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Submitted photo

Buy Nothing Neenah group administrator Miss Smedema and her boyfriend, Lt. Nick Wilson of the Mountain Fire Department, are shown while handing out candy at Halloween. The cape and fireballs outfit Smedema is wearing were made from fabric given to her from Buy Nothing Neenah group members.

Spring race candidates lining up

Council, school board have contested seats

Neenah News

Three common council positions, three school board seats, four Town of Neenah positions and a Winnebago County circuit court judge race will be on the ballot for the April 4 spring election in Neenah.

Common Council

Council members Cari Lendrum, Tami Erickson and Scott Weber are up for re-election. Lendrum, who has been the District 1 alderwoman since 2011, is being challenged by Alexander M. Collins who filed papers Tuesday.

Erickson has represented District 2 since 2014 while Weber took over as District 3 alderman in May 2022, completing the remainder of the term of Jane Lang, who was elected mayor. Both will be on the ballot unopposed.

Town of Neenah

Positions in the Town of Neenah up for election include chairman, Town of Neenah Sanitary District No. 2 commissioner and two town supervisor positions.

Incumbent Bob Schmeichel is running for the chairman position; incumbent Duane Sargent is running for the Sanitary District No. 2 commissioner position; and incumbents Brooke Cardoza and Tom Wilde are running for the town supervisor positions. All of the town candidates are unopposed.

Board of Education

Neenah Joint School District Board of Education seats held by Tom Hanby, Amy

SEE **Spring election** ON PAGE 8

INSIDE



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Thrifty residents create avenue for free exchange

Buy Nothing group circulates variety of items

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Used greeting cards, half a gallon of coffee creamer and leftover Halloween candy are not the types of items normally listed for sale in local buy-and-sell groups, but those are just a few of the items that locals have listed for free in the Buy Nothing Neenah Facebook group.

The Buy Nothing Neenah group is open to adult residents who give freely without

any expectation of reward. Buying, selling, bartering and trading is not allowed. In the past month, locals have posted more than 500 times in the Neenah group.

The members give or ask to receive all sorts of items, as long as the items are legal. Popular items include holiday decorations, clothing, toys, home decor, children's items and food.

The concept is not new; many classified websites and social media pages historically included a free section or free item listings. The difference is that local Buy Nothing

SEE **Buy Nothing** ON PAGE 8

Medical examiner system begins for county

New morgue being built; overdose deaths cited

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Winnebago County has officially switched from an elected coroner to a hired medical examiner as of the first of the year and the Medical Examiner's Office plans to break ground on a new morgue this spring.

Coroners and medical examiners investigate all reportable deaths that occur within the county. The office works with law enforcement and the District Attorney's office in death investigations and may testify in court.

The move from an elected to a hired position comes after former Winnebago County coroner Barry Busby was censured by the County Board and resigned in 2019 amid allegations that included sexual harassment, retaliation and absenteeism. Busby spent months in Florida while holding the position, which paid \$73,000 per year.

A month after Busby turned in his resignation letter, the county board voted to eliminate the elected coroner's position and replace it with a hired medical examiner position. The change couldn't occur until Busby's term was complete at the end of 2022.

After Busby's resignation, Gov. Tony Evers appointed Cheryl Brehmer to the vacant coroner's position for the remainder of the term.

The county has now moved forward on plans to eliminate and replace the coroner's position. As of Jan. 1, the Coroner's Office is now the Medical Examiner's Office. County Executive Jon Doemel appointed Brehmer as the lead medical examiner.

SEE **Medical examiner** ON PAGE 8



Winnebago County photo

Cheryl Brehmer, shown speaking at a County Board of Supervisors meeting, was named the county's first lead medical examiner.

Neenah News

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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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Corrections

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County board approves social media standards

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors approved a social media policy for county employees at a meeting Tuesday, although the policy won't apply to supervisors themselves because they're elected officials.

Emergency Management director Eric Rasmussen said the county social media accounts are used to share information and promote one-way communication. The various county departments have several social media accounts on several platforms.

"This is something that we're actively using to educate the members of our community," he said.

The county has been using social media for more than a decade without any standard countywide guidance in place. Over the past six months the county social media pages have seen about 2,500 updates, posts and comments per month, which jumped to more than 4,000 in November.

The new policy establishes which county employees are authorized to post on the social media accounts. Each department head will be responsible for content posted on the department social media pages.

The Information Technology Department will maintain a list of social media profiles approved for use by the county and each department head will maintain a list of employees who are authorized to communicate the county's business on the page.

The new policy does not allow county employees to comment, respond to comments or "like" comments or posts except under limited circumstances.

Employees are not permitted to remove public comments or block the public from viewing or commenting on county social media accounts. If a public comment incites unlawful behavior, county employees may notify law enforcement.

The county will also retain records of all social media posts and comments for seven years, in accordance with open records laws. County employees who violate the social media policy may face disciplinary action including termination.

Employees authorized to use county social media accounts must conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with all policies, directives and professional expectations. The county's website content and social media posts will be subject to approval by department heads.

The policy does not apply to a county employee's personal use of social media unless the employee is using their account as a representative of the county. The policy notes that the public may attribute an employee's private social media page to the county.

"For these reasons, employees must exercise care when posting and commenting on social media, as personal views can be tied back to employment with (the) county," according to the policy.

Rasmussen said the majority of adults in the United States are using social media to read news and find information.

"It is a priority of the county to increase our outward communication and transparency," he said. "We want to make sure this communication is happening in a professional and legal manner."



Coins commemorating the Neenah Police Department's 150th anniversary are being distributed in a treasure hunt that started this week.

Police launch medallion treasure hunt around city

The Neenah Police Department is celebrating its 150th anniversary with a challenge for community members to find a hidden treasure each week through 2023.

Bronze medallions have been created, weighing more than 8 ounces, showing the anniversary badge and previous badges used by the police department over the years. Each of the 52 medallions is numbered.

Clues provided each week will lead treasure hunters to the prizes hidden within city limits at city parks and property that is open to the public. Others will be given away at special events throughout the year.

Those who find the coins are asked to scan one of the QR codes on the instructions placed in the package with the medallion, take a picture of their group and come to the Police Department between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. to collect a certificate of authenticity.

