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Submitted photo

Cindy and Geoff Hendren discovered they were a match as a couple long ago and then more recently when Cindy needed a kidney.

Kidney donation was couple's special match

By Christopher Ulrich
 ROTARY CLUB OF NEENAH

It began with a match years ago and thousands of miles away that brought two hearts together in love, and it grew into a special kind of match that saved a life.

Cindy and Geoff Hendren own and operate Bon Voyage Boutique Travel in downtown Neenah. Three years ago, Cindy was diagnosed with a kidney disease. While not the most welcome news it was not completely a surprise, as a genetic form of kidney disease runs in her family.

The disease progressed quickly, and by

September 2020 she was referred out to begin the process for a kidney transplant. Wouldn't you know, Geoff was a match for Cindy. The chances of such a match are low, less than 15%, even with matching blood types.

This is a magical tale of two people from different parts of the world (Geoff hailing from New Zealand), destined to meet in Wisconsin after connecting on Match.com, and then years into their marriage Geoff is the kidney match to save his be-

SEE **Kidney donation** ON PAGE 6

City to help get Shopko site updated

By Bethanie Gengler
 NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

The empty Shopko building in Neenah could soon see new business. An approved budget proposal would spend \$950,000 to remodel the vacant building located at 699 S. Green Bay Road.

Wisconsin-based Shopko filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2019 and closed all of its stores, leaving vacant buildings across the state. Community development and assessment director Chris Haese wrote in a memo to the city's Finance Committee that other than inquiries to reuse the building as a church or as a storage facility, there was little interest in the former retailer's building.

The building was listed at auction in 2021 but no bidders covered the minimum bid, Haese said. Immediately after the auction closed, developers Phil and Larry Langohr purchased the property for \$1.6 million under the name Spring Creek Center II.

The Langohrs are experienced developers who own the adjacent Neenah Festival Foods and they completed development on the Walmart and Kohls on the city's west side.

Haese said that after purchasing the Shopko building, the Langohrs initiated conversations with Community Development to discuss potential redevelopment options for the 94,000-square-foot site.

"Given the evolution of the retail market away from large box development, it is apparent the most feasible outcome for the site is to repurpose the building to a multitenant configuration," Haese said.

In order to repurpose the building, construction is needed to remove an existing mezzanine, improve flooring, repair and replace HVAC systems, prepare tenant spaces, reconstruct the parking lot and install landscaping.

The renovation would transform the vacant building from a single retail store to

SEE **Shopko building** ON PAGE 3

INSIDE



Getting healthy
Rockets' Taschner tallies
hits while healing
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Plenty of poppies
American Legion plans
annual distribution
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Firefighters plan for 10th Backdraft Bike Tour fundraiser

Annual event brings support to variety of area organizations

By AJ Mikkelson
 NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

When your job is a firefighter, many people will thank you for your service. Often, those firefighters who serve their community look beyond the on-duty time for ways to give back to that community.

The firefighters at Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue also operate an organization that helps fund worthwhile causes. The Neenah-Menasha Firefighters Charitable Foundation exists to give back to the residents and visitors of Neenah and Menasha. Their biggest annual fundraiser event is now in its 10th year.

The Backdraft Bike Tour is set for June 12 with the primary recipient of the fund-

raiser being the Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin Charitable Foundation (PFFWCF) Summer Camp for Burn Injured Youth. The money will help pay for the cost of campers to attend.

This year's tour will feature new routes and distance options that range from 10 to 100 miles, suitable for all ages and abilities.

Beginning in 2012, the bike tour was the idea of tour coordinator Capt. Tim Patterson of Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue. Before the Backdraft Bike Tour launched, the Charitable Foundation raised money through concerts at Fox Cities Stadium or the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.

Neenah-Menasha firefighters were looking for something more homegrown that would better fit the cities. Patterson,

SEE **Bike tour** ON PAGE 7



Photo from Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue

The 10th annual Backdraft Bike Tour will have participants doing plenty of pedaling, but also having a good time for an important cause.

Neenah News

Local news for you

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Advertising deadline is noon Friday for the following Friday. The classified line ads deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday for Friday.

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Photo by David Hall

Roller Derby fans

The Fox Cities Roller Derby club was skating at The Plaza on Saturday to promote their upcoming season and the sport. The team expects to return to competitions next winter after being stalled by the pandemic for the past two years.

Medal of Honor winner from city dies

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society announced that Medal of Honor recipient Kenneth E. Stumpf, a native of Neenah, passed away April 23 in Tomah at age 77.

On April 25, 1967, U.S. Army Spc. 4th Class Stumpf was in Duc Pho, Vietnam, when his platoon came under heavy fire from well-fortified enemy bunkers. Three of his fellow servicemen were injured. Ignoring the fire that was concentrated on him, Stumpf left cover three times to carry each one back to friendly lines.

Stumpf then organized the remaining men to neutralize two enemy bunkers. Stumpf took on a third bunker by himself, despite machine gun fire directed on him, enabling the success of the mission and preventing further loss of American sol-

diers.

For his actions that day, Stumpf was presented the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon B. Johnson on Sept. 19, 1968, in a White House ceremony.

Stumpf was born in Neenah on Sept. 28, 1944. He was drafted in 1965 from a factory job. He served three tours in Vietnam. In 1944, he retired from the Army as a sergeant major after 29 years of service.

When asked about his actions that day, Stumpf replied, "I've always said I didn't do anything above and beyond the call of duty. What I did was my duty. I had to do that... it was a responsibility that I had to my men."

He is survived by three children and numerous grandchildren. Burial arrangements are pending.

Hydrant flushings to happen south of Cecil beginning in May

Starting around May 16 south of Cecil Street in Neenah, Water Department crews will be flushing hydrants from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. to remove accumulated rust

and mineral deposits.

Residents near those activities are asked not to use water for about 30 minutes to allow any fine particles to settle down. If water is run and discoloration noticed, do not run hot water for at least 15 minutes and flush out the discolored water

through the cold faucet.

Officials said that although the water may temporarily be discolored, it is safe to drink. The discoloration is from rust and mineral deposits scoured from inside of the pipes. Questions can be directed to 920-886-6191.



