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Lang elected Neenah's new mayor

Boyette keeps council seat; school board set

By Dan Roherty
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah voters chose veteran City Council member Jane Lang as its new mayor over council colleague Brian Borchardt in Tuesday's election.

Lang won 57% percent of the vote, 3,235 to 2,474, and will be sworn in April 19 to replace Mayor Dean Kaufert, who announced his retirement last year after serving since 2014.

"I'm just so honored to have this opportunity – overwhelmingly grateful," Lang said.



Lang

City Council incumbent Kathie Boyette narrowly retained her District 1 seat serving wards 1-8 against newcomer Kristen Sandvick, 783 to 773, in the one council race. Dan Steiner retained his District 2 seat running unopposed.

Voters also returned Lauri Asbury to the Neenah Board of Education along

with newcomers Sarah Moore-Nokes and Tara Brzezinski. Asbury, the board's vice president, led all six candidates with 3,926 votes, followed by Moore-Nokes (3,619) and Brzezinski (3,605). Falling short were Rocky Schafer (3,503), Sara Johnson (2,831) and Lydia Rhoads (2,531).

As Neenah's new mayor, Lang said she is looking forward to continuing public initiatives already underway such as development of South Commercial Street business district, Arrowhead Park renovations and planning for the downtown's future.

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Photo by David Hall

A soldering class is one of the in-person workshops being offered at Cre8lab on South Commercial Street.

Young creativity sparked in lab

Cre8lab offers STEM learning opportunity for Neenah area

By Bethanie Gengler
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

A community makerspace in Neenah called Cre8lab offers locals an outlet to create and learn about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Cre8lab is a volunteer-run nonprofit located at 1131 S. Commercial St. It was started by Eric Brehm and Adam Waite, who had previously started a STEM club for kids at another successful nonprofit.

"We started to realize that one of these

spaces may be good to help guide not only kids, but young adults toward the trades, toward the STEM field and into technology, and then get some of these adults that have never done some of this stuff access to it," Brehm said.

Brehm and Waite's desire to offer a makerspace in Neenah inspired them to purchase the Commercial Street location.

"We bought the building and gutted it and remodeled it and made it what it is today," Brehm said.

Cre8lab officially opened in December 2019, not long before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

"I don't think we could pick any worse

timing on that one, but it worked out for us well," Brehm said. "We actually were able to engage with the community quite a bit due to that."

Brehm said he and Waite both have day jobs in the tech field and volunteer their time at Cre8lab. The makerspace has a full wood shop, CNC machine, 3D printers, a laser engraver, paint booth, a Cricut and a heat press.

Brehm said there are two ways for the public to participate in the programs. Interested parties can purchase a monthly membership that comes with access to

SEE **Cre8lab** ON PAGE 10

Health officials back second booster option

NEENAH NEWS

The Winnebago County Health Department is supporting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recommendations and authorization of a second COVID-19 booster dose for individuals over age 50 and for certain immunocompromised individuals.

The FDA said last week that evidence suggests a second booster dose of an mRNA vaccine improves protection against severe COVID-19 and will reduce the risk for severe disease, hospitalization and death.

The additional boosters will be available at vaccine clinics hosted by the Winnebago County Health Department, includ-

SEE **Health update** ON PAGE 6

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County disperses \$10M in grants

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

At a special meeting of the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors, a resolution was approved to accept more than \$10 million from the Neighborhood Improvement Grant Fund through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

It was the only item on the March 29 agenda – the final act of the board before this week's elections – and passed by a near unanimous vote. Only two supervisors abstained from voting.

The resolution called for acceptance of \$10,351,686.15 and for those ARPA funds to be divvied out among six programs around the county to help address homelessness. The six recipients all have proposed projects to help fight the increasing number of homeless residents.

The Day By Day Warming Shelter in Oshkosh received the largest portion of the funds to build a year-round homeless shelter for 50 to 60 residents per night. That project, including land costs and construction, will total \$3,587,720.

Three other recipients topped the \$1 million mark with Habitat for Humanity of Oshkosh drawing \$2,425,680 for acquisition of six lots and construction costs for two homes; Solutions Recovery was awarded \$1.5 million to acquire land and build five to six additional sober-living properties as well as upgrades to the recovery center; and Covey received \$1,063,124 for building family housing for those with cognitive disabilities in Oshkosh and Menasha.

The rest for the funds were dispersed to

the Housing Resource Center, which received \$941,228 to serve as a resource for those at risk of losing shelter, and \$570,000 to the Oshkosh Kids Foundation to assist with the building of a community center for a tiny house village in Oshkosh.

One other concern brought by Supervisor Thomas Borchart of Menasha was that the majority of the money was going toward programs in Oshkosh. He would have liked to have seen more representation around the rest of the county.

"I wish the peanut butter is applied more liberally to all of the bread," he said.

Board chairman Shiloh Ramos, who was conducting his last meeting as chairman, advised the board that the board was only accepting the money and allocating it to the different organizations. He reiterated that the board was not doing anything related to location, specific planning or zoning or sustainability with the projects, which would be up to the specific organizations.

"We, tonight, are simply deciding whether we want to accept that \$10.35 million from the state and allocate it to those organizations," Ramos said. "That's really what we are debating tonight."

Although the resolution passed without any votes against, there was plenty of debate from supervisors and some who expressed some reluctance in voting for the measure.

Some of the concerns revolved around the process taken to get the resolution in front of the board, what the county's financial responsibility would be in the future and whether these programs would be able to curb homelessness issues in Winnebago

County.

"I can't see an end result. This is just a feel-good thing," Supervisor Maribeth Gabert said. "I have not received enough information nor heard enough that there is a plan. I have many, many reservations."

Gabert said she considered voting against the resolution but opted to back it.

Other supervisors to voice concerns included Donald Nussbaum, Brian Defferding, Bryan Stafford, Vicki Schorse and Joel Rasmussen. Schorse and Rasmussen each said they planned to abstain.