Follow the City of Neenah Police Department Facebook page for rules and more details.

City's website now offers updated view

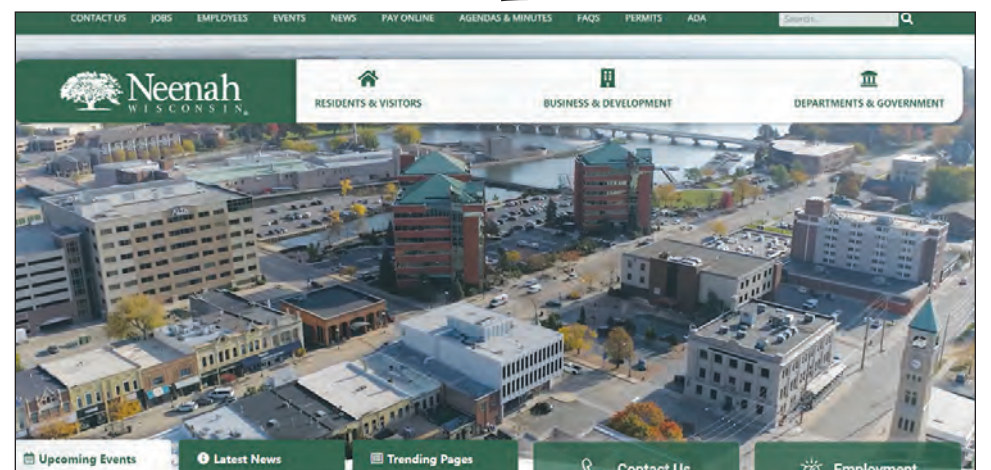
Neenah News

The city of Neenah has unveiled a new look for its website with a more engaging and customer-focused interaction that can be viewed at ci.neenah.wi.us.

Joe Wenninger, Information Systems Department director, said the site update will help both the visitors who use it and staff that maintain it.

He said that besides being more visually appealing, the site adds functionality and navigation for mobile devices while providing a new management tool on the back end as it replaces the website in use since 2014.

Stellar Blue Technologies of Neenah was contracted to do the makeover and Wenninger said the website's URL is in the process of being transferred from the



A screen capture shows the new home page for ci.neenah.wi.us.

former location.

The city's website has been averaging 3,297 unique visitors per week with a high

at 4,082, according to Wenninger, along with an average of 4,578 total sessions per week with a high of 5,719.

Red Cross blood drive promotion gets underway

The American Red Cross and Pro Football Hall of Famer Peyton Manning are asking people to score big for patients in need with a chance to win a trip to Super Bowl LVII in Arizona by giving blood or platelets.

National Blood Donor Month is underway as the holiday season winds down and threats of severe winter weather and seasonal illness cases continue to rise. To book a time to give, visit RedCrossBlood.org, download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, or call 800-RED CROSS.

In partnership with the NFL, those who give blood, platelets or plasma this month will be entered to win a trip for two to Super Bowl LVII on Feb. 12, including access

to pregame activities, tickets to the Super Bowl Experience, round-trip airfare, three-night hotel accommodations and a \$500 gift card for expenses.

Upcoming Red Cross blood donation

opportunities include two in Neenah: 1 to 6 p.m. Jan. 16 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 1140 Tullar Road, and noon to 5 p.m. Jan. 30, Best Western Hotel & Conference Center, 1000 Cameron Way.

Lawmakers officially sworn in at Capitol

Tuesday was inauguration day for local lawmakers and other top leaders in the state. Gov. Tony Evers, new Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, 24 new members of the Assembly and seven state Senate members were among those sworn in at the state Capitol in Madison.

New members included Nate Gustafson, a Republican from Fox Crossing, who was sworn into the Assembly for

the 55th District seat previously held by Rachael Cabral-Guevara, another Fox Crossing Republican who was sworn into the Senate for District 19. Freshmen went through an orientation last month on what to expect in the Legislature.

Eight new Democrats were sworn in to the Assembly along with 16 Republicans. Five new Republicans and two Democrats joined the state Senate.



Neenah News

Plaza holidays

Downtown Neenah's Plaza drew holiday visitors over the last weekend to take in some skating and outdoor gatherings during the holidays.

Business news roundup

Volatus Infrastructure LLC and **VMIC** have signed an agreement for VMIC to perform business development tasks in South Korea. VMIC will help bring electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) infrastructure to South Korea to ensure they will be ready to support the advanced air mobility (AAM) industry. Based in Seoul, VMIC is an aviation start-up with expertise in infrastructure and transportation asset finance, leasing and management. For more information, visit vmalternative.com.

Founded in 2021, Neenah-based Volatus offers three main eVTOL infrastructure designs, a vehicle agnostic charging station, and an app and maintenance programs.

Online magazine **Best Life** recently named the Plaza at Gateway Park in downtown Neenah one of the 10 "most charming" ice-skating rinks in the country. The Plaza was listed along with skating rinks like the Rockefeller Center and Central Park in New York.

Tax collections have begun for municipalities in area

Neenah News

Property tax payments are being collected through January at municipal offices, dropoff locations and online for full or partial payments of 2022 bills. Homeowners received their property tax bills by mid-December with the first payment installment due by Jan. 31.

Neenah: The city of Neenah, which noted an overall tax rate decrease of 1.54% compared to 2021, has property tax bills and payment verification at ci.neenah.wi.us under Property Information in the Residents & Visitors tab. City Hall has a dropbox available at all times. Office hours and drive-through at 211 Walnut St. are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday.

Village of Fox Crossing: Payments are taken by mail, dropbox or online by going to foxcrossingwi.gov. The Fox Crossing Municipal Complex at 2000 Municipal Drive is accepting them from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and at Community First Credit Union locations at 1575 Dresang Way, Neenah, and 2626 S. Oneida St., Appleton, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and 8 a.m. to noon Saturday.

Town of Neenah: Tax collection hours in January at 1600 Breezewood Lane are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays, and 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 31. Go to townofneenah.com/property-taxes for online payments.

Town of Clayton: For in-person payments the town office is open from 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday. Mail to the Town of Clayton Treasurer, 8348 County T, Larsen, WI 54947 or online at govpay-now.com.

