly Smith Park and near Badger Labs, and on Doty Island.

Valley Packaging Industries: Seeking volunteers who would love to coach for Special Olympics. Help athletes achieve greatness on and off the field by training them in a sport of your interest. Volunteers must register to coach on Special Olympics website. For more information, contact Kaitlin at 262-202-6548 or kbeatie@vpind.com.

Fox Valley Literacy: Seeking volunteer tutors for about one hour a week to work with adult students getting their GED, learning English, and preparing to get American citizenship. Training and ongoing support provided. For information, contact Paola at paola@foxvalleylit.org or 920-991-9840.

Phone Pals: Looking for volunteers who enjoy casual phone conversations and are willing to make regular calls to a participant in the Phone Pals program. Interested volunteers are required to complete an application and pass a standard background check.

Contact info@volunteerfoxcities.org or call 920-832-9360.

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While doctors debate, Lyme disease patients suffer

Tick-borne infection shows many lingering symptoms

By Zhen Wang
WISCONSIN WATCH

If life had gone as planned, Maria Alice Lima Freitas would be in medical school, inspired by the career of her father, a surgeon who practiced in Brazil. But instead of changing careers, the 49-year-old therapist retired from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Freitas says her undiagnosed Lyme disease has sapped her energy, fogged her thinking and caused pain in her neck, shoulders, hands and right knee. She has three times deferred her entrance into medical school while struggling with myriad symptoms that she attributes to Lyme.

Most of her doctors say she is mistaken, and that her symptoms, which began in 2015, are due to rheumatoid arthritis.

Freitas is among thousands of Wisconsinites who say they are suffering from a chronic or long-term version of the disease. The infection comes from tiny ticks primarily found in the northeastern United States, including in Wisconsin — which is a hot spot for Lyme, ranking No. 5 among states for Lyme cases in 2019.

Nationally, Lyme disease infects an estimated 476,000 people a year. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services reports the state had 3,076 estimated cases of Lyme disease in 2020 — a doubling in the past 15 years. But medical entomologists say Lyme cases in the state could be 10 times higher than reported.

The medical establishment calls Lyme a short-term disease that usually quickly resolves with antibiotics. Self-described “Lyme-literate” practitioners argue patients like Freitas suffer from a long-haul version of the disease, often called chronic Lyme disease.

The orthodox position held by most scientific experts and some professional associations — and endorsed by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — is that Lyme disease is an acute infectious disease. Clinical diagnosis is based on a “bull’s-eye” rash, other specific symptoms and two-tiered antibody tests. Treatment is by short courses of oral antibiotics. And persistent symptoms rarely occur.

The standard antibody testing for Lyme disease, cleared by the Food and Drug Administration and endorsed by insurance companies, has been criticized by patients and practitioners as inadequate to detect all cases of the disease. Some practitioners offer alternative tests and



Maria Alice Lima Freitas pays about \$1,200 a month for medicine, vitamins and treatment for her chronic Lyme disease. She is pictured at her home in Middleton with husband John Oppenheimer.

Photo by Coburn Dukehart

treatments, but insurance does not cover the cost of their care. And in extreme situations, such doctors risk disciplinary action.

For most people, Lyme disease is treatable and curable. Most patients report their symptoms cleared after a short course of antibiotics if the infection is recognized and treated early. Another 10-20% of patients develop more severe cases whose symptoms include debilitating pain, fatigue, brain fog, irritability and sleep disorders.

Wisconsin Watch has spoken with five people in addition to Freitas whose persistent, subjective symptoms fall outside of the mainstream definition of Lyme as an acute disease. Caught in the middle of

the debate, they face emotional, physical, mental and financial exhaustion as they bounce between specialists in search of explanations for their pain.

Dr. Elizabeth Maloney, a family physician from Minnesota who leads the Partnership for Tick-Borne Diseases Education, said the latest guidelines on Lyme disease treatment leave such patients out.

“They do not really talk about what to do with patients who do not fully recover,” said Maloney, who helped write the guidelines. “It’s kind of a black box.”