"The last thing I think anyone wants to see is someone struggle because of actions we took today," Stafford said.

Ramos spoke to wanting this version of the county board – before elections – to have the opportunity to adopt this resolution and so the timeline had to be condensed from a normal resolution. He also said that had the board not heard the resolution when it did, the resolution would not be considered until the end of April.

One amendment to the original resolution was proposed by Supervisor Morris Cox to make sure each entity that received funds from the grant would come before the board every six months to discuss their projects.

That motion was carried by a majority of the supervisors.

The next meeting of the County Board is slated for April 19, which will be an organizational meeting for the new board after the elections. The first business meeting for the new board will be the following week.

Medical supplies donated to ThedaCare to help Ukrainians

ThedaCare team members are supporting the Ukraine humanitarian effort in three areas where donations are needed most: monetary, medical supplies and medications.

ThedaCare inventory technician Tom Meier and supply chain distribution supervisor Kurt Rasmussen recently prepared the first shipment of medical supplies donated from ThedaCare that was to be distributed by a Midwest network of Ukrainian-American groups.

Community members who would like to help can contact the ThedaCare Family of Foundations' Ukrainian Medical and Humanitarian Care Fund, where all money raised will go to International Medical Corps (IMC). The nonprofit aid organization provides emergency medical services and health care training and development programs to those affected by disaster, disease or conflict.

To contribute, visit thedacare.org/about-us/giving and go to the Donate Today section. Donations are tax-deductible gifts.



Submitted photo

Donations of medical supplies and medications are being collected by ThedaCare team members.



Photo from Neenah Historical Society

Park tradition continues

Families are shown enjoying Riverside Park in this 1898 photo. The sign reads, "Do not hitch to the trees." The park is marking its 150 birthday this year.



Program focused on end-of-life issues

The Fox Valley Respect Life Committee is hosting a program titled "The Gospel of Life at the End of Life" beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday at St. Mary Catholic High School's Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center.

The free event and workshop will highlight end-of-life issues from a faith-based and life-affirming perspective. Featured event speakers include St. Gianna Clinic president Dr. Robin Goldsmith and Pro-Life Wisconsin Speakers Bureau attorney Greg Vanevenhoven.

Vendors from local and statewide organizations also will be at the event. No RSVP is required.

Electric scooter rental program endorsed

Neenah News

An electric scooter rental service was recommended for city approval this week that would add a new mode of public transportation and be managed through a liaison between the city and its private provider.

Garrett Gronowski of Bird Rides Scooter Co. told the city's Public Services & Safety Committee that using a scooter would cost \$1 as a start fee and then 30 cents per minute, with the average ride

costing \$5.50.

The scooters are tracked with GPS and will not be able to operate past Geo-Zone areas set up by the city.

If the pilot program for 50 to 70 scooters is approved by the City Council at its Wednesday meeting (after print deadline), Gronowski said there will be a Bird account manager and fleet manager hired locally in charge of maintenance and daily distribution of the scooters.

Preferred parking areas would be creat-

ed where drivers would earn a discount on charges while geo-fence zones would be established to ban the scooters on roundabouts, bridges, overpasses, trestle bridges and some sidewalks such as the 100 to 200 blocks of West Wisconsin Avenue.

The city will add an additional 10 cents per ride to offset public administrative costs and the council was also asked to approve an ordinance amendment to allow scooters in the city right of way and on trails where currently prohibited.

While Bird Rides does not provide bike racks or other infrastructure, Gronowski said signs are typically placed around the city designating scooter locations. One of the proposed "nesting" areas is the Bridgwood Hotel, where guests would be able to use them to visit the area.

Menasha was considering a similar pilot program this week and Fox Crossing is also expected to consider it, which would alleviate concerns about the scooters crossing those borders on trails.

Coyote activity in season with urban sightings

By Amber Brockman
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

At this time of year when coyotes are more active during the breeding season and people are getting out more to enjoy the spring weather, the potential for sightings of the wild canine species increases.

Coyotes are present in almost every county in Wisconsin, and as cities expand into rural areas, they have been getting more comfortable in human-populated areas.

"As urbanization increases so does coyote habitat and potentially coyote populations," state Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Josh Jackl said. "Coyotes are highly adaptable and have probably increased populations within urban areas, so as those areas expand, coyotes are expected to utilize those habitats also."

Urban coyotes are not a new or novel thing and reported sightings in Winnebago County have been steady or slightly increased over time, Jackl said.

"It could be a number of reasons but might include the use of trail cameras and cellphones (that) has become more common, which leads to more and better photographic evidence," he said.

Within the last few months, there have been a couple of reported sightings, about the same as in recent years.

"The calls were mainly about coyote sightings around a yard and concern about their pet dog and coyotes scaveng-



Photo by David Horst

A coyote searches for rodents in southern Outagamie County in February.

ing on a deer carcass in another person's yard," Jackl said.

Coyotes have adapted to the urban environment where more abundant food sources are available.

Although coyotes primarily feed on small rodents and rabbits, they are opportunistic hunters and will eat anything they can find – residential garbage, birdseed, compost and pet food – according to the DNR website.

In some cases, they may attack and kill small pets, but attacks on humans are rare.

Coyotes are nocturnal so they are generally most active in the early evening around dusk and early morning before dawn, according to Jackl. In urban areas, coyotes tend to use wooded patches and shrubbery to hide from people, as well as any available natural spaces, including parks, cemeteries and golf courses.

"Their habitat is more forested but they are highly adaptable and will also be found around green spaces with forested edges, open fields and generally anywhere there is a good food source," he said.

If you encounter a coyote, remain calm. "Most of the time wild animals, including coyotes, are more afraid of humans than we are of them," Jackl said.

With a pet, keep in mind the coyote may feel threatened by it or think it is prey.