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Photo from Neenah Historical Society



Early head nurse

The Visiting Nurse Association was established April 23, 1908. Ida Heinicke was the first visiting nurse for the organization. She visited more than 100 patients in their homes in her first month of service. She most often went on foot throughout the city, though a Model T was purchased for her in later years as her patient load grew.

Winneconne bridge, park work backed

Neenah News

The Board of Public Works this week recommended approval of a \$217,847 contract for repairs to the Winneconne Avenue bridge and \$165,669 for the first phase of upgrades at Kimberly Point Park.

The bridge repairs will include the deck in different locations, expansion joint replacements at each end, and repair of a column on the pier west of the railroad tracks that has shown concrete failure due to water penetration. A bid from Pfeifer Brothers Construction of Green Bay was chosen for the bridge work and the city will use 2022 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding and CIP facility reserves.

The Kimberly Point construction contract is the first part of upgrading the park area with recreational trail and some road work. Martell Construction of Green Bay was chosen for the project if approved by the Common Council using budgeted project funds and Public Infrastructure Fund reserves.

The project will continue the trail on Lakeshore Drive to North Park Avenue along with a sidewalk added for a short strip to complete a loop with the Riverside Park trail.

The Public Services & Safety Committee also recommended the work Tuesday after the Board of Public Works' action. Future projects planned at Kimberly Point include shoreline improvements and restroom updates at the lighthouse.

Design work and archaeological permitting was previously approved as part of the preliminary work. There will be an estimated three days of archaeological monitoring to assure there are no ancient burial sites or artifacts that would need to be excavated and reviewed.

Latest Winnebago County plat book takes new route

By Dan Roherty
NEENAH NEWS

Winnebago County's newest land plat book is out with a five-year update and more visual options through a partnership with a national mapping service.

The Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Department contracted with Mapping Solutions for its 2022 plat book that had previously been an in-house project to provide the definitive private and public land ownership guide.

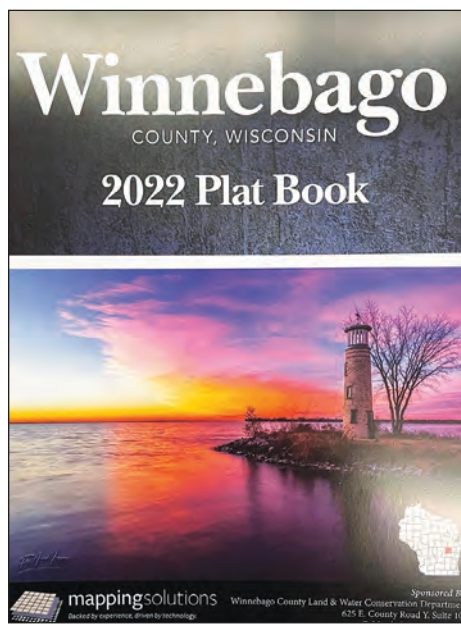
Andy Maracini, a GIS specialist for the county's Land & Water Conservation Department, said what used to be called cartography is now all about geographic information systems (GIS) commonly used by cellphones and other online devices.

"Computers kind of took over, probably starting in the late '80s and into the '90s," Maracini said. "I started my mapping career with ink and pens back when I was in college and doing forestry maps, so I've seen the whole transition."

The latest spiral-bound book serves the same function as previous versions with standard land ownership map pages showing townships and ranges within the county, including property boundaries for rural parcels.

"The way a plat book is developed, it's still a basic land ownership map and its purpose hasn't changed over many, many years that we have done them," Maracini said.

Mapping Solutions brings with it a phone-friendly SmartMap that updates land ownership, an eBook version and wall map options. The updated edition also includes a current county govern-



ment directory page, county road map, road index and multiple lake maps.

Maracini said the maps have added bathymetry, or contour depths, for county lakes such as Winnebago, Winneconne and Butte des Morts for fishing and boating interests.

Plat book sales have fallen off in recent years as other online map resources have expanded. Maracini said the new partnership allows the county to stop ordering larger quantities of the hard copies to keep the cost down and opens the possibility of shortening the time between book updates.

"Having that hard copy is useful too, and we recognize that; that's why we continue to do it," he said. "Some counties have completely stopped producing plat books."

Plat information is valuable to those who own land in Winnebago Coun-



The latest Winnebago County plat book offers more than just a book of maps.

ty along with prospective or adjoining property owners, hunters, foresters, farmers and emergency services.

The 2022 plat book is available for \$35 at the Winnebago County Land & Wa-

ter Conservation Department, 625 E. County Y, Suite 100 and the Winnebago County Clerk's Office at 112 Otter Ave in Oshkosh. For more information, contact 920-232-1950.



Neenah News

The former Shopko building on South Green Bay Road is expected to get an overhaul to make way for new businesses.

Shopko building

FROM PAGE 1

accommodate four to seven tenants. No potential tenants have been publicly announced.

An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 square feet of space would remain vacant to provide options for reuse other than retail, Haese wrote in his memo.

The Langhorns will also create at least one outlot development on the 8-acre site, adjacent to Green Bay Road.

Last month the Common Council voted to provide an annual assistance payment totaling \$950,000 to rehab the building for future tenants. The funding will be pulled from Tax Incremental District 7.

The renovations are expected to increase the taxable value of the property by about \$5 million over three years.

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Legion Family readies for poppy distribution

By Cheryl Hentz
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

You've no doubt seen them outside of some of your favorite Neenah area stores, handing out poppies in late May. The American Legion Family members are getting ready to distribute them again ahead of this year's Memorial Day.

On May 2, Mayor Jane Lang will sign an official proclamation designating May 26 and 27 as poppy distribution days, and May 27 as National Poppy Day. But do you really know the significance of poppies or why they're distributed in May, even though they could be distributed anytime during the year?

During World War I, when the soldiers were fighting on the front lines in Europe, with some – sadly – being killed in action, poppies were growing in the nearby fields. After the war, poppies flourished even more all over Europe.

"The red poppy stands for the blood that was shed during that war," following the publication of the wartime poem "In Flanders Fields," written by Lt. Col. John McCrae, a physician serving on the front lines, said Char Kiesling, unit president of the American Legion Auxiliary for the Neenah area.