Dark-skinned patients face particular difficulties in getting a Lyme diagnosis. Identifying the red target symbol over light skin tone is easy for light-skinned people, but not so with dark skin tones.

A recent UCLA study found that 34% of Black patients with Lyme disease had neurological complications compared to just 9% of whites, suggesting the disease may not have been recognized for many Black patients in earlier stages when it’s easier to treat.

Physician reports first state case in 1970

In 1970, a Wisconsin dermatologist first documented what would soon be called Lyme disease across the country. Dr. Rudolph J. Scrimenti, a dermatologist in Milwaukee, reported the first case in the United States of the signature rash of early Lyme disease.

The patient had removed a tick from his skin three months earlier in north-central Wisconsin. Scrimenti treated the patient with penicillin based on medical literature he had read out of Europe. In a 1970 journal article, he called the cause of the disease “uncertain.” A few years later, the disease was tied to ticks and named after the town in Connecticut with a cluster of cases.

Researchers in Wisconsin continue to study the spread of black-legged “deer” ticks and the long-term impact of Lyme disease. In a recent presentation, Susan Paskewitz, a medical entomologist at University of Wisconsin-Madison, said ticks have “invaded our state entirely” and, as the climate warms, are marching into Canada.

Xia Lee, a tick biologist in Paskewitz’s lab, has studied the insects for more than a decade. Lee said Lyme-bearing ticks “are always born uninfected,” but they pick up infections as they feed on animal hosts.

Lee noted that Wisconsin never got the proper recognition as the site of the first case of the disease.

“We like to joke about it and say that Wisconsin was actually the first state where Lyme disease was detected,” he said, “but we never got the glory for naming (it).”

Diagnoses: Viral infection and arthritis

Freitas’ Lyme journey began in March 2019 as she battled monthly bouts of fever. She had trouble falling back to sleep late at night. Her hair rapidly fell out. And her body ached and her neck was stiff. She suffered from severe pain in her joints, bones and chest. She also felt tired. Fevers hit her in June and again in July.

SEE **Lyme disease** ON PAGE 9



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Lyme disease

FROM PAGE 9

By August of that year, Freitas took a medical leave, unable to work.

She checked into a Madison hospital for a couple of days. She said the doctor ordered a variety of tests — but not for Lyme. Freitas was diagnosed with a viral infection, which she said failed to explain her full slate of symptoms, including electric sensations on her face and arms and forgetfulness.

Four summers earlier, Freitas said she similarly felt eye pain, knuckle pain, fatigue, forgetfulness and headaches. She recalled a rash that had stayed on her leg for at least three weeks. Freitas saw a rheumatologist at St. Mary's in early July 2015.

The doctor noticed a red spot on her leg, but it was not the classic Lyme sign of "bull's-eye" rash. She recalls being tested for Lyme, but the two-step testing came back negative.

The doctor deemed the red spot a likely spider bite and diagnosed her with arthritis. After taking pain medication for a month, Freitas began to feel better. When more symptoms took hold in 2019, Freitas started reading articles about Lyme disease.

Freitas floated the Lyme hypothesis to a rheumatologist, who felt the joint pain and hand swelling looked more like rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Test results also suggested Freitas may have RA.

CDC recommends a two-step testing process for determining whether a person has Lyme disease. Both blood tests must come out positive — or at least indeterminate — for a Lyme diagnosis to be made, the agency recommends.

Freitas tested positive in the first stage

of testing but not the second, showing three bands instead of the five that the CDC says are proof of Lyme disease.

She took a different type of test from IGeneX. It indicated she did have Lyme disease. However, IGeneX testing is not conclusive, said Elitza Theel, who directs Mayo Clinic's Infectious Diseases Serology Laboratory.

"Their criteria are less stringent than the CDC," Theel said, "which will lead to a higher number of false positive results."

Even friends and family members question whether the symptoms Freitas describes are real.

"When everybody is saying that it is not Lyme," Freitas said, "you start to question yourself."