"Especially during the breeding season, pet dogs can be treated aggressively by coyotes due to the perceived territorial threat," Jackl said. "In either case, consider keeping your dog on a leash while on walks and/or keep a close eye on your dog while outside if you know there are coyotes around."

The DNR website provides tips to manage the presence of coyotes in residential areas:

- Remove potential food sources such as open garbage cans, bird feeders and pet food bowls. Never intentionally feed coyotes.
- Do not provide food and water for other wildlife. It may attract coyotes and their prey.
- Clear brush and undergrowth in yards.
- Use scare tactics. Yell and make loud noises, shake or throw pop cans filled with coins, throw a ball, shoe, sticks or other objects or spray the coyote with water. You can also buy ultrasonic dog repellents or pocket-sized air horns.
- Install a 6- to 7-foot-high fence buried about a foot deep to help keep coyotes out of an area.
- Trapping and hunting of coyotes on private property is legal without a DNR license. Check with local government to ensure adherence to ordinances.

To report concerns about coyotes, call 920-420-5830 or joshua.jackl@wi.gov, or contact the Neenah Police Department.

There is a referral list for nuisance animal removal on the Wisconsin Trappers Association website that is searchable by county at wistrap.org. For more information, visit the DNR website and click on the Coyotes tab at dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/damage.

Boys and Girls Brigade gives out its annual honors

The Boys and Girls Brigade marked the 121st year of its leadership program by recognizing senior award recipients and leader milestones.

The Outstanding Brigadier Award based on all-around participation and performance went to Hans Patel and Emmalee Van Sambeek.

Seven Year Four-Fold recipients who demonstrated strength, balance and growth based on attention, participation, wreath sales and behavior were Eric Blank, Emma Bowman, Zanger Coenen, Alayna Hopfensperger, Shaylee Klenke, William Kyles-Werth, Mackenzie Lehmann, Grace Look, Patel, Maddy Pritzl and Van Sambeek.

My Own Self scholarship winners are Phynix Beringer, Look, Klenke and Pritzl. Wide Awake awards went to Look and Wyatt Pershing. Sure and Steadfast awards were given to Blank, Zander and Pritzl.

A special congratulations went to Linda Ahles and Jody Hoppe for receiving the 2022 S.F. Shattuck Award.

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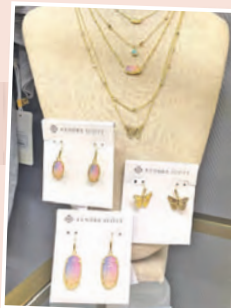


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Wonders of waterfowl now on shoreline display

By Rob Zimmer
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

With ice out on Lake Winnebago, the Neenah lakefront and riverfront are hot spots for observing the incredible movement of waterfowl during early April. Spring migration is on and, immediately upon ice out, ducks and geese and loons and other water birds arrive here by the thousands.

We are fortunate in our area to have some of the best waterfowl viewing spots in the state. Places like Fresh Air Camp, Kimberly Point Park, Riverside Park, the Friendship Trail and Loop the Lake Trail, as well as the dams, are waterfowl-watching hot spots.

Many of these birds have been waiting just to our south for the instant the ice shield breaks up on the big lake. And they arrive almost instantly. Already, massive flocks, known as rafts, of diving ducks are visible along the shoreline in each of these places. Common loons are also beginning to show up, as are American white pelicans, returning for another year of acrobatics in the sky and on the water.

Grab a pair of binoculars and head on down to one of these parks and scan the open water to see what you can see.

Chances are, the most common ducks you will spot appear black and white from a distance but are actually iridescent in shades of green and purple, along with striking black-and-white plumage. Common goldeneye, scaup, bufflehead, common merganser, red-breasted merganser, redhead, ring-necked duck and canvasback are beginning to appear in huge numbers.

Bring along a field guide to help you



Photos by Rob Zimmer

American white pelicans and loons are some of the bird wildlife currently active on Lake Winnebago.

identify these different ducks as you scan the open water. They are amazing to watch in action as they dive beneath the surface in search of zebra mussels and other aquatic prey. It is possible to see hundreds, even thousands, of these ducks right offshore.

Of course, everyone loves to see the loons when they appear each year in April. Large numbers of common loons congregate on Lake Winnebago during early spring as they wait for northern lakes to become ice free. It's possible to spot dozens of them on any given day this month by simply scanning the open water.

There are a couple of different species of ducks that are often mistaken for loons from a distance. Common mergansers have a similar appearance, as do red-breasted mergansers. But take a closer look and you'll see the difference. Have a field guide on hand to point out the strik-

ing differences in these birds.

Common loons are generally much heavier and bulkier than the mergansers, with a much thicker, sharply pointed bill that is black in color. The bill of mergansers is generally reddish orange, thin and pointed.

The American white pelicans are quite noticeable when they return each year in April. Adults of breeding age boast a large crest, or sail, on the top of their foot-long orange bill. This is only apparent in spring during breeding season and quickly dissolves away once nesting begins.

Over the past 20 years, pelicans have exploded in numbers here on Lake Winnebago, Little Lake Butte des Morts and other Winnebago system lakes. It is a joy to see them soar through the sky and sail upon the wide-open, blue waters of our lakes and rivers.

These birds nest on remote islands on the Winnebago chain of lakes, where they are safe from land predators such as mink, coyote and fox.

The grebes are another interesting group of duck-like birds that flock to Lake Winnebago this month. Pied-billed grebes are small, grayish brown in color with a black and gray bill. The horned grebe is slightly larger with striking red and black plumage and huge, golden ear tufts, or horns, on top of their head.

Other birds you may see along the shore while watching waterfowl in early April are double-crested cormorant, generally black with an orange bill, as well as the mighty osprey that soars over the open water on long, powerful wings, diving beneath the surface to capture carp and other prey.

You may also hear and see belted kingfisher flying from tree to tree along the shore, along with great blue herons.