Town of Vinland: Taxes can be paid by mail to the Town of Vinland hall at 6085 County T, Oshkosh, WI 54904-9734, the preferred method, or at that location from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. They also can be dropped off during business hours or put in the drop box in the office door. Go to www.townofvinland.org for more information.

All payments made after Jan. 31 are payable to the Winnebago County Treasurer at P.O. Box 2808, Oshkosh, WI 54903-2808 or in-person at 112 Otter Ave., Oshkosh.

Information about the Wisconsin Lottery and Gaming Credit Program and application forms can be found at revenue.wi.gov.

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Do you have the pulse on the community? Interested in feature stories or prep sports?

We are looking for writers interested in creating community features, news stories or sports reporting on a freelance basis for either the Oshkosh Herald or Neenah News weekly newspapers. Submissions would need a local focus that also can connect to broader topics. Compensation is on a story-by-story basis.

Contact editor@oshkoshherald.com to get more details.



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Advisory vote on cannabis gets more county discussion

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

There's still a slim chance that Winnebago County residents may be able to weigh in on the legalization of marijuana in the April 4 spring election.

This is after the County Board of Supervisors sent the resolution for a cannabis advisory referendum back to the Judiciary and Legislative committees at its December meeting, limiting the possibility of the advisory making it on the April ballot before the Jan. 24 deadline.

The cannabis advisory referendum request was brought by supervisors Michael Norton, Brian Defferding, Steven Binder, Julie Gordon, Doug Zellmer and Rachael Dowling.

The referendum question would ask residents whether cannabis should:

- (a) Be legal for recreational use for adults 21 years of age and older, and legal for medical use, taxed and regulated similar to alcohol.
- (b) Be legal for medical purposes only.
- (c) Remain a criminally illegal drug as provided under current law.
- (d) None of the above.

Attorney and former municipal judge Len Kachinski, of Fox Crossing, said the referendum is a political move to gain support for marijuana legalization.

"I have had so many clients, dozens ... whose lives have been destroyed by the use of marijuana," he said. "It zaps ambition, it causes all the problems that the previous speakers have talked about and it's just generally very negative for society."

Supervisors Nate Gustafson and Conley

Hanson proposed sending the county advisory referendum request back to the committees, which some supervisors said was to kill the measure and not give people the opportunity to weigh in on legalization. The board voted in favor of sending the measure to the committees.

Earlier this year the Winnebago County District Attorney's office issued a memo stating that the county has ceased criminal prosecution of personal use marijuana cases. The DA's office requested that personal use marijuana cases be handled as ordinance violations or sent to an alternative program.

Twenty-one states have legalized marijuana for recreational use, including bordering states Michigan and Illinois. It remains illegal in Wisconsin for medical or recreational use.

In September, Gov. Tony Evers announced he would include marijuana legalization and decriminalization in the upcoming 2023 state budget.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos told Wisconsin Politics last month that putting recreational marijuana in the budget would be a waste of time and would scare people into thinking that approving medical marijuana is a gateway to legalizing recreational marijuana.

Norton said he is working to move the county cannabis advisory referendum measure through the committees. The referendum request would need to pass the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee, which each have meetings scheduled Monday, and then also be approved at a county board meeting before the Jan. 24 deadline, to be on the April ballot.



Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue photo

Fire truck hit on 41

A portion of Interstate 41 south of Breezewood Lane was briefly shut down Saturday night as a Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue crew responded to a vehicle incident during slippery conditions. During the call one of its fire trucks was struck by another vehicle. No firefighters were hurt. Officials reminded drivers to slow down in the presence of emergency vehicles.

Winter Festival planned with weather in mind

Neenah News

Washington Park's annual Winter Festival is planned for Jan. 14 with a variety of outdoor family activities depending on how weather conditions cooperate with the plans.

The two-hour event from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. hopes to offer skating, hockey contests, sledding and other contests if the Parks Department is able to get the conditions needed to form a skating rink. Superintendent of recreation Jim Kluge said earlier this week that they may not have the ice option by that time but are still planning for the event with other activities for children and families based on the weather.

He also said there would be consideration for postponing the event for at least

a week if better weather conditions were forecast in the near future.

"If we get some cold weather we can get (a rink) up in a couple of days or so. They will work overnight laying water down but the temperatures have to be there," Kluge said. "We're hopeful and crossing our fingers."

Fox Communities Credit Union has been a sponsor of the annual festival and provides s'mores, hot dogs, hot chocolate and other give-a-ways using the warming shelter as a staging area.

The festival came about when Washington Park and the ice skating area were reconfigured about five years ago and reintroduced to park visitors.

"It's a nice, quick event," Kluge said. "It has always been well attended."

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Calendar of events

Friday, Jan. 6

Fitness Friday, 9:15 a.m., Neenah Public Library

Saturday, Jan. 7

Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Berg-

strom-Mahler Museum of Glass

Monday, Jan. 9

Monday Matinee, 1 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Saturday, Jan. 14

Washington Park Winter Festival, 11 a.m., Washington Park, Neenah

Thursday, Jan. 19

Hidden History of Doty Island – the Driving Park, 7 p.m., Neenah Public Library

AUTO ACCIDENT?

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High-speed chase through region awaits charges

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

More than a month after two men stole a vehicle in Menasha, fled from authorities during a high-speed chase and jumped into a river before being apprehended, police say the incident is still under investigation.

A 19-year-old Eau Claire man, who was driving, and his passenger, a 25-year-old Neenah man, allegedly stole a 2023 Land Rover Defender vehicle from Menasha on Nov. 29. The vehicle may also have been involved in other crimes in the area, according to a Fond du Lac police press release.

The men were involved in a vehicle pursuit in the Menasha area and eluded

law enforcement officers. The vehicle was last seen heading south on Interstate 41 in Winnebago County.

Fond du Lac police located the stolen vehicle traveling near I-41 and South Military Road and attempted a traffic stop. The vehicle failed to pull over and fled, with officers in pursuit. The chase reached speeds of about 90 miles per hour while the vehicle was traveling into Fond du Lac.

The stolen vehicle continued into town and struck an occupied vehicle on Western Avenue. Both suspects exited the vehicle and fled on foot. The occupants of the struck vehicle were unharmed.