The poppy originated with one woman who started making poppies for soldiers to wear when they came back. The effort grew in popularity and on Sept. 27, 1920, the poppy became the official memorial flower of the American Legion Family to honor those who served and died for our country in WWI and all wars since. It seeks to remind Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms.



The American Legion will once again be distributing poppies around the community leading to Memorial Day, while Mayor Jane Lang is set to designate May 27 as National Poppy Day.

In 1924, the distribution of poppies became a national program of the American Legion Auxiliary. Around the same time, the American Legion also asked Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day. Poppy Day is celebrated in several other countries throughout the world.

These days U.S. veterans make the poppies, using crepe paper. They get a small amount of money per poppy for making them and each unit buys a certain number. The Auxiliary in Neenah usually buys 5,000 to distribute. Because there aren't enough Auxiliary members to cover all the stores, members of Haw-



ley-Dieckhoff American Legion Post 33 help Auxiliary members distribute poppies, with a request that the person receiving the flower make a donation to support the future of veterans, active-duty military personnel and their families with medical and financial needs.

Michael Dart, commander of Neenah Post 33, is one of several post members who helps distribute poppies. He's been with the American Legion for about 16 years altogether, two of which were in Appleton and the rest with Post 33.

As a nine-year member of the U.S. Navy Seabees, Dart was deployed three times – once to Beirut and twice to the Gulf region during the Persian Gulf War. He knows how important donations to the Poppy Fund are.

"One hundred percent of the money goes into a Poppy Fund to help veterans. Any veteran who comes to us and needs

any help – financial or (otherwise) – that's what the money is used for. We don't use it for anything else," he said.

Because the Neenah post helps the Auxiliary, Kiesling, a 47-year member of the Auxiliary, said they give a portion of the donations to them for their help but agrees that the money must be spent on veterans or veterans' care and added that most all of it is spent in Wisconsin.

This year the American Legion Family will distribute poppies at Krueger's Hardware Store, Festival Foods, both Neenah Pick 'n Save stores, Neenah Plaza and Kwik Trip stores in Neenah and in Fox Crossing.

"When you give a donation for a poppy or wear a poppy, you are honoring a veteran. That's the most important thing," Kiesling said, adding that the Neenah community has always been generous. Over a two-day period, the auxiliary usually raises about \$4,500 to help veterans.

"We are always so grateful for the community's support," she said.

There are many ways individuals and groups can help bring greater awareness to this symbolic flower, honor our fallen and support the living heroes on National Poppy Day, May 27. Here are a few:

- Wear a red poppy all day and tell everyone why: that you are honoring the fallen and supporting the living who have worn the nation's uniform.
- Distribute poppies to friends, co-workers and family and tell everyone why.
- Collect donations at your workplace to give to the Poppy Program. Contact the Auxiliary for a collection can.
- Tell the story on Facebook of who you are wearing your poppy to remember or support on National Poppy Day.
- Accept a poppy and make a donation if you see a member of the American Legion Family in your neighborhood or at a store where you're shopping and they are distributing poppies.

ThedaCare board adds two members

Two leaders have joined the ThedaCare board of trustees, the governing body for the local, not-for-profit health care organization. Trustee chair Jim Kotek announced that Laurie Carter and Mary Goggans have been elected to the board.

Carter is the 17th president of Lawrence University, where she assumed the position in July. Before joining Lawrence University in Appleton, Carter served as president of Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, Pa.

Goggans is president of Encapsys LLC, and a member of the Encapsys board of directors and executive committee. She joined Appvion in 2012 as director of corporate development and innovation and moved to the Encapsys division where she served as executive director and general manager from 2013-2014.

Goggans had a long career at Kimberly-Clark Corp. and currently sits on the boards of directors for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley and New North.

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RAIN OR SHINE



Photo by David Hall

Outside artists

Young artists were invited to paint outdoors Saturday morning at the Neenah Public Library as part of a Plein Air event. Materials and general instruction on the artistic process were provided.

Camera donation helps trauma nurses with cases

A donation from Kimberly-Clark to the ThedaCare Family of Foundations has helped to provide a new, specialized camera for the ThedaCare Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program.

SANE launched in 2016 to provide compassionate care to survivors of sexual assault and abuse with trained nurses helping victims while also assisting law enforcement to gather evidence.

“With this new piece of equipment, I hope our law enforcement partners will be able to look to us for help with more than sexual assault cases, perhaps situations of domestic abuse, physical abuse and child abuse,” said Leah Eckhart, ThedaCare clinical program specialist for the program. “We also hope that more of our survivors can receive the justice they deserve.”

SANE nurses follow forensic procedures to arm law enforcement with evidence if it becomes necessary for a court case. Photo evidence is crucial when it comes to prosecuting sexual assault and domestic abuse cases. The camera is a specialized forensic



ThedaCare photo

A specialized camera shown here will help trauma nurses document sexual assault cases.

camera and photo storage system.

Amanda Charais, regional development director for the ThedaCare Family of Foundations, said the camera has filters that can potentially show bruising not likely to be captured by a standard camera. The camera operates on a foot pedal and has secure storage that allows nurses

to provide the photos to law enforcement or child advocacy groups through encryption.

The overall impact of this generous gift will benefit the community for years to come.

“Often, our patients come to the exam room alone,” said Eckhart. “I want them to know that they are not leaving the room alone. Our team members provide expert medical forensic care and emotional support as well. And it goes beyond the hospital walls.”

Vaccination Toolkit offered by county

The Vaccination Toolkit, a new customized media campaign from the Winnebago County Health Department, provides access to printable posters, social media posts, videos and other forms of media based on the message, I am the Change.

Local businesses and organizations are

encouraged by health officials to spread the message on COVID-19 vaccinations, which they said continues to be the most effective way to keep businesses thriving and communities safe.

Visit wcvaccine.org/toolkit for details and to take part in the campaign.

Calendar of events

April 29

Arbor Day Celebration, 10 a.m., Washington Park

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

May 1

Red's Spring Market and Flower Love, 10 a.m., Red Door Mercantile, 130 W Wisconsin Ave.