Visit each of these areas over the next few weeks to witness the unusual and amazing variety of birds you will find at each spot. The April migration will be over soon for another year so make the time to get out and enjoy this amazing avian ritual.

Wildfire season prompts safety warnings

The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds Wisconsinites that fire season is underway after the snow melts and before plants, trees and grass turn green.

Seasonal warm and dry conditions can increase wildfire activity, with about 60% of all annual wildfires in Wisconsin occurring in March, April and May.

Temperature, wind, humidity and pre-

cipitation are the key weather components that determine the daily fire danger. This spring fire season enters with drought impacting most of the state.

People start 98% of wildfires, most often by burning debris in the spring when vegetation is still dead and dry. Fires also have been started by heavy equipment and vehicles, while lightning strikes have sparked a small percentage.

Winnebago County Democrats plan Indigo Dinner

The Winnebago County Democratic Party's Annual Indigo Dinner is set for April 23 at La Sure's Hall in Oshkosh.

Guest speaker is Matt Rothchild, executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign and former editor and publisher of The Progressive.

A social hour with jazz by the Marc Sackman Quartet and networking is from

4 to 6 p.m. followed by a dinner.

Supporter ticket is \$45 per person by April 17, then \$50. Tables of six are available. Tickets are available at secure.actblue.com/donate/indigo2022.

Tickets are also available at the Winnebago County Democratic Party office, 480 N. Main St. in Oshkosh Call 920-410-3373 for more information.

State DNR bird stamp contest opens

The state Department of Natural Resources is now accepting artwork entries for the Wild Turkey, Pheasant and Waterfowl Stamp design contests, where the winning designs will appear on the 2023 collection of stamps.

Each year, local artists from around Wisconsin compete for an opportunity to have their artwork commemorated in a historic way on the stamps.

"This is the 26th year of the turkey stamp contest. It's a historic opportunity for artists to commemorate their talent and provide opportunities for wildlife and wildlife habitat management," said Alaina Gerrits, DNR wildlife biologist. "Artists are encouraged to use the contest to show-

case their creative expression while capturing the charisma of native Wisconsin birds."

Sales of these three stamps bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for species management throughout the state, including habitat management, restoration, education and research projects. Hunters are required to purchase stamps to harvest these game birds.

Artwork must meet technical requirements to be eligible, and applicants should carefully review the contest rules to ensure their entries' eligibility. The deadline to submit designs is July 15. Judging will take place in late July or early August. More information can be found at dnr.wisconsin.gov.

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Bike shop evolves, expands with steady experience

By AJ Mikkleson
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

The popularity of bikes is on the rise. A desire to be more eco-friendly and gas prices are two reasons that have people looking at bicycles as a transportation alternative.

For the past 45 years in Neenah, that has often meant crossing paths with Stephen Pratt. Now as Pratt is ready to retire – semi retire as he describes it – this means a change in ownership at Cranked Bike Studio on Green Bay Road.

Pratt's older brother Billy began a bike repair shop in 1976 in the basement of his family home on West Wisconsin Avenue and Pratt followed him along. Shortly after, Billy moved the shop into a storefront on East Wisconsin and named it Class Cycles, which operated until 1986. Class Cycles was one of the first Trek bicycle dealers in Wisconsin.

Shortly after Class Cycles closed, Pratt ran Mr. Wilson's Bikes for about two years, which sold bicycles and skateboards from the storefront where Future Neenah is now located. Pratt bought the business and renamed it Beachfront. The shop grew and Pratt needed more space, eventually moving it out near Interstate 41 north of Winneconne Avenue.

Pratt sold Beachfront to Steve Scherck in the early 1990s. A short time after the sale, Pratt had a couple of friends who wanted to open a used bike shop in Menasha and reached out for advice and insight from Pratt, who then accepted a position with them. That shop, Recyclist Bicycle, moved from Menasha to Kaukauna and Pratt worked there for about 11 years alongside brother Billy.

In 2008, Pratt opened Cranked Bike Studio along with two partners, one of whom was Steve Scherck. Pratt was the managing partner and operated at the downtown Main Street location for 10 years. Much like the evolution of the other bike shops Pratt has been a part of, Cranked outgrew its location.

"My edge to compete with the other shops was to be able to offer what the customer needs when they walk in," Pratt said. This meant having available inventory of bikes and parts.

With more than four decades of experience, Pratt has learned about taking care of the customer and is proud of Cranked Bike Studio's customer service focus.

As Pratt began looking for a place to expand, he came across the building on Green Bay Road.

"I found this location between two highway exits with a beautiful storefront," he said. "It had the right height and width and natural light. It just worked out."

Pratt and Cranked Bike Studio have played an important role in the community. More than a retail business, Cranked organizes group rides and has been a major sponsor of Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue's annual Backdraft Bike Tour, now entering its 10th year.

As Cranked Bike Studio enters its 15th year, Pratt has decided to semi-retire and sell his share of the business to Scherck. There are four other full-time employees and other part-time staff who consider bikes their passion.

As gas prices reach new highs, some have begun looking for alternatives to filling the gas tank each week. Increasing in popularity are e-bikes.



Photo by AJ Mikkleson

Stephen Pratt stands outside his Cranked Bike Studio on Green Bay Road.

"E-bikes are the fastest-growing segment of our business," Pratt said, with demand increasing exponentially. New bikes, service and used bikes are all in demand as well. The bike repair area of the shop is year-round and the current location is about three times the size of the previous one and fully utilized.

Pratt said his passion will keep him around cycling in Neenah and helping out at Cranked Bike Studio.

"I might be the oldest bike shop owner in the Valley, or even Wisconsin," Pratt said. As he transitions into retirement, his cycling legacy in Neenah and the Fox Valley will be felt for generations.