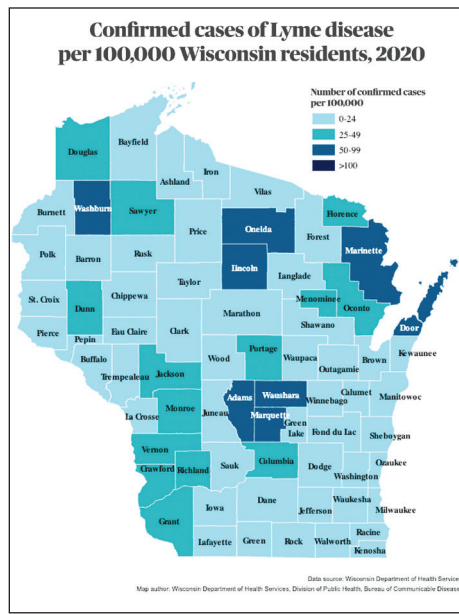
Two camps with two different approaches

A survey of more than 2,400 U.S. patients found that 50% of the respondents reported seeing at least seven physicians before a Lyme diagnosis, and more than half continued to suffer symptoms for at least six months after the recommended short course of antibiotics.

Freitas saw a long string of mainstream physicians for a diagnosis. Then, in the spring of 2020, she began seeing out-of-network doctors in and outside of Wisconsin, and many of them didn't take insurance.

She tried an intravenous antibiotic therapy but it didn't work, and she rapidly dropped 30 pounds. She continued to search for doctors.

Freitas began seeing Dr. Samuel Shor, a Virginia-based internist, who works for the Tick-Borne Illness Center of Excellence in Woodruff, Wisconsin. Shor, who also is a clinical associate professor at George Washington University, sees



patients in Wisconsin via telemedicine, charging \$490 for an initial consultation.

Dean Nardelli is an associate professor who studies later-stage Lyme disease at the UW-Milwaukee's Biomedical Sciences Lab Programs. Nardelli said Lyme disease patients exhibit a variety of symptoms and severity, sometimes caused by the inflammatory responses against the microbes.

Nardelli is investigating how the immune system is affected by the Lyme bacterium, research that could contribute to treatments for people with prolonged reactions after the infection. He said science can be a slow process of acquiring new knowledge, and it's "tough" for patients who are suffering with no clear answers.

That can lead them to seek out untrustworthy practitioners or fall for costly treatments that don't work. "You go out and find doctors that diagnose everything as Lyme disease," Nardelli said.

Freitas said she trusts Shor, who has embraced her IGeneX test results for Lyme and has also diagnosed her as hav-

ing several afflictions: babesiosis, which has some of the same symptoms as Lyme and can come from the same ticks; bartonella, also known as cat scratch fever; and chronic fatigue syndrome.

Freitas now takes Epsom salt baths and uses an infrared sauna for "detoxification." And she takes 30 pills each day, interspersing antibiotics with herbs and dietary supplements, which cost upwards of \$1,200 a month.

And she meets with Shor monthly online from her house at a charge of \$250 per visit, which insurance does not cover.

"It was to me (that) the money is well paid. I'm having peace of mind," Freitas said. "I feel like I'm getting better."

Freitas said she started regaining weight and her mind is a bit clearer. "I'm getting out of the graveyard," she said.

But her husband, John Oppenheimer is more cautious, saying to Freitas: "What I'm seeing is you're better relative to the beginning of (2021), because you're still not good."

Former WPR/Wisconsin Watch reporter Bram Sable-Smith contributed to this story. The nonprofit Wisconsin Watch (www.WisconsinWatch.org) collaborates with WPR, PBS Wisconsin, other news media and the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

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Obituaries

Clarence J. Gruse Jr.

Skeeter Gruse, age 82, of Appleton, died on Friday, March 25, 2022. He was born in Oshkosh on November 16, 1939; the son of Clarence and Helen (Peerenboom) Gruse. Skeeter married Lori Harnitz on October 3, 1989 and had 32 wonderful years together.