May 4

Touch A Truck, 10 a.m., Memorial Park

May 6-8

Flatgrass Soccer Tournament, Memorial Park

May 7

Spring Fling, 10 a.m., downtown Neenah

Fox-Wolf Watershed Cleanup, 9 a.m., Herb and Dolly Smith Park

Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

Commercial St. repair work gets underway

Sanitary sewer repair work on South Commercial Street is underway through June 30 from Wright to Byrd avenues. Access through the construction zone will be limited to southbound traffic.

A detour for northbound traffic will be posted using Byrd Avenue, Marathon Avenue and Cecil Street.

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Local Hmong firefighter continues to blaze new trail

By Carmelyn Daley-Hinkens
FVTC COMMUNICATIONS

Xiong Yang takes his unique status in stride. In 2011 he graduated with an associate degree in Fire Protection and was hired by the La Crosse Fire Department. That's where he learned he was only the third Hmong firefighter in Wisconsin at the time.

"I've brushed that detail off in the past, but then someone mentions it again," Xiong explains. "And I'm reminded it is something cool. I want children who look like me to see me and think they can be a firefighter too."

Growing up in Oshkosh, Xiong was drawn to the career after watching 9/11 unfold on TV.

"I watched firefighters risk their lives for strangers," Xiong says. "I thought it was a noble cause and I just decided to do it."

As a first-generation Hmong born in the United States, Xiong relied on family and instructors to help him navigate college at Fox Valley Tech. His siblings, who had also attended the college, helped him apply for financial aid. And his instructors continually reinforced that Xiong was exactly where he belonged.

"There were times I wondered if I was in the right program. Most classmates were bigger, taller and no one looked like me," Xiong explains. "But my instructors were so knowledgeable and kept encouraging me. They always said that if they could do it, I could do it too. I just needed to keep believing in myself."



Submitted photo

Xiong Yang has been a member of Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue for six years.

"What also helped was FVTC required an internship before graduation. I did mine with Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue (NMFR) and that was a great real-life experience. It reaffirmed my decision to be a firefighter."

Six years ago, Xiong returned to NMFR but this time as a full-time firefighter. He's now 10 years into his career and he confirms his passion for the job remains strong.

"We are there to help. We try to make someone's worst day of their lives just a little bit better. It's a profession to be proud of."

More charges pending from '83 murder

Additional criminal charges have been filed against a Chilton man who was convicted in the 1983 death of a Neenah man after the victim's body was finally discovered last year at High Cliff State Park.

Calumet County's district attorney announced the new charges of hiding a corpse against John C. Andrews during a news conference last week. Andrews' defense will be arguing that the six-year statute of limitations on the charge has expired but prosecutors contend it occurred more recently.

Andrews, 82, made an initial court appearance Friday, at which time a criminal complaint was filed, a preliminary hearing

requested and a \$10,000 signature bond ordered. The charges carry up to a 12-year sentence and \$25,000 fine.

Human remains found in September at High Cliff were identified as Starkie L. Swenson, last seen in 1983. Police reports at the time of his disappearance stated he was having an affair with Andrews' wife and that her husband struck Swenson, who was riding his bicycle, with his car next to Shattuck Junior High School.

A murder trial against Andrews ended when he accepted a lesser charge of homicide by negligent use of a vehicle and was given two years in prison.

Legacy Private Trust announces rebranding

Legacy Private Trust Co. has announced a corporate rebrand to mark its 18th year of business.

Legacy officials said the brand revitalization reflects continual changes in technology and resonates with future clients without alienating its existing customers.

Legacy also launched a new website that is more engaging and with more information about the company with added video content and photography featuring staff.

Legacy Private Trust Co. is based in Neenah at Two Neenah Center as an independent, closely held trust and investment company with assets under



management of more than \$1.85 billion. Legacy specializes in intergenerational wealth transfer, investment planning and management, financial planning, and trust administration.



Submitted photo

Neenah resident Cindy Hendren underwent kidney transplant surgery earlier this year with her husband, Geoff, donating the kidney.

Kidney donation

FROM PAGE 1

loved wife.

The message here isn't about getting monetary donations for research for kidney disease, but rather highlighting that the act of organ donation is underserved.

"We've met a number of people who have been kidney donors, and the real struggle is getting the word out about donation," says Geoff. "Organ donation isn't an issue that you can just throw money at to have it fix the problem. From my point of view, in the grand scheme, the decision was an easy one. You're really only giving up a couple months of your life. When you weigh that against what you're giving to the person receiving the donation, that's what makes the decision to donate an easy one."

While interviewing the Hendrens for this story I made some small talk and said that I had heard that the person receiving the kidney has an easier time healing. Cindy replied, "Absolutely! Just think of it, I finally had a working kidney after my two had been kaputt for nearly two years."

Geoff chimed in at this point, to his credit, to say that it genuinely wasn't terrible for him, and his body has rapidly adapted to its new norm of having just one kidney.

Cindy continued, "...the difference that makes, I can't even describe it. I cannot

adequately put the sensation into words, but suffice it to say that I had forgotten what it felt like to feel healthy, but now I remember and it's absolutely amazing."

Geoff is a Rotarian in the Rotary Club of Neenah. The Rotarian motto is service above self.

"This has been the ultimate act of service," Cindy proclaimed. "I'm not used to needing things, and I'm certainly not used to being on the receiving end of this level of care. To have someone literally sacrifice a part of themselves for me was truly incredible. It is the most beautiful act of service and love."

Now nearly three months out post-surgery, both Geoff and Cindy are feeling well with a new lease on life. Geoff has been back in the office for over a month, and Cindy will be returning shortly.

"There are so many people just waiting for a kidney these days," Geoff added as we were wrapping up our conversation. "If you know of anyone who needs a donation, go get yourself tested. A test is just a test. You're not committing to do anything yet, but start with that test to see if you're a match and then go from there."

Go pay Geoff and Cindy a visit at Bon Voyage Boutique Travel and ask to hear more of their story. If you're even the slightest bit curious about donating an organ yourself, they will be more than happy to share their experiences so that perhaps you will get your own chance to save another life.