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Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue photo

Firefighter recruits

The third annual Joint Recruit School between Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue and the Oshkosh Fire Department is underway for five weeks of training before they begin 24-hour shifts. The recruits include David Burroughs, Nick Peppard, Dennis Kilgore, Brayden Litton, Alex Johll, Bennett Krings and Max Schmidt.

Health update

FROM PAGE 1

ing at the Fox Crossing Fire Department, 1326 Cold Spring Road, from 3 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, along with other health care providers, pharmacies and retail locations.

With this new approval, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has also updated their recommendations to allow certain individuals who received an initial booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the Moderna vaccine at least four months ago to be eligible for another booster.

Subsequently the state Department of Health Services supports:

- A second booster dose of the Pfizer

er COVID-19 vaccine or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine that may be administered to ages 50 and older at least four months after receipt of a first booster dose of the vaccine.

- A second booster dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to people ages 12 and older with certain kinds of immunocompromise at least four months after receipt of a first booster dose. These are people who have undergone solid organ transplantation or living with conditions considered to have an equivalent level of immunocompromise.

- A second booster dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine administered at least four months after the first booster dose to people ages 18 and older with the

same kinds of immunocompromise listed above.

- A second booster dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine to people ages 18-49 years who are not moderately or severely immunocompromised and who received Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine as both their primary series dose and booster dose at least four months after their first Johnson & Johnson booster dose.

Call the COVID-19 Hotline at 920-232-3026 for more information.

Ongoing questions regarding vaccination recommendations, language and definitions prompted the CDC to recently clarify some previously released updates and emphasized these are clarifications and not new information.

Calendar of events

Ongoing

Downtown Neenah Spring Scavenger Hunt through April 14

Saturday, April 9

Neenah High School jazz ensembles in concert, 7 p.m., Neenah High cafeteria
Brews with the Bunny, 5 p.m.; Easter Egg Hunt, 7:45 p.m., Fritsch Park, Fox Crossing

“The Gospel of Life at the End of Life,” 8 a.m., St. Mary Catholic High School

Sunday, April 10

Ladies Leather Clutch Making, 11 a.m., The Plaza at Globe Coffee

Monday, April 11

Big Band Reunion, 7:30 p.m., Cranky Pat’s, 905 S. Commercial St.

Tuesday, April 12

Discover Class: Dungeons and Dragons (grades 8-12), 6 p.m., The Brigade, 109 W. Columbian Ave.

Wednesday, April 13

Fox Valley Women’s Connection Lunch, noon, Ridgeway Country Club

Theater group sets auditions

Future Stars Theatre Company, a newly formed local theater group, is holding auditions for its production of “Annie Jr.” for students entering first through 12th grade.

Auditions are set from noon to 4 p.m. April 23 for the free, entry-level theater opportunity. Visit futurestarstheatreco.org for more information and to register.

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Former swim-dive coach named to national hall of fame

By Dan Roherty
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah High School's former swimming and diving head coach was recently named to the National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association of America's Hall of Fame in recognition of his dedication going back to before the Rockets had a pool.

Mike Schuelke led the girls' high school team for 27 years and the boys' team for 16 before retiring in 2006. Over that span, the boys' team claimed the Fox Valley Conference 12 times and the WIAA sectional title 11 times. The girls' team won seven FVA and five WIAA sectional titles.



Schuelke

The 1969 Neenah High graduate didn't stay retired for long from a coaching standpoint, coaxed into being the Rockets diving coach for another four years and then for Appleton's program for four more when they were at risk of losing the program without his leadership. Schuelke stepped down a year ago from that role.

Currently serving as national records and archive chair for the NISCA, Schuelke has been a state representative for the national group for 26 of his 28 years as a member.

"It's always special to be honored by your own peers, and that's what this was," he said.

"It feels good to be around these people who know the sport and know how much dedication that the girls and boys put into



Photo from Mike Schuelke

Former longtime Neenah swim-dive coach Mike Schuelke poses with his trophy after being inducted into the NISCA Hall of Fame.

it, and it's fun to be able to hang around with them and talk to them."

Schuelke recalls those early days when

the existence of a Neenah swim team was mostly limited to its members and families as they practiced at the local YMCA

until the high school pool was built in the early 1980s.

"Once we had our own pool at the high school it seemed things just took off – more kids come out and they got stronger," he said. "That was a good time."

Schuelke and his wife, Sue, were in Florida for their first five years of teaching before coming back to Neenah to stay, where Mike was a physical education teacher. His coaching started with girls swimming and later expanded to the boys team and both diving programs, all of which he established as a perennial conference and regional power that continues with his successors.

In 2004, Schuelke was named National Federation Boys Swimming and Diving Coach of the Year and has earned that honor on the state level multiple times for swimming and for diving in 2016.

Schuelke received the Hall of Fame honor at the NISCA's 49th annual banquet March 26 in Atlanta. The Professional Awards Committee makes one selection each year for this highest award given for leadership in interscholastic aquatics.

Winners are chosen from those who have served in swimming, diving or water polo for at least 20 years and either have been selected for the Outstanding Service Award or shown leadership at the national level in interscholastic aquatics.

Schuelke is grateful for the national recognition while especially appreciating the conference athletes and coaches he has come to know.

"From the local standpoint, you get to know these people and they become your friends," he said.

Volunteer needs

From Volunteer Fox Cities:

ThedaCare at Home: Volunteers to provide companionship to terminally ill patients and their family members. Volunteers share their time and talent by visiting, listening, assisting with meals, or simply being a loving presence. Contact Jane at jane.shea@thedacare.org or 920-969-0919.

ThedaCare Medical Center: Volunteers to assist in the Aylward Surgery Center. Volunteers will provide clerical support doing tasks that include preparing patient charts, consent forms and patient wrist bands. Shifts are weekdays from 9 a.m.-noon. For more information, contact Brooke at brooke.techlin@thedacare.org.