Skeeter served in the USMC from 1957-1960. Skeeter retired from Schroeder Moving Systems/United Van Lines after driving coast to coast moving people for over 40 years. He was a lifetime member of the Winnebago Detachment Marine Corps League #357 and a member of Pound 44 Devil Dogs in Oshkosh. He enjoyed hunting and spending time with Lori at their land in Neshkoro.

Survivors include two daughters Cynthia (Mario) Terrones of Neenah and Lori Petersen of Greenville; two sons: Daniel (Traci) Gruse of Oshkosh; Erick (Konstance) of Neenah. In addition to 25 grandchildren and numerous nieces and

nephews.

He is further survived by four brothers: Clyde (Pam) Gruse, Rodney (Laura) Gruse, David (Cindy), and Dennis (Fiancée Cindy Smith) all of Oshkosh. Five sisters Janice Coe, of Oshkosh, Wendy Gruse of Fond du lac, Mary (Larry) Kryzaniak Sr., of Oshkosh, Helen Paulick of Oshkosh, and Carol (Don) Schlichting, of Pine River.

Skeeter was preceded in death by his parents, and one sister Corinne Gruse.

There will be a celebration of his life on Saturday, April 23, 2022 from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. at the Marine Corps League Clubhouse, 4715 Sherman Road, in Oshkosh. Rev. Ed Demler will preside over a memorial service at 2:30 p.m. Following the service, the Winnebago Detachment Marine Corps League #357 will hold a short service followed by military honors.

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Neenah's Carstens has valuable resource in Taschner

By Tim Froberg
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

The chances of a Little Leaguer making it to the Major Leagues are calculated at roughly 0.03 percent.

Those that beat the incredible odds and reach "The Show" possess rare and valuable knowledge.

Jaeden Carstens gets this. That's why whenever Neenah baseball coach Jack Taschner speaks, Carstens tries to absorb every word. Carstens' willingness to learn from an advanced baseball mind is one of the reasons he's regarded as one of the state's elite pitchers.



Carstens

Carstens, Neenah's senior right-hander, was a first-team selection on the 2021 all-Fox Valley Association team and is one of the key players on a talented Rockets squad.

A year ago, Carstens posted a 4-1 record with a 1.79 earned run average. He had 27 strikeouts in 31 1/3 innings and threw two complete games.

Carstens has benefited from working with Taschner, a former Major League pitcher who played in the big leagues from 2005-2010 for San Francisco Giants, Philadelphia Phillies, Pittsburgh Pirates and Los Angeles Dodgers. A left-hander who played college

Senior Spotlight

ball at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Taschner compiled a 10-5 record in the majors with 160 strikeouts in 189 innings.

"He (Taschner) is very smart and 100 percent supportive," Carstens said. "He's not one of those guys who is going to be yelling in your face if you make a mistake. He understands that baseball is a game of failure. One of the things he tells us is that even hall of famers fail 90 percent of the time. So, there is plenty of room for failure."

This isn't the first time Carstens has worked with Taschner. At the age of 12, he took pitching lessons from Taschner, who settled in the Appleton area following his retirement from baseball. Carstens also played summer ball for Taschner two years later.

"He gave me a good foundation at a young age," said Carstens. "When you're 12, no kid really knows how to pitch at all. Even at 18, I can't say I know exactly what I'm doing on the mound. But I've really learned a lot from him."

Indeed he has. In his first FVA start of the season April 12 against Hortonville, Carstens allowed just one hit and struck out 11 in 5 1/3 scoreless innings, leading the Rockets to a 1-0 win.

"Even when he's not talking to me - when he's talking to other pitchers about their mechanics - I always listen and try to apply it to myself," Carstens said.

Carstens' top pitch is a two-seam fastball. He also throws a four-seam fastball along with a curveball, changeup and slider. His fastball tops out around 86 mph.

"I'm just trying to throw strikes as much as possible and get outs," he said. "It doesn't matter to me if it's a ground ball or a strikeout - as long as it's an out."