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Greater Fox Valley audiences are entertained and enlightened by theatre productions staged annually on all three UWO campuses. The upcoming drama-comedy *She Kills Monsters* runs April 28 to May 8 in Oshkosh.

Learn more or purchase tickets at
at uwosh.edu/theatre.

Photo from UWO production of *Silent Sky*



Submitted photo

The latest jersey (lower right) has been added to this collection for the Backdraft Bike Tour.

Bike tour

FROM PAGE 1

who has a passion for cycling, had participated in other tours and felt having one here would be a good fit.

Patterson wanted to combine the community's affection for firefighters, fire trucks and fire stations with his own passion for cycling.

Having participated in other fundraiser bike tours, Patterson believed he could create an event that cyclists would return to each year not just for the ride, but to enjoy the connection to the fire departments where the tour traveled.

Organizing and putting on the Backdraft Bike Tour is a labor-intensive task. Much of the work of getting sponsors, ordering the merchandise, and making or improving the routes is done by Patterson. As the date of the tour approaches, members of Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue in their off time help distribute promotional materials and begin taking registrations.

The day before the tour, usually five to eight volunteers help post route signs and ensure those preregistered have a smooth check in by pre-bagging the merchandise and shirts.

"On the day of the tour, anywhere from 50 to 70 volunteers are needed, not including the members of the fire departments hosting the rest stops," Patterson said.

The organizers of the Backdraft Bike tour pride themselves on providing a safe and well-organized event. Patterson finds that firefighters are great at providing the safety part and making sure the rest stops are well stocked with snacks and drinks for refueling cyclists. There is also significant tour support with SAG (support and gear) Wagons for each of the distance options riders can choose.

For the first nine Backdraft Bike Tours, depending on the length of the route chosen, participants would have rest stops at the Harrison Fire Rescue station in Sherwood, the Stockbridge Fire Department and Potter Fire Department in Calumet County. Since the completion of the Loop the Lake trail, the Family Route, usually 10 miles or less, would use all or part of that route.

For the 10th tour this year the routes all have some changes. The longer distance ones now head west of Neenah and Menasha rather than east. The family route still crosses the Trestle Trail bridge and continues around the Loop the Lake.

The other routes – distances of 30, 62 and 100 miles – all travel toward Winneconne. This year's rest stops include the Winneconne-Poygan Fire District Station and the Omro-Rushford Fire Department.

Funds in previous years have gone to the PFFWCF Summer Camp four times. Other organizations that have been the primary beneficiary were Future Neenah,

where the funds raised went to Loop the Lake, and Be The Magic, an organization that offers housing, healing and hope for young women aging out of foster care in the Fox Valley.

Year to year, the Backdraft Bike Tour sees 400 to 500 cyclists participate.

"The difference is weather dependent," Patterson said. In years where the weather is nice, 100 or more people will register the day of the event. The majority like to register early and get the dry wick T-shirt and take advantage of early discounts.

The bike tour has raised a total of \$63,750 for the Neenah-Menasha Firefighters Charitable Foundation. Each year there is the primary beneficiary, but in addition the foundation also supports local causes and events such as post-prom and post-graduation events for the high schools, local youth sports teams and programs, and Youth Go.

Those who would like to participate can visit backdraftbiketour.com and complete the registration. Those who register before May 29 get a dry wick T-shirt.



Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Cops and kids

The Fox Crossing Police Department and local Kiwanis Club donated books to first-graders at Spring Road Elementary last week as part of the Kiwanis 'n Cops 'n Kids reading program. Officer Daniel Wiechman is shown reading to students and was assisted by officer Scott Blashka and Kiwanis Club member Jill Gretzinger. Students each received their own copy.

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Rockets pitcher letting bat do the work for now

Taschner recovering with bright future lying ahead

By Tim Froberg
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Gradin Taschner's powerful right arm won't be of much use to the Neenah Rockets this spring.

However, his ultra-productive bat will help the Rockets significantly.

Taschner, the reigning MVP of the Fox Valley Association boys' baseball league, is being relegated to designated hitter duties his senior season while he recovers from Tommy John surgery.

Taschner had surgery Aug. 18 to repair a torn ulnar collateral ligament inside his right elbow. The time estimate for a pitching return from Tommy John surgery – known more formally as ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction – is usually about 12 to 16 months.

Taschner is about eight months removed from surgery and has started a light throwing program from a limited distance (75 feet). His progress is being carefully monitored because he's a top Division 1 college pitching prospect. Taschner has already committed to play baseball at Illinois State University and may have the arm talent to pitch professionally.

Before the injury, Taschner's fastball was clocked as high as 92 mph. He is also known for a sharp breaking ball.

"My goal is to be pitching by my freshman year (at Illinois State)," Taschner said. "I want to be part of the team and the program. If I stick to my current program, the plan is for me to throw my first bullpen in August and make my first ap-



Submitted photo

Gradin Taschner will be Neenah High School's designated hitter this season as he recovers from elbow surgery.

pearance against hitters in October."

Taschner has a valuable resource to lean on. His father, Neenah coach Jack Taschner, pitched in the Major Leagues for five years (2005-2010) and also underwent Tommy John surgery during his playing days.

"My dad had it when they used to do the old figure 8 technique around 2002-2003," Taschner said. "Now it's completely changed."

What's encouraging about Tommy John surgery is that most baseball pitchers make a fully recovery, unlike the early

days of the operation when it sometimes ended baseball careers.

"You're almost predicted to come back even stronger than you were before," Taschner said. "My dad has told me that when you come back, there's no elbow pain anymore. He's never had a problem with his elbow since he had surgery. Having him as a mentor through this has been huge."

"I've even started to notice that my elbow doesn't get sore any more. There's no pain at all."

Taschner, who throws and bats right-handed, has been hitting for about three months and is a formidable slugger. As a Neenah junior, Taschner hit .446 with two home runs and 24 RBIs in 68 at bats. He had an on-base percentage of .596 and a slugging percentage of .692 – good for an OPS of 1.28. On the mound, he compiled a 2-3 mark with a 3.79 ERA and 39 strikeouts in 31 1/3 innings.