Fox Cities SCORE: Is seeking a working or retired business professional to be a business mentor to small business owners and entrepreneurs in the Fox Valley and

help them succeed. Mentor training is provided. The time commitment is 10 hours a month and can fit your schedule. Contact Keith at keith.keller@scorevolunteer.org or visit www.foxcities.score.org/volunteer.

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Zephyrs girls soccer team aiming for state success

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Building a successful high school program is one thing. Sustaining that success is a completely different animal. That is what Gary Kruger has done in his time with the St. Mary Catholic varsity soccer program.

Known for having a strong program year in and year out, the Zephyrs came so close to making the state tournament in 2019 only to come up short in a pen-

alty shootout. They then saw their 2020 season lost because of a global pandemic only to return for 2021 in a big way. After posting a 6-1-1 conference record the Zephyrs found themselves in the sectional round only to come up short.

"I think at times we overachieved and other times we underachieved, that's a pretty usual season," Kruger said. "I felt like 2020 was going to be a state championship as we returned a large portion of the team that lost in a shoot-out at the state semifinal in 2019, but the 2020 season was not played due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We then turned around and put together another strong showing last year only to come up short again."

Unlike most programs that see their expectations change on a yearly basis, the Zephyrs continue to place extremely lofty goals and expectations on their players. Whether those goals are realistic or not, it comes with the territory of building a strong program and having the amount of success that Kruger has

had.

"Every season has the same expectations, as coaches we set high expectations of the players," he said. "We try to create a team atmosphere where every player can succeed if they put the effort in. Our main goal is to improve as a team each week, putting us in position at the end."

High expectations or not, the Zephyrs are going to have a tall task in front of them this season as they need to replace a ton of weapons from last year's squad.

Ava Staehler and Haley Jensen provided a ton of scoring for this team and their presence up top will be hard to replace. Maria Schultz and Olivia Bahn gave the Zephyrs outstanding defense which makes things easier on the goal-tender.

Even with these four along with several other seniors from a large class, the cupboard is not bare as the Zephyrs have another cast of seniors and underclassmen for that matter ready to step up and contribute now. Agii Kerwin (defender), Nyla Albrecht (midfielder), Megan Roloff (forward), Lily Griffith (defender), and goalkeeper Greta Norville are seniors who will be bringing with them leadership for this group.

Audrey Norville and Erin Bahn, midfielders Olivia Bergstrom and Mackenzie Barmash-Turner are also returning to the defensive side of the ball as they will make for a nice anchor on that back line. Along with those returning players comes talented underclassmen, all capable of making an impact. Melissa Piotrowski, Audrey Wanless and Claire Benz are some of those underclassmen

coming in with club experience as the Zephyrs appear locked and loaded for another deep run.

Rockets set to contend with FVA competition

The Neenah girls soccer team is coming off a 5-6-1 season, 5-3-1 in Fox Valley Association play. Their conference record is something to note as the FVA is often one of the toughest in the state, so to miss an entire year and follow that up with that level of success is a win for this program.

"It was great to be able to get out on the field last season," head coach Lars Nordang said. "Our student athletes had been very good in their preparations and responded well on the field last year. All credit to the student athletes for being able to do that after such an extended time."

With a new season set to begin, it was time for new goals and new expectations. For the Rockets, they ultimately are seeking a conference championship as a team goal.

Nordang is hoping for at least similar success in 2022 from what he had in

2021.

"Our goals and expectations are very similar to last year," he said. "We want to focus on what we can control; our preparation in the off-season training, our individual training in the off season; and sticking to our standards (culture/how we want to behave). We trust the process, and then we can allow the games to teach us where we are."

The Rockets only had four seniors on last year's team but they played a lot of minutes and were the focal point of the offense, so replacing them won't come easy.

From the upperclassmen down to the freshmen, the Rockets want to be a cohesive unit capable of making things happen.

"We want leaders in each and every one of our student athletes," Nordang said. "Learn to lead yourself, learn to help lead others. Be a servant leader. We are interviewing prospective leaders from freshmen to seniors for our leadership team. We have a great group of freshmen coming in, where several of them have been in the weight room all winter, getting stronger. Some played club at the highest levels."

St. Mary Catholic holds off Freedom

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Coming off its 6-0 win over Green Bay NEW Lutheran last week to open the season, the St. Mary Catholic girls soccer team was back on the pitch Tuesday for another nonconference matchup at home against North Eastern Conference powerhouse Freedom.

Despite a low-scoring and relatively slow start, the Zephyrs first-half goal proved to be the difference as SMC moved to 2-0 on the season with a 3-2 win over the Irish.

"This was a great battle between two good programs," head coach Gary Kruger said. "Our players had to deal with some adversity today but did what they needed to do to hang on for the win."

Given that the season is still early, that feeling-out process often takes longer as there was minimal action across the first 10 minutes. Apart from an SMC corner that didn't amount to anything, both sides struggled to get things rolling on the offensive side.

As the first half was approaching the halfway point, the Zephyrs started to get more comfortable with their tactical formation and attack. That led to the game's first goal where Melisa Piotrowski took the Claire Benz assist and put it past Avery Lang for a 1-0 lead.

Then it was the Irish who started to put shots on frame with Greta Norville coming away with several key stops to keep things 1-0 as that score held until halftime. Kruger got a sense that Freedom was starting to settle in but was happy with how his defense was able to adjust.

"Freedom did a great job attacking our defense by countering with player switches and better energy," he said. "It seemed like every time we had things under control or the way we wanted it, they found a way to climb back into the game."

Disc golf tournament set at O'Hauser Park

O'Hauser Park's disc golf course in Fox Crossing is hosting the Raging River Open on May 8 as a 36-hole competition.

The Professional Disc Golf Association

C-Tier event will be two rounds of 18 with either \$60 or \$70 entry fees depending on the division. Registration information can be found at discgolfscene.com/tournaments/Raging_River_2022.