Taschner likes more than just Carstens' repertoire of pitches. He's extremely impressed with his poise, composure and competitiveness.

"Jaeden is a unique competitor," Taschner said. "He's very intelligent coupled with a great ability to never get rattled. We always talk about making the peaks and valleys as close together as possible to stay in command. He's as good at doing this as any player I have coached."

Baseball is the only prep sport that Carstens plays, but it's not just a two-month spring fling. He also pitches during summers for the Waukesha Stiks, a highly competitive club baseball team.

"Pitching has always been my thing, ever since I started as a 9-year-old," Carstens said. "I always found that the most fun I had playing baseball was when I was on the mound. It gives you a chance to control a lot of situations. You can't totally control the outcome of a game, but you can play a big role in it."

Carstens will play the game at the next level. He has committed to play college baseball at the University of Milwaukee School of

Engineering. Carstens is an exceptional student with a 3.86 grade-point average.

"There were some schools that reached out to me that didn't have engineering programs and I would have loved to play at those places," he said. "But I just really needed that engineering aspect. I've been interested in engineering since I was a kid. When I got to high school, I knew that it was what I wanted to do."

"Most likely, I'm not going to play at a higher level than college, so you definitely need a fallback plan. Plus, I just like the big-city environment. I visited the campus and it seemed like I fit right in."

Taschner is confident that Carstens will be a great fit for the school's baseball program and will excel as an engineer - if that's what he pursues.

"Jaeden will find success wherever he goes and with whatever he does," Taschner said. "He's just that kind of person. He's a true pleasure to coach."

Carstens is one of several seasoned starters that form the backbone of a talented Neenah team looking to challenge for the FVA title.

"Team-wise, state is our main goal, but we'd really like to get that conference championship," Carstens said. "We have nine seniors back, including the FVA player of the year (Gradin Taschner), which is nice. Personally, I just want to go out there and do me... and do what I do best. I want to be the best pitcher I can for this team."

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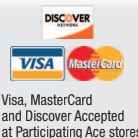
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Calendar of events

Public Library
"Puffs," Neenah High School Rocket Players, 7 p.m., Pickard Auditorium
"Primordial Shift and the Art of Michael Meilahn" exhibit opens, Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

April 24

"Puffs," Neenah High School Rocket Players, 2 p.m., Pickard Auditorium

Thursday, April 28

Neenah High School band concert, 7:30 p.m., Pickard Auditorium
Kitchen Tour, 10 a.m., five southeast Neenah locations

Friday, April 29

ZephyrFest, 5 p.m., Fox Cities Exposition Center

April 22

"Puffs," Neenah High School Rocket Players, 7 p.m., Pickard Auditorium
Family roller-skating party, 5:30 p.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee

April 23

Fox Valley Roller Derby, 11 a.m., The Plaza
Plein Air Painting, 10 a.m., Neenah

Teen pleads no contest in school lockdown case

A 17-year-old from Appleton pleaded no contest last week in Winnebago County Circuit Court to an aggravated battery charge related to a threat that locked down Neenah High School in October.

Robert Lehto was given a deferred prosecution or sentence April 14 by Branch 2 Judge Scott Woldt after he pleaded to the battery charge that was reduced from two charges of making ter-

rorist threats.

Police said a girl called 911 to report Lehto, her ex-boyfriend, had sent her a photo of a rifle and video of him driving to Neenah High School. School authorities then locked down the high school and two nearby elementary schools before Lehto was found at his home.

He told police he went to the school to confront the girl's current boyfriend but later left without incident.

Valley Transit center, buses lift mask mandate

Valley Transit is now following Transportation Security Administration rules based on a federal court decision to end its mask requirement on buses or inside the transit center.

Valley Transit will continue to have safety measures in place including enhanced cleaning, driver barriers and bus air puri-

fication systems.

Everyone may now choose whether they want to wear a mask and the CDC continues to recommend masks in indoor public transportation settings.

Those with questions or concerns can contact Valley Transit at 920-832-5800.

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