Authorities from several agencies responded to the area to search for the men and a drone and police canine were de-

ployed. Both men jumped into the Fond du Lac River to attempt to get away from law enforcement officers before being taken into custody.

The Eau Claire man was arrested on charges of operating a motor vehicle without the owner's consent, resisting and eluding an officer and a probation hold.

The Neenah man was arrested on

charges of resisting an officer, possession of a schedule two narcotic, possession of an illegally obtained prescription and a probation hold.

Menasha Police community liaison Dan Hoernke said the vehicle theft and other crimes are still under active investigation and he declined to release the names of the two men involved.

Shining Star Award nominations sought

The Fox Cities Chamber is presenting its fourth annual Excellence in Education Shining Star Awards on March 30, and nominations are being accepted to shine a light on the sacrifices and successes in the region that are shaping the future.

The awards are open to all individuals who work with students and children, including day cares, preschools, homeschools, public schools, private schools and colleges from the Fox Cities region – Calumet County, Outagamie County and northern Winnebago County.

Each award honors a Fox Cities educator who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to supporting students in and outside of the classroom.

One award each will be presented in these categories:

- Excellence in Early Childhood: First five years of development and learning, including day care and preschools
- Excellence in Elementary Education:

kindergarten – grade 4

- Excellence in Middle School Education: grades 5-8
- Excellence in High School Education: grades 9-12
- Excellence in Specialty Arts: band, choir, art, languages, etc.
- Excellence in Specialty STEM: automobile, robotics, agriculture, woods, etc.
- Excellence in Special Education: PK-12 teachers
- Excellence in Extracurriculars: sports coaches, club directors, etc.
- Excellence in School Administration & Support Staff: principals, administrative assistants, counselors, librarians, etc.
- Excellence in Higher Education: post-high school educators, directors, etc.

Additionally, an Educator of the Year winner will be announced the night of from one of the 10 recipients.

Nomination information can be found at business.foxcitieschamber.com.

Winnebago ice report

By Jim Nobbe

PAYNE'S POINT HOOK AND SPEAR FISHING CLUB

As of early Tuesday, I am seeing between 8 and 10 inches of ice on average in the northern half of Lake Winnebago. North of Payne's Point there is a fair amount of shove ice on the lake, but with the warm weather we have seen it has melted down quite a bit, so travel on an ATV or snowmobile is not too rough.

I traveled due east from Payne's Point Hook and Spear Fishing Club, and did not encounter any major cracks as

of this time. As of now it appears the worst ice is right next to shore where it is thinner from low water levels and ice shoving onto shore. I recommend

travel by foot, ATV, snowmobile at this time.

I will do my best to keep everyone updated with what is changing on the lake through the Payne's Point Hook and Spear Fishing Club's website and Facebook page as well as weekly updates. If you are not sure

about the ice conditions check the ice thickness yourself and remember that the ice is never 100% safe.



Utility shares tips to stay safe and warm

Wisconsin Public Service offers these winter tips to stay safe and warm.

Space heater safety: Only use newer models with safety features like automatic shutoff. Keep it at least 6 feet away from flammable materials like drapes or blankets. Plug heaters directly into the wall, not into extension cords or power strips. Place the heater on a flat surface away from children and pets.

Safe sleeping: Turn off electric blankets when they are not being used. Keep pets away from electric blankets, as their teeth and claws can puncture wire insulation and cause damage.

Prevent carbon monoxide dangers: Make sure carbon monoxide detectors are working properly and learn the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Oven safety: Never use a stove or oven

to heat your home. Not only is it inefficient, but it could also lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Let the sun in: Open curtains or blinds when the sun is out to help warm your home. Close them at night to help retain heat and cut down on drafts.

Be prepared: Assemble an emergency kit with blankets, flashlights and battery-powered chargers for your cell-phones.

Keep meters clear: Safely brush away snow and ice from your home's natural gas meter and vents. The extra weight can stress or crack meter piping, causing a natural gas leak. It also can clog appliance vents, trapping carbon monoxide indoors.

Energy assistance: Wisconsin Public Service offers budget billing, payment plans and heating assistance.



Photo from Neenah Historical Society



Shovel team

Two men remove snow in front of Krueger's Hardware. Krueger's was situated downtown at 107 W. Wisconsin Ave. adjacent to the current Knox Furniture Gallery. The building was demolished in 1974.

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Learn more about our commitment — about how we're putting that inspiration into action — at ThedaCare.org/community-benefit.



Medical examiner

FROM PAGE 1

Brehmer's tenure has seen a sharp increase in overdose deaths in the county. In 2022, there were 31 confirmed overdose deaths and seven more possible overdose deaths, which are pending toxicology results. Forty-one people fatally overdosed in the county in 2021. The majority of the deaths are attributed to fentanyl.

"We've seen it go to heroin, to heroin and fentanyl, then it was meth and fentanyl – they just keep coming," Brehmer said at a June county board meeting.

The county Health Department, Human Services Department, Medical Examiner's Office and Overdose Fatality Review Team have partnered to provide additional services for families who have experienced the loss of a loved one due to an overdose. Starting in February, a three-year pilot bereavement program will be operated out of the Medical Examiner's Office for family and friends.

Suspicious deaths require autopsies, which are conducted in Fond du Lac County. Fond du Lac no longer has the capacity to store bodies, which means Winnebago is often holding them for up to 12 days.

The county borrowed a cold storage trailer from another county that it had been using to store bodies. The trailer was only a temporary solution and experienced issues including a cooling system failure. Brehmer said the county returned the trailer and the livery service that transports the bodies is providing temporary storage of the deceased.

In June, the board approved a \$1.5 million proposal to expand the sheriff's department's evidence storage and add a morgue with cold storage so that the county will store its own bodies. The Medical Examiner's Office will also be added on to the morgue.

Brehmer said the project is expected to go out to bid this month. The plan is to break ground on the new morgue this spring.

Spring election

FROM PAGE 1

Morrissey and Deborah Watry are up for election this spring, with three-year terms. Morrissey is not seeking re-election.

Six individuals will be on the ballot for the three seats.

The candidates are Hanby, Watry, Brian Roeh, Rocky Schaefer, Lindsay Clark and Michelle Swardenski. There will be no primary.

Winnebago circuit court

Judge Scott Woldt in Branch 2 is up for

re-election and former Branch 4 Judge LaKeisha Haase is challenging him.