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Neenah lacrosse boys ready to improve on 2021

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Despite posting a 3-9-1 in Bay Valley Conference play last season, the Neenah boys lacrosse program used it as a learning experience as they push forward to 2022. Record aside, the Rockets were just happy to be back on the field last

LACROSSE PREVIEW

season and that is why results didn't matter as much last year as in past seasons.

Given that the COVID pandemic ran wild over the past three years, the Rockets saw their 2020 season completely canceled before getting back on the field last season. Taking the record off the board, the Rockets had plenty of great moments last season as they were happy to be playing the game they fell in love with.

"It was an odd 2021 season with the late start due to the WIAA pushing fall sports

to alt- spring," head coach Paul Zielski said. "It actually impacted our team numbers as we had players in fall sports and then immediately transitioning to spring sports. It was tough both physically and mentally on the players and coaches. All I know at this point is I'm glad we can be moving well past all of that."

With things back to normal in terms of a spring start date and how the seasons are constructed, the Rockets are filled with confidence and anticipation with a team of 16 seniors and 12 of them having at least one varsity season under their belt. Zielski knows it will play a critical role in his team's success.

"A lot of time was put in during the off-season and we can see some major improvements in their skills already," he said. "Obviously, we want to see a swing in that win-loss column. There are several strong teams in the conference this year and we feel we can compete and are looking for a top-three finish."

On the offensive side of the ball expect senior Caden Scheibel, attack/captain, to lead in scoring. He has a strong support group at attack with Easton Hans and Matthew Hasler contributing. At midfield, expect to see a lot from junior Jaden Lopez as well as seniors Miles Wehner (captain), Ben Basler, Bruce Argal and Isaac Christian. Along with that cast, the sophomore and freshman classes have shown plenty of capabilities. One standout is freshman Jackson Brown at midfield.

On the defensive side, seniors Nick Grotenhuis (goalie) and defensemen Daniel Meixl and Matt Whitmer will be the anchors. Juniors Cooper Waldoch and Zac Fruendt will add balance splitting time between defense and long stick middle. The Rockets also see a great deal of potential and promise from sophomore Goalie Jack Romsos and freshman Alex Alatorre, who should potentially see several minutes at varsity.

All of those pieces will be critical to the Rockets success as they play in the tough Bay Valley Conference with state powers like Appleton United and Bay Port.

"In the Bay Valley we have several core teams who have strong youth programs and those programs seem to be consistently at the top," Zielski said. "Most of those programs have been around for anywhere from 15 to 16 years now. They have been able to build strong feeder programs. For years many of these programs have had consistent coaching and development. For Neenah this is my 19th season. I think that consistency has helped here."

"With the WLF State Championship taking only the top 24 teams in the state Neenah is going to have its work cut out to contend for either a conference or strong playoff run," he said. "If we can play together as a single unit and work hard on the small things, I think we have as good a shot as anyone."

Rocket girls lacrosse team hoping to grow with another year

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

One of the more rapidly growing sports in America and Wisconsin is lacrosse. While most of that growth is in the southern part of the state, which you can see by the amount of club teams and programs, that is starting to include northeast Wisconsin.

LACROSSE PREVIEW

Coming off a season in which the Rockets went 5-9, but 5-3 in conference play, there was a lot to take away from that season. Especially when you consider that there was no season in 2020 due to COVID.

"I thought the girls showed a ton of growth last season and were excited to get back out there and play," head coach Paul Kelly said. "After missing a year due to the global pandemic, it felt great to get back on the field and have the consistency we were missing. Instead of worrying about how we could practice, and where we would play, the protocols lightened up and we were able to play a normal schedule as planned."

Now, fresh off a normal off-season for the first time in three years, the Rockets are

busy preparing for the season. Although still a few weeks away from game action, this is when the success of seasons pays off.

Kelly is excited for what is to come with his team as he aims to grow the sport as well as set the bar high.

"Given the strides we made last season, I want us to build off of that and start progressing more as a team," he said. "We have spent the last few seasons learning the fundamentals of this game as most of our girls have never played lacrosse before joining our program. Now with more experience, we can start implementing more complex things on offense and defense. That should lead to better results which can help us grow the sport. You always want to grow lacrosse and the best way to do that is by getting a youth program interested in what you are doing."

Although this is a program that sees a lot of its girls try out for the first time in high school, the Rockets are fortunate enough to have plenty of experience compared to other seasons. There are freshmen, sophomores and juniors in the program, but this is going to be a senior-led team.

A lot of those seniors are on their fourth year on the varsity level. Lauren Wilharm,

Maddie Hart, Taylor Seitz and Mia Kinayman are some of the many seniors who look to play a prominent role. Their leadership and experience could get the Rockets to the next level in terms of consistent play.

As the season unfolds, look for Neenah to continue to take some bumps along the way with the likes of Appleton and Wausau on the schedule who are starting to come on strong. But Neenah has a team on the verge of becoming a consistently strong program.

"For us to be competitive this season

and achieve the goals we set, we need to implement new things on both offense and defense and perfect them to the best of our ability," Kelly said. "A lot of the programs in our area are what I like to call one-trick ponies where they ride their best players to do everything. We are not like that. We are a balanced team and once we start putting in set plays, I think the level of our play will increase."

The Rockets open their season April 14 when they travel to Watertown for a non-conference game.

Rabas named Coach of the Year by WBCA

Neenah boys basketball coach Lee Rabas collected a prestigious honor after leading the Rockets to the WIAA Division 1 state title in March.

Rabas was selected as the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association Boys Basketball Coach of the Year, it was announced by the organization earlier this week.

Rabas led the Rockets to a 29-1 record, which included winning the Fox Valley Association title. Neenah finished three games ahead of both Appleton East and Kimberly in the final league standings.

Under Rabas' guidance, the Rockets went on to win the state title with a convincing 64-52 victory over Brookfield Central at UW-Madison's Kohl Center. It was the first state title for Neenah since 1978 as the Rockets won their six postseason games by an average of 14 points.