"Hitting has always been my first love," Gradin said. "I never really pitched much as a little kid. I was probably pitching a total of 20 innings max from 9 to 14. My first real year of pitching was actually my freshman year. My dad had a philosophy of, 'Your arm only has a certain number of bullets. It's not worth wasting them all in Little League.'

"But pitching has grown on me. I enjoy the mindset, knowing I can control a lot of what's happening in the game. If I mess up, it's my fault and I can't blame anyone else."

Illinois State projects Taschner as a pitcher, but his productive bat could change that. When he plays in the field, Taschner is a corner infielder who can play both third and first base. Illinois State starts its college baseball season in mid-February.

"They (Illinois State) have told me that

Senior Spotlight

pitching will be my main focus, but that they'll give me a fair shake as a hitter."

As a pitcher, the most obvious difference between father and son is that Gradin is a right-hander, while Jack was a lefty.

"He tells me that mechanically we have the same arm path – the same arm slot," Taschner said. "The one thing he always tells me that I do better than him is with mental toughness. He says that he always let the little things get to him and they would drive him nuts. He's noticed that I'm able to let things go. He says that I'm able to accept the failure. That's exactly what you need in this game because it's a game of failure."

Taschner grew up around the game and MLB clubhouses. Jack played his first four big-league seasons with the San Francisco Giants (2005-08) before spending the 2009 season with the Phillies. He split his final season of 2010 with the Pittsburgh Pirates and Los Angeles Dodgers.

"I remember when he was playing with the Giants that was the absolute best," Taschner said. "I always wanted to be in the clubhouse after the game and he'd bring me in. I was always best friends with Brian Wilson, you know, 'Fear the Beard,' along with (pitcher) Matt Cain and (utility player) Kevin Frandsen."

"I still have those bonds to this day. If I need help with my hitting, I'll text Kevin Frandsen. Having those bonds to this day is pretty amazing."

One of those bonds is with the man who recruited him to Illinois State and will be coaching him there: Redbirds head baseball coach Steve Holm. A former MLB catcher, Holm spent the 2008 season with Jack and the Giants.

"I have known Gradin since his days of running around the San Francisco Giants locker room when his dad and I played together," said Holm on the school's website. "He's a power pitcher. The sky is the limit for him on the mound."

Taschner appreciates the relationship he has with his father, who now works as a lieutenant with the Appleton Police Department in charge of school resource officers. Jack has been Neenah's head baseball coach since 2018.

"It's been awesome to have him as my mentor and my dad – it's been nothing short of amazing," Taschner said. "I know some kids whose dads coach them and it's like they're a coach at home and on the field. With my dad, it's really balanced. At home, he won't even talk about baseball unless I bring it up."

"Having that resource by me all the time is amazing. Seeing his work ethic motivates me – even to this day. If I want to get to where he was, I have to do it the way he did it. That's through hard work."

Taschner, a solid student in the classroom, played basketball and volleyball earlier in his prep career at Neenah before deciding to focus on baseball. His goal is to play the game professionally – just like his dad. He plans to major in criminal justice science at Illinois State.

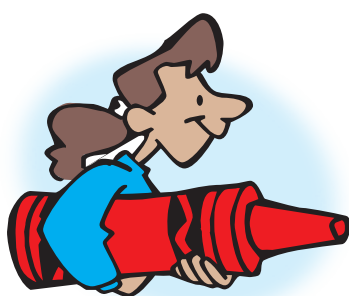
"I'd like to make it to the highest level and the goal is to get drafted my junior year (at Illinois State)," he said. "The coaches from Illinois State have told me that as much as they'd like to have me for four years, their goal is to get me ready for that third year when I'll be draft eligible. Having them understand that and be willing to push me to get there is awesome."



Freedom of the Press

The Founding Fathers of the United States believed so strongly in the importance of a free press, that they protected that right in the First Amendment of the Constitution. There were 10 Amendments, or additions, added to the Constitution in 1791.

To find out how many Amendments have been added since 1791, color the spaces with two dots red.



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Kid Scoop VOCABULARY BUILDERS

This week's word: **DEMOCRACY**
The noun **democracy** means a system of government typically elected by a majority of the people.

In a **democracy**, it's important for the people to vote in every election.

Try to use the word **democracy** in a sentence today when talking with your friends and family members.

Double Double Word Search

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FREEDOM
FATHERS
PROMISE
PROVEN
WORLD
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FACTS
MEDIA
FEELS
READ

Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards, sideways and diagonally.

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A	R	R	F	A	C	T	S	P	S
T	O	E	D	F	H	R	M	R	I
H	M	A	E	G	I	U	E	O	M
E	E	E	I	D	S	T	D	V	O
R	L	R	L	E	O	H	I	E	R
S	P	R	E	S	S	M	A	N	P
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Rockets net impressive draw against potent Kimberly

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

KIMBERLY – The Neenah girls soccer team has been showing signs of significant improvement since the season began but were still looking for its first conference win of the season.

For that to happen Thursday, the Rockets were going to need to be at their best as conference-leading Kimberly was standing in their way.

The Rockets came ready to play and gave the Papermakers all they could handle. Neenah had one of its best defensive showings and played Kimberly to a 0-0 draw – the first time the Papermakers ha-

ven't walked off the field with a win this season.

"This was a terrific showing for us and a great game overall," head coach Lars Norberg said. "This was a great team effort and the work the girls put in on the field was second to none. Although we didn't win, I am happy with the performance and our effort was great."

Neenah's Emily McCarthy got the first good look at a scoring chance in the seventh minute but sent a shot just wide of the mark.

Rachel Dietrich and Megan Koshollek helped the Rockets establish possession later in the half, which led to several scor-

ing opportunities – including a shot off the crossbar – and corner kicks, but the match remained 0-0 heading into intermission.

"We had a shot that hit the crossbar in the first half that we felt should have gone in," he said. "After that, Kimberly really started to take over when it came to pace of play especially during the middle stages of the second half. I have to give our defense and the girls a ton of credit. Not only did they stick together but they didn't panic."

Kimberly averages more than five goals per contest, reached double digits three times and has scored at least two goals in

every game this season.

Yet, Neenah's defense never let the Papermakers get their offense rolling and as the final seconds ticked away, the teams remained scoreless.