Haase was appointed in December 2020 by Gov. Tony Evers after Judge Karen Seifert's retirement. She took the bench in January 2021 and lost the fall 2021 election to Michael Gibbs, who took over the Branch 4 position.

Woldt has been a circuit court judge since his appointment in 2004, then was re-elected in 2005, 2011 and 2017.

Judge Daniel Bissett in Branch 6 will also be on the ballot. He is running unchallenged.

Buy Nothing

FROM PAGE 1

groups are dedicated exclusively to free items, offering people a way to give, receive, share and borrow items without cash exchanging hands.

The Buy Nothing Project was started in 2013 in Washington by friends Rebecca Rockefeller and Liesl Clark, who touted it as a local gift economy that is parallel to worldwide cash economies. It has since grown to include 7,000 groups in 44 nations with more than 6 million members.

There are about 71 Buy Nothing groups in Wisconsin, including nearby communities Fox Crossing, Appleton, Greenville, Grand Chute and Oshkosh. The local pages are run entirely by volunteers, with support and guidance from the organization.

The Neenah group was started by friends Miss Smedema and Jonna Smith in 2020 and has nearly 1,000 members.

Smedema knows all about clutter. As the owner of the business Miss Assist in Neenah, she often helps people clean and declutter their homes.

"It's hard to let go of things, especially when it's something that's really held a lot of meaning for you or you see it as something of value," she said. "And when we have that connection of it going to somebody who truly needs it, who truly wants it, and you can really make that personal connection, it's a little bit easier to let those things go."

That's where the Buy Nothing Project comes in. She compared it to the old-school concept of borrowing a cup of sugar from a neighbor.

"We just don't have that anymore because of the world we live in (and) technology, there's somewhat of a disconnect, so that we don't know our neighbors," she said. "We have a unique opportunity in our area to help serve one another."

Smedema, whose boyfriend is a volunteer firefighter from Mountain, said the group helped her out in a pinch when she was invited to hand out Halloween candy this past October for the Mountain Fire Department. With no costume to wear, Smedema posted in the group looking for material that resembled fire.

"I was able to put together this floor-length fiery colored cape and then made

three fireballs to go with it," she said. Her experience was so positive that she joined the fire department.

Group member Kristi Clover said she posted in the group searching for a volunteer to be a Girl Scout cookie manager so that a child could sell cookies. Within a few hours she found four volunteers.

During the height of the pandemic, Clover said members dropped off essentials, such as toilet paper and food, to other members who were home sick with COVID-19.

In 2021, group members collected gifts and delivered them to 34 residents at an assisted living facility on Christmas Day, while dressed as elves.

In 2022, Clover collected gift cards from members to donate to a local mother who was struggling to afford Christmas gifts for her child.

"Being a part of a giving community is such a gift in itself," she said, noting that she hopes more local Buy Nothing groups are started, such as Menasha.

Rachel Gellerstedt is a group moderator who saw membership triple over the past two years. The night before she was having a wine tasting at her house she realized she was short on glasses. A group member loaned her eight wine glasses to use for the day.

"My favorite part, though, is that I've been able to declutter my house and give it to people who truly want or need it, instead of throwing it away or going through the hassle of selling," she said. "I often wonder how many pounds of trash our group saves from the landfill, because we are now more apt to donate instead of throwing it away."

The items aren't necessarily gifted to the first person who responds to a post. Although there is no requirement, members often post the free item along with a question, which encourages group members to share and connect in the comments.

Group member Beth Oosterhous said she has given and received items in the group, and made friends along the way.

"People I probably wouldn't have met otherwise as I'm pretty socially awkward," she said. "I would rather gift something to someone in need rather than a perfectly good item go in the trash or be sold at the store."

The members may also post to express gratitude for the items they receive. Nicole Schilt said she was grateful for the silk flowers that a group member gave her. She used the flowers at her daughter's wedding, which was arranged on short notice with a tight budget.

Smedema said the most meaningful part of the group is the positive relationships that are formed.


"Our goal really isn't just to give or receive items," she said. "We want to foster that sense of community and a gift economy is a great way to do it."



Smedema







Smith



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Rockets drop OT thriller to Polar Bears

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

A packed house at Hortonville High School was treated to an impressive girls basketball game as the defending Fox Valley Association champion Polar Bears hosted second-ranked, unbeaten Neenah last Saturday.

Tied after regulation, the hard-fought tussle came down to the final possession and Hortonville was able to escape with a 60-59 overtime victory.

“Major props to Hortonville for the job they did today,” head coach Andrew Braunell said. “I am pleased with the effort our girls had today and they battled all game. We had a great look at the end there, but that is how basketball goes sometimes.”

With 2.8 seconds left and trailing by one, Neenah ran a play that generated a shot for Samantha Buss under the basket, but the layup attempt missed the mark and time ran out.

It was the first loss of the season for the Rockets, who travel to Oshkosh North tonight.

“Losing a game like this is never easy, especially when we had our chances,” Braunell said. “However, the one thing we can take away from this is learning from our mistakes. We will get better from this game and experience and hopefully we can handle these situations better the next time.”

Throughout the first half, the Polar Bears were focused on UConn recruit Allie Ziebell, which forced others to carry the offensive load. Senior Ava Kok stepped up her game, scoring nine points in the first half to help, the Rockets take a 30-26 lead.

“Individually, my shots were falling and that was great,” Kok said. “This is not guaranteed for every game. I am going to continue to work on driving to the basket as well to better diversify my game and help this team get better.”

Ziebell finished with 33 points and assisted on Kok’s long jumper that tied the game at 54. She scored all five of Neenah’s points in overtime, including a contested 3-pointer that gave the Rockets a 59-58 lead.

Amaya Jones chipped in eight points for the Rockets.

“Although this was a tough loss and some of our shots didn’t fall, we did show a great team effort today,” Kok said. “The energy in the gym was electric and almost had a playoff feel to it. That helped fuel our effort. Those are the types of environments you dream of playing in and I would love to see more support like that for the girls basketball games.”

Corso, Klesmit spark Neenah win

By Dustin Riese
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Brady Corso and Cal Klesmit provided a potent 1-2 punch for the Neenah boys basketball team in a 76-66 victory over Hortonville in a Fox Valley Association boys basketball game last Saturday.