Rabas was also named Coach of the Year in the FVA.

Todd Hansen of Kettle Moraine Lutheran was named the High School Girls Coach of the Year after leading the Lasers to the WIAA Division 1 state title. Kettle Moraine Lutheran beat Appleton East, 69-53, in the title game and finished 27-3.

The WBCA also honored one coach for both boys and girls in each division with achievement awards.

For the girls, the honorees were Celeste Ratka of Hortonville, Darla Olson of Rice Lake, Jeff Capelle of Brillion, Mike Eggebrecht of Phillips and Jason Schultz of Northwood.

For the boys, the awards went to Chad Brieske of Eau Claire Memorial, Ryan Walz of Wisconsin Lutheran, Hunter Price of Big Foot, Sam Bertsch of Iola-Scandinavia and Clint Nemitz of Southwestern.

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Cre8lab

FROM PAGE 1

the space any time it's open, along with training and access to all tools and equipment.

"We teach (members) how to use all the equipment, all the safety standards, and then how to use the design software to build anything that they want to and then they can utilize our knowledge to help them learn how to do all kinds of stuff," Brehm said.

On weekends, Cre8lab hosts classes the public can attend.

"The kids can learn basic hand tools – how to use things like a drill and a hand saw," Brehm said, adding that Cre8lab is offering a terrestrial terrarium class April 24. "They learn about the ecosystem and how vital every piece of that is."

Other classes include basket weaving, woodworking and soldering circuits.

"They actually get to pick out a shaped circuit board that looks like a robot or a jet or an atom, and then they learn about how LEDs work, how circuit boards work, and switches and batteries," Brehm said. "They learn how to solder all of those together and they get to leave with one of these circuit boards that looks like one of these really cool things and lights up."

Cre8lab is funded by membership fees, class fees and public donations. Brehm said they are currently raising funds to add a metalworking shop and water jet



Photo by David Hall

Eric Brehm (left) and Adam Waite founded Cre8lab at 1131 S. Commercial St. just before the pandemic hit.

cutter, a tool that uses high-pressure water to safely cut materials.

"We're about halfway to our water jet (goal) and we're just looking for any help that the community might be able to give to get kids into metalworking," Brehm said. "It's a trade that is always looking for new people and pays well and is a good job for somebody to take that doesn't want to do four years or six years in college."

Cre8lab is open from noon to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and every other weekend. Donations are welcome

and can be made in person or through the Cre8lab Facebook page.

Brehm said Cre8lab is influential in inspiring interest in the STEM field.

"One of things we talk about is that sometimes the youth don't know they're interested in something because they've never had access to it," he said. "You would never know you have a knack for wood-working or an interest in technology until it gets put in your hands. I think you leave with an interest in something and the ability to start building a skillset."

Water resources group tabs former McMahon VP

Engineering and architectural firm McMahon announced that retired senior vice president Carl Sutter was recently named a board-certified diplomate, Water Resources Engineer of the American Academy of Water Resources Engineers, a subsidiary of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Sutter led the environment and infrastructure group at McMahon for 20 years, assisting in the creation of the first multijurisdictional storm water utility in the state and provided more than 2,900 drainage plan reviews for governmental agencies.

He also conducted numerous area-wide or watershed-based drainage analyses, bridge hydraulic studies, and dam break analyses and emergency action plans.

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YOUR NEIGHBORS' CONCRETE GUYS



Photo by David Hall

Statues staying warm

The city's downtown statues have been dressed for the cold spring weather in recent weeks.

Elections

FROM PAGE 1

"There are many opportunities for us to really start digging in and accomplishing some of the things that we have been thinking about and talking about for a while so I'm super excited to get going on that," she said.

"In spite of COVID we have had a lot going on in Neenah that says a lot about this community. We've maintained really positive momentum."

A 3rd District alderperson since 2014 and lifelong Neenah resident, Lang said the campaign took on a wider goal than her previous elections to City Council.

"Running for mayor you really have to think deeply about your vision for the community as a whole and being able to think that through and articulate it," she said, "and have those conversations with people in the community that helped you shape that vision."

Borchardt, who has been a 2nd District alderperson since 2020 and teaching in the school district for 15 years, thanked his supporters for their help and congratulated his opponent.

"I am a better person for this experience and my hope is that this community is as well," Borchardt posted on Facebook. "I look forward to supporting Jane over the next four years in any way I can."

In Winnebago County's supervisor District 7 covering the Neenah area, Betsy Ellenberger edged out Kelly Thom Fahrenkrug by just 25 votes – 681 to 656 – for the seat vacated by Steven Lenz after four years.

Fox Crossing village board member Greg Ziegler held off a challenge by Nick Gebert to retain his Trustee 3 seat, 1,271 to 878.

Winnebago County had three open judicial seats, two of which had challengers.

In Branch 3, Neenah attorney Bryan Keberlein defeated Lisa Krueger, 13,745 to 11,421, to replace Judge Barbara Key after she announced her retirement late last year.

Keberlein, a Menasha native, practiced law in the Fox Valley for more than 16 years and has been Winnebago County's judicial court commissioner since 2014. Krueger has been the county's family court commissioner since 2012.

Neenah attorney Mike Gibbs defeated Branch 4 Judge LaKeisha Haase, 13,768 to 12,081. Haase was seeking to maintain her seat after being appointed by Gov. Tony Evers in December 2020.

Branch 5 Judge John Jorgensen, first elected in 2010 and re-elected in 2016, was uncontested for a new term.

In the Town of Neenah, James R. Weiss and David J. Bluma were chosen as board supervisors ahead of Andrea C. Long for the two available seats.

Other county officials running unopposed were Village of Fox Crossing trustees Michael Van Dyke and Dale McNamee, Town of Clayton board supervisor Scott Reif, and Neenah-Menasha Municipal Judge Jim Gunz.

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