"This is a great result and by far one of our better overall showings this season," Norberg said. "Kimberly is loaded with offensive talent who can score at any moment. They are a very dangerous team so for us to hold them to zero goals and play to a tie is about as close to a win as you can get."

The Rockets return to action on Tuesday when they travel to take on Kaukauna.

Kaukauna keeps Neenah bats quiet in FVA softball tussle

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

When you talk about softball in the Fox Valley Association, Kaukauna is one of the programs that continually comes up.

Neenah found out this version of the Ghosts is certainly worth the superlatives as Kaukauna made quick work of the Rockets, 14-1, in five innings on Tuesday.

"Tonight was a tough one for us," head coach Steven Gross said. "Kaukauna is a

great team. They're ranked No. 1 in the state for a reason. We made some mistakes along the way that Kaukauna took advantage of, which is what good teams do."

Morgan Harwood went all five innings in the circle for the Rockets, allowing 12 hits while walking two and striking out two.

Neenah trailed 4-0 entering the bottom of the second when it generated its first

scoring chance. Amara Kaminski led off the inning with a single but was eventually stranded at third base as the Rockets were unable to push a run across.

Kaukauna tacked on five runs in the third and then closed out the win with five runs in the fifth inning.

The Rockets' lone run came in the bottom of the fourth inning when Harwood delivered a solo home run off Kaukauna ace Sklyer Calmes.

"Morgan battled all night against a strong hitting team," Gross said. "We made some mistakes in the field, which didn't help. She came through with a home run to put us on the board in the bottom of the fourth inning."

Although not the score or result the team was hoping for, Gross is proud of

what he saw as a couple of mistakes drastically impacted this game.

"The score doesn't reflect how the game actually went," he said. "Tonight, our kids fought hard and didn't give up the entire game, even when we had our struggles. We put the ball in play, just couldn't generate any runs. So proud of the fight these kids had tonight, even with the outcome we had."

Harwood finished 2-for-2 at the plate, while Neenah also got the hit from Kaminski.

Neenah is back on the diamond this weekend as they face first-place Hortonville tonight before taking on Algoma and Coleman at the Pulaski invitational this weekend.

Henderson named WIAA Scholar-Athlete

Neenah senior Austin Henderson was one of 32 high school athletes to receive the prestigious WIAA Scholar-Athlete Award, it was announced recently.

Henderson, a three-sport standout for the Rockets participating in cross-country, swimming and track and field, was one of four Division 1 boys selected to earn the award. The others were Mason King of Wauwatosa East, Nate Streveler of Stevens Point and Ryan Whynott of Kenosha Tremper.

The WIAA selects four boys and four girls from each of four divisions, based on enrollment, from around the state to comprise the class of Scholar-Athlete Award recipients. The winners are chosen based on both athletic and academic achievement.

Henderson is expected to finish his high school career with 12 varsity letters. He helped Neenah win the Division 1 state boys cross-country championship as a freshman, while winning the individual state title this past season as a senior. He finished third his junior year.

In swimming, he qualified for the state meet in multiple events the past three years, while he finished third in both the 800 meters and 1,600 meters at the state track and field meet last spring. He also competed in the 3,200-meter relay at state as a freshman.

Henderson maintains a 4.0 grade point average and plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison after graduation.

Flatgrass Showdown soccer tourney set

The Neenah Soccer Club is hosting the return of the Flatgrass Showdown, one of the state's largest soccer tournaments with more than 150 teams, set for May 6-8 at Neenah Memorial Park off Tullar Road.

The 42nd annual tournament, with lead sponsor Scheels, has multiple divisions for girls, boys and coed teams.

Tournament sponsors help support the club's scholarship programs, tournaments and teams while helping with fields and equipment needs, player development

through camps, coaches and indoor field time, and registration and uniforms.

The primary mode of communication throughout the tournament for parents and teams will be the TeamSnap Tournaments app. Go to neenahsoccerclub.demosphere-secure.com for tournament details.

Neenah Soccer Club will be hosting food trucks that follow suggested county guidelines. The club is following the COVID protocol of the Neenah Joint School District.



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Prep sports roundup

SOFTBALL

Zephyrs collect win over Howards Grove

A three-run second inning helped St. Mary Catholic break away from Howards Grove in a 6-0 win on Monday.

Rhiannon Reichenbacher highlighted the three-run outburst with a two-run single that gave the Zephyrs a 4-0 lead. Chloe Vogel opened the game with an inside-the-park home run for St. Mary Catholic's first run.

Reichenbacher and Nevaeh Saringer each had two hits in the game, while Reichenbacher also picked up the win on the mound allowing just one hit – which came in the sixth – and one walk, while fanning eight.

The Zephyrs followed that win up by taking a 12-10 slugfest from Manitowoc Lutheran on Tuesday, scoring two runs in the top of the eighth for the winning margin.

Saringer drove in the tie-breaking run in the eighth for St. Mary Catholic, while Reichenbacher followed with an RBI-double.

Vogel and Reichenbacher each finished with two hits in the game, while Reichenbacher finished with three RBIs and Taylor Foord drove in two runs.

On Thursday, St. Mary Catholic suffered a 1-0 loss in 10 innings to Xavier in a nonconference game played in Appleton.

The Zephyrs finished with two hits and three errors in the game with Vogel tally-

ing both hits.

Saringer pitched well for SMC, giving up one run on five hits with nine strikeouts.

Neenah team falls twice

The Neenah softball team dropped two games last week, falling 3-0 to Oshkosh North on Thursday and 7-2 against Freedom on Saturday.

The Rockets mustered just one hit against the Spartans as Madie Jagoditsh broke the no-hitter. Morgan Harwood pitched well despite the loss, pitching all seven innings – giving up two earned runs on six hits with six strikeouts.

BOYS TENNIS

Rockets continue to roll

The Neenah boys tennis team dominated Appleton North in a Fox Valley Association dual last Thursday, winning 7-0. The Rockets then faced Arrowhead, Whitefish Bay and Eau Claire Memorial on Saturday, winning 5-3, 6-1 and 6-1.