Corso finished with 24 points and Klesmit added 22 points, nine rebounds and four assists as the Rockets remained unbeaten in the Fox Valley Association with the win over the Polar Bears.

“I thought as a team we worked very well and played very well together on both sides of the ball,” junior Brady Corso said. “On offense, we moved the ball very well. Everyone screened and cut very well, which led to great actions that created open scoring opportunities for everyone. On defense, we stuck to the scouting report, stayed solid and fundamentally sound, and did all the little things to help us get stops.”

The duo have been the top two scorers for the team all season and combined for 24 of the Rockets’ 34 points in the first half.

“When those two both play well offensively, it helps our chances of success,” Rabas said. “The one thing we need from them is to continue getting more consistent on the defensive end. Just a matter of taking care of the ball and taking good shots. Always helps to play from the lead as well, which we were able to do most of the second half.”

Corso was nearly perfect in the game, hitting all seven of his field goal attempts, including both 3-point tries, while finishing 8-of-9 from the free-throw line. The 24-point effort was his career-best



Photo by Dustin Riese

Neenah’s Brady Corso drives past a Hortonville defender when the two teams collided last Saturday in Hortonville.

in an FVA game and the second-highest total overall behind his 27 points against Waunakee earlier this season.

“In the first half, my teammates created all of the scoring opportunities that I had,” Corso said. “They set screens for me which created open looks for myself, and when their defenders helped off of them on to me, it created open looks for my teammates. All credit to my teammates for

getting me open looks and passing me the ball when they created the open look for me.”

Head coach Lee Rabas was pleased to pick up the road win over a team that had won three of its first four conference games.

“Hortonville is a talented team that is

SEE **Boys basketball** ON PAGE 11

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Uhlenbrauck brings scoring skill to Zephyrs

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

There's a large plaque near one of the corners of the St. Mary Catholic gym that lists the top basketball scorers in school history.

It's not something that is updated yearly, only when a career is complete and final total can be attributed to an individual.

One day soon, Cole Uhlenbrauck will be taking over one of the top spots on that board. Midway through his senior season, Uhlenbrauck has moved into fourth place on the list – he passed John Koslowski on Tuesday – with 1,388 points and with an average output in his next game, could slide into third.

It's something that the four-year varsity starter is proud of.

"I do look at that. It's important to me because it shows the hard work that I have put into my game throughout the years," Uhlenbrauck said. "I keep trying to go up the ladder."

All of the points he has put up are nice and time will tell where he ends up on the list, but that is far from his only focus.

Uhlenbrauck is the leader of the No. 1 ranked Division 4 boys basketball team, which currently sports a 10-0 record. And as much as his career point total will be a part of his legacy when his prep career comes to an end, so is being part of a successful team, and Uhlenbrauck takes as much pride in how the Zephyrs do.

"Being undefeated is really fun – we have never done that before," Uhlenbrauck said. "Everyone, all of our teammates, are working together as one unit and it's been fun to see all of the progress we've made. It's been fun to see it all come together."

St. Mary Catholic's success isn't a surprise for this group. The nucleus of the team has been playing together for a long time and has looked forward to this season, knowing they could set some pretty lofty expectations.

"I thought we would be able to have



Neenah News

Cole Uhlenbrauck is currently fourth on the all-time scoring list at St. Mary Catholic and is averaging 24 points per game this season for the Zephyrs.

something special, but I didn't really realize it until we got to eighth grade or freshman year. I just saw us keep growing together," Uhlenbrauck said. "With that chemistry we have had for so long, we have all thought we could do something special this year."

Uhlenbrauck is one of seven seniors on the roster and that experience has meant

a lot to the Zephyrs' success this season. However, just having experience doesn't make a team good.

There is plenty of talent on the roster as well and that mix is at the heart of the team's success.

Uhlenbrauck also credits his teammates for what he's been able to do on the court. Some might think that taking the court

Senior Spotlight

with three other double-figure scorers might limit his scoring, but Uhlenbrauck believes that with as unselfish as the group is, having that much talent around has only helped him succeed.

"It helps because so many people can score the ball, all of the defensive eyes aren't on me," Uhlenbrauck said. "They are on Danny (Griffith) and they are on Fisher (MacKenzie), Michael (Fairweather) or Charlie (Nackers). They can't not play defense on them. They have to guard their own man and so we can just play off each other because they have to see every one of us as a scoring threat. That helps a lot in getting me and others open."

When Uhlenbrauck does get his opportunities to score, he's taking advantage of them.

Through the first 11 games of the year, he is averaging 24.1 points per game, including a career-best 36 points against Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah, and has been held to less than 19 points only once. More notably, he is shooting 58 percent from the floor and 45 percent from 3-point range this season and has made at least five 3-pointers in a game six times already.

So, there are definitely times when he's feeling good as a shooter, but there is no one way to tell if he's going to be on in a given game.

"Sometimes its shooting around that day when you feel good, you feel energetic and sometimes it is in warm-ups when you are hitting a lot of shots. Or when you are in that game you hit that first shot and it feels good and then you keep getting more confidence and going from there," Uhlenbrauck said. "Your teammates help with that a lot, getting you the ball and knowing if you make one or two, they know to keep feeding you to stay hot."

Uhlenbrauck said he started playing

SEE **Senior spotlight** ON PAGE 11

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Prep sports roundup

WRESTLING

Rockets tie for third at prestigious On The Water

Neenah's wrestling team crowned three individual champions and finished tied for third place at the two-day, 70-team On The Water Classic held at UW Oshkosh last week.

Neenah dominated the lightweights as Declan Koch (120), Jacob Herm (126) and Jayden Sheppard (132) each claimed titles. The trio went a combined 15-0 and registered six pins en route to the titles.

Koch earned his title with a 5-2 decision win over Hortonville's Nolan Skebba, while Herm topped Campbellsport's Ostin Blanchard, 5-4, to claim his title. Sheppard also won a close match to win the championship, beating Lourdes Academy's Mason Carpenter, 7-6.