All singles players and doubles teams won in straight sets as Solomon Dunsirn, David Murphy, Ben Kotchen and Tristin Yun all picked up wins in singles play in Thursday's match.

In doubles play, the duos of Nolan Kubiak/Khaled Saleh, Henry Werner/Satchell Moss and Leyton Daharsh/Jaxon King all were victorious.

Against Arrowhead, Dunsirn and Kotchen picked up wins in singles play while the top three doubles teams in Saleh/Kubiak, Werner/Moss and Daharsh/King picked up wins in doubles play. Four flights of doubles were played in the match instead of the usual three.

In the 6-1 victory over Eau Claire Memorial, Dunsirn, Kotchen and Yun won in straight sets in singles play while all three doubles teams picked up wins.

Against Whitefish Bay, Dunsirn, Kotchen and Yun picked up wins in singles while all three doubles teams picked up wins.

BOYS GOLF

Neenah picks up FVA win

The Neenah boys golf team picked up a Fox Valley Association win on Friday, shooting a team score of 173 against Appleton West's 188.

The Rockets got a 38 from John Callahan while Eli Oitzinger fired a 42. West was led by Lucas Burry, who shot a 40 as conditions were tough at Winagamie Golf Course.

On Tuesday, the Rockets came up short against Fond du Lac at Rolling Meadows. The Cardinals won the dual meet with a score of 169, while the Rockets totaled 178.

Callahan led Neenah with a 43, while Oitzinger was next with a 44.

Lynch earns medalist at Lourdes Academy invite

The St. Mary Catholic boys golf team competed in the Lourdes Academy Invite on Friday and Spencer Lynch dominated all golfers – earning medalist after shooting a 4-under, 68 at Lake Breeze Golf Course in Winneconne.

The next closest was an 80 as the Zephyrs finished third as a team with a score of 368 out of 10 teams.

BASEBALL

Neenah picks up two wins

The Neenah baseball team picked up two wins on Saturday, beating Catholic Memorial 13-3 before topping Franklin, 8-5.

The Rockets scored three runs in the first and five more in the third en route to the game one win. Brady Corso and Eli Schmidt had a big day at the plate as Corso was 3-for-4 with three runs and three RBIs – with a home run and a double.

Schmidt had four RBIs as he had two hits with one being a double. Gradin Taschner and Ethan Van Dyke each added two RBIs in the win while Cal Radies picked up the win – giving up three runs on four hits with five strikeouts against two walks.

SEE **Prep roundup** ON PAGE 11

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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 10

Against Franklin, Neenah scored three runs in the fifth and two more in the sixth to help pull away. Schmidt and Taschner each had two hits and two RBIs in the win while AJ Price picked up the win in relief – giving up one earned run in four innings.

The Rockets returned to Fox Valley Association action on Tuesday and dropped a 2-0 decision to Fond du Lac.

Taschner and Ethan Van Dyke collected the only hits in the game for the Rockets. Carter Thomas allowed just four hits and one earned run in six innings, while striking out six but took the loss.

Mishicot sneaks by SMC

The St. Mary Catholic baseball team dropped a Big East Conference game last Thursday, falling 2-1 to Mishicot at home.

No individual stats were available for the Zephyrs.

GIRLS SOCCER

Neenah scores two late goals to beat Preble

The Neenah girls soccer team broke a scoreless game in the second half, scoring two goals to help pick up a 2-0 win over Green Bay Preble last Thursday.

No individual stats were available.

Zephyrs grab pair of Big East victories

Megan Roloff scored a pair of goals to help boost St. Mary Catholic to a 3-1 win over Random Lake in a conference match on Monday.

Roloff scored five minutes into the match and the Zephyrs held the 1-0 lead

into the second half when Erin Bahn scored to make it 2-0. The Rams sliced the deficit to one with about 13 minutes left in the match before Roloff netted an insurance goal for the final margin.

Greta Norville made six saves in goal for the Zephyrs (5-2-1 overall, 2-1 conference).

The Zephyrs also picked up a 6-0 win over Ozaukee last Thursday.

TRACK & FIELD

Rockets finish fifth in Preble Relay Meet

The Neenah girls track and field team competed in the Green Bay Preble Relay Meet on Friday, finishing fifth out of eight teams. The boys did not compete.

Lydia Delene was third in the discus for the Rockets with a 95-10 while Annelise Zenzick was fifth in the 100-meter hurdles with a time of 20.35.

The Neenah 3,200-meter relay team was second with a time of 10:30.39 (Mazie Olkowski, Hadley Hackinson, Rebecca Marsh, Lauren Tears) and the Neenah 800-meter relay (Ava Schalow, Janae Rodriguez, Sophie Nedens, Brooke Mericle) was fourth with a time of 2:01.33.

Zephyrs third, fourth at Rosholt Invitational

The St. Mary Catholic boys and girls track and field teams competed in the Rosholt Back the Track Invitational on Friday and the boys were third out of 10 teams while the girls were fourth out of nine teams.

On the boys side, Cam Connolly was second in the shot put (41-10.25).

The 3,200-meter relay team (Seiske, Ashton Post, Schoeni, Alexander Gropel) finished first while the 400-meter relay quartet of (Post, Connor Riehl, Harry

Higgins, Dylan Dwyer) and 1600-meter relay team (Dwyer, Seiske, Post, Gropel) took third.

On the girls side, Gabby Ruback had three top three finishes – taking first in the long jump (14-09) while placing runner up in the 100-meter hurdles (18.15) and triple jump (32-10).

Lauren Ripley added a second-place finish in the 1,600 meters (5:56.22), while Jaydin Vosters was third in the 300-meter hurdles (53.64) and Nolie Anderson was third in the shot put (31-01.75). The Zephyrs also won the 3,200-meter relay, while taking second in both the 400- and 800-meter relays.

St. Mary Catholic also hosted a Big East North Division meet on Monday, with the girls taking first and the boys finishing second.

Katharine Schoeni led the Zephyrs

by winning the 3,200 meters, while St. Mary Catholic also finished first in the 3,200-meter relay.

For the boys, Gropel in the 800 meters and Post in the pole vault posted wins, while the Zephyrs' 3,200-meter relay team also collected a win.

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