Three other Neenah wrestlers finished in the top 10 in their respective weight classes, led by Eric Schaufelberger, who went 5-2 at the tournament to place fifth at 220 pounds. Eli Gast finished 6-2, including five pins, to take sixth at 182 pounds, while Nick Novak was eighth at 152 pounds.

The Rockets finished with 271 points at the tournament, which tied them with Germantown. Hortonville took second, one point ahead of the two teams, while Coleman claimed the team title at 292.5 points.

BOYS BASKETBALL

St. Mary Catholic remains undefeated

The Zephyrs opened the new year with a win over Menasha on Tuesday night to improve to 11-0 on the season.

St. Mary Catholic jumped out to a 39-27 halftime lead and then scored 48 points following intermission to hold on for the 87-73 win.

Cole Uhlenbrauck led the way for St. Mary Catholic with 23 points, while Daniel Griffith added 22 points and Charlie Nackers finished with 20.

The Zephyrs also collected a big win at the Wisconsin Basketball Yearbook tournament Dec. 30, taking down Newman Catholic 83-72.

Fisher MacKenzie and Uhlenbrauck each posted double-doubles in the win, with MacKenzie totaling 26 points and 10 rebounds and Uhlenbrauck added 19 points and 12 boards. MacKenzie also hit seven of the team's 15 3-pointers in the win.

Griffith earned game MVP honors, finishing with 24 points and four assists.

Big first half lifts Rockets past Papermakers

Neenah rode a big first half to a double-digit win as the Rockets knocked off Kimberly, 68-53, to remain unbeaten in

the Fox Valley Association.

Neenah led 39-21 at halftime.

Cal Klesmit paced the Rockets with 22 points, while Brady Corso added 16 points and Jackson Schlomann finished with 10 points and six rebounds.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Rockets bounce back to beat Papermakers

Neenah rebounded from its first loss of the season to take down Kimberly, 58-47, at the Ron Einerson Fieldhouse on Tuesday.

The Rockets led by just two points at halftime but outscored the Papermakers 33-25 in the second half to claim the win.

Allie Ziebell led the way for the Rockets with 18 points, seven rebounds and eight assists, while Ava Kok also reached double figures with 10. Rowen Klemsit chipped in seven points in the win.

Zephyrs storm past Panthers to extend streak

St. Mary Catholic ran its winning streak to six with a 68-40 thumping of Reedsville in a Big East North tussle Tuesday night.

The Zephyrs held the Panthers to just 18 points in the first half and coasted to the win after intermission.

Nolie Anderson led three players in double figures with 15 points, while Chloe Vogel added 14 and Sienna Anderson chipped in 10.

SWIMMING

Neenah collects win over Oshkosh West

Drew Gaerthofner and Tanner Trustem each won two individual events and Neenah swept all three relays as Neenah collected a 114.5-68.5 win over Oshkosh West on Tuesday night.

Gaerthofner finished first in both the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard backstroke, while Trustem posted his wins in the 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard breaststroke.

Other individual event winners for the Rockets were Julian Kuehn in the 200-yard individual medley, Quinn Koeper in the 100-yard freestyle and Ryan Foucault in diving.

Neenah also took first in all three relays with Trustem, Kuehn, Braden Loudon and Joshua Youngwerth teaming up to win the 200-yard medley relay. Gaerthofner, Koeper, Kuehn and David Murphy finished first in the 200-yard freestyle relay, while Youngwerth, Trustem, Koeper and Gaerthofner were the winning quartet in the 400-yard freestyle relay.

BOYS HOCKEY

Rockets lose to Ledgers

The Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team dropped a 5-1 decision to the St. Mary's Springs Ledgers on Tuesday night.

No other information was available from the game.

Senior spotlight

FROM PAGE 10

competitively in second grade and has always been around basketball.

Whether it was taking the court himself or watching his older cousins play, basketball made sense to him.

"From a real young age, I've always been around basketball, so it came naturally to me and my dad has helped me a lot," said Uhlenbrauck, whose father played basketball at Cardinal Stritch University. "I just remember having fun when I was young. We weren't the best team, but we played hard and were just learning our fundamentals and the things to try to do when you are young."

By the time Uhlenbrauck reached high school, there was no hiding the talent. That led to him playing varsity as a freshman, where he averaged 7.5 points per game and made 39 3-pointers in 22 games.

"Starting as a freshman, I had to change a lot, get stronger, do all of these things because the style of play was much faster and more physical," Uhlenbrauck said. "I had to adjust and work to get better and build confidence in shooting the ball. It definitely was a big jump and it took a little time, but I gradually adjusted and became better from there."

Uhlenbrauck is expecting a similar ex-

perience as he transitions next year to the college game as he has already committed to continue his career at St. Norbert College.

"Their coaching staff is awesome. They've come to a lot of my games, they always reach out to me and their style of play is awesome as well. The team is really fun to be around," Uhlenbrauck said. "I have to get faster, stronger, quicker ... I think a lot of things like that. It's a step up just like how it was for me from eighth grade and freshman year."

Before he gets to that point, Uhlenbrauck has the second half of his senior season to go and he hopes that he can cap it off with a trip with his teammates to the Kohl Center.

"It has been our main goal for a couple of years, so we definitely do talk about it here and there and how awesome it would be to play there. But we do have to look at each game individually before that and make sure we get through each game," Uhlenbrauck said. "To get there it starts at the defensive end. This year we have really stepped up our defense, more than the other years and it's shown. It's helped us to win those tight games. Then it's just us working together and being unselfish like we have done and rebounding the ball. Making the smart plays overall and doing that consistently I think will help us to get where we want to go."

Boys basketball

FROM PAGE 9

off to a great start," Rabas said. "I thought we played better defensively than we had in some of our earlier games. Also, we competed on the glass with them, which was important considering their roster has a lot of tall and athletic kids."

The Rockets led by two points at halftime but opened the second half with a 7-0 run to extend the advantage. Jackson Schlomann and Sam Coulthard had baskets in the spurt, while Corso drained a

3-pointer as Neenah surged to a 41-32 lead.

Hortonville narrowed the gap before a couple of tough inside baskets from Klesmit kept the Rockets in front, but the Polar Bears eventually knotted the score at 60.

Corso and Klesmit once again came to the rescue, combining for six points in an 8-0 run that created a cushion and the Rockets hit eight free throws down the stretch.

Elliot Swanson added nine points in the win, while Coulthard finished with eight.

The Rockets return to the floor tonight when they host Oshkosh North.

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Kid Scoop

THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE



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DR. I. CICLE'S WEATHER SCHOOL

I'm puzzled, Dr. Cicle. What are cold fronts and warm fronts?



Good question, Paula! Cold fronts and warm fronts are something meteorologists—scientists who study the weather—watch to make predictions about the weather.

Here's how meteorologists show a cold front on a map.

This is how they show a warm front.

The cold front looks like icicles on a string!

Standards Link: Earth Science: Students understand how to read a weather map.

Oh no! A cold wind blew my display about weather fronts all apart! Luckily, I numbered each sentence. Do the math problem on each piece. Then use the answers to put the sentences in order from the smallest number to the largest.

8+7=

Cold fronts move quickly and can bring storms and even hail. But the storms won't last long.

4+3=

The sun's heat warms the air. Some parts of the world get warmer than others. These differences in temperature make the air move, causing weather to change.

20-8=

This cools the warm air, and if there is moisture in that air, it condenses and forms drops that fall as rain or snow.

19-3=

A "warm front" moves slowly. If the air is moist, dark clouds will form and it may rain or snow for days.

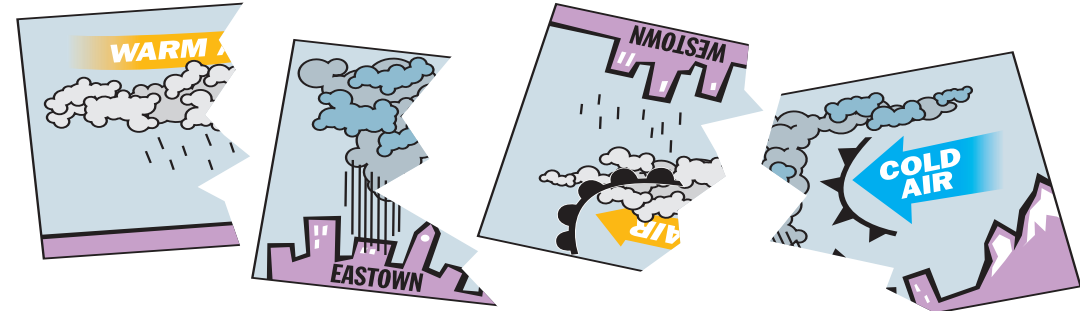
6+3=

A "cold front" happens when a cold air mass pushes the warm air up.

17-9=

When cold and warm air masses meet, they don't mix. They form a front.

Standards Link: Number Sense: Students compute sums and differences, order numbers from least to greatest.



Extra! Extra! Cool Division

Search through the newspaper for the following numbers:

- Numbers divisible by 2
- Numbers divisible by 3
- Numbers divisible by 5

Standards Link: Number Sense: Students know rules of divisibility.

Help Paula Predict the Weather

Look at the two weather puzzles. Which town is most likely to have stormy weather? Use the cold front and warm front symbols to help you predict.

Standards Link: Earth Science: Students understand that weather can be observed and predicted; different conditions affect different results.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Chill out while you find the two identical snowmen.



Standards Link: Visual discrimination.

Double Double Word Search

- WEATHER
- FRONTS
- SYMBOLS
- CONDENSES
- STORMS
- SNOWMEN
- WARM
- WATCH
- MOISTURE
- CHILL
- COLD
- MASS
- LAST
- LONG
- PREDICT

Find the words in the puzzle. How many of them can you find on this page?

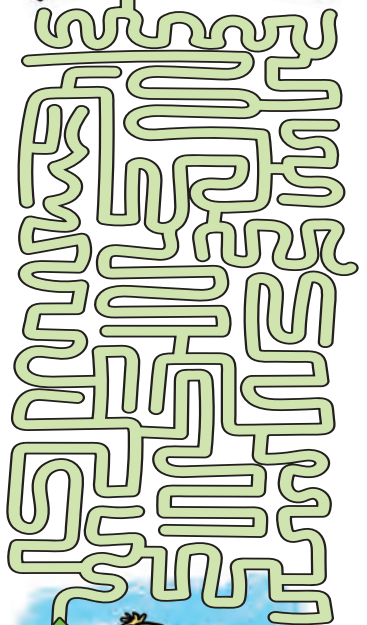
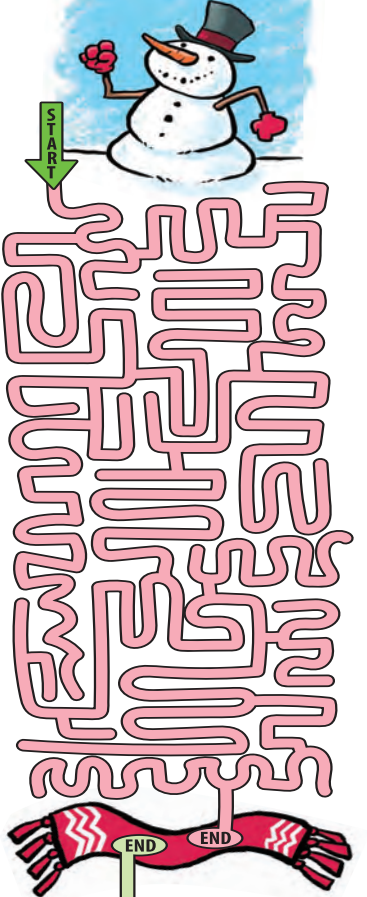
E	R	U	T	S	I	O	M	S	P
S	N	O	S	D	C	F	R	E	R
T	L	A	L	M	O	R	F	S	E
O	M	O	R	L	E	O	G	N	D
R	C	A	B	H	D	N	W	E	I
M	W	T	T	M	O	T	A	D	C
S	P	A	M	L	Y	S	T	N	T
N	E	M	W	O	N	S	C	O	N
W	T	S	A	L	L	I	H	C	S

Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognize identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

Kid Scoop Together Snowman Run

You choose one snowman. A family member chooses the other. Who can race through their maze to reach the scarf first?

SNOWMAN A



SNOWMAN B

Write On!

Crazy Weather

What would you do if it started raining cats and dogs?

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- Local newspapers can strengthen communities.
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