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## Shattuck site options still being pursued

### Development plans on hold for school land

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

Residents who don't want an Oshkosh-based developer to turn the site of the Shattuck Middle School into a housing development are actively seeking alternative developers, according to Common Council candidate Alex Collins.

Collins said at a council meeting earlier this month that the residents were actively recruiting developers and one of them

provided a presentation to Community Development officials. He declined to provide additional information about who the developer is or what the plans are for the site.



Collins

School Superintendent Mary Pfeiffer said at a Board of Education meeting earlier this month that the district has not received any additional offers to purchase the Shattuck site.

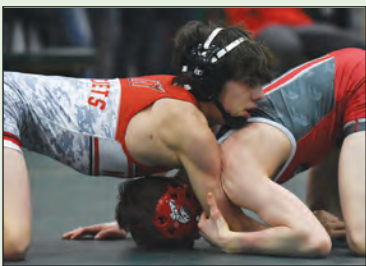
The Neenah Joint School District voted to sell the 27-acre property to Northpointe Development for \$500,000 last July, with the sale contingent on the city rezoning the property so the company can construct apartments inside the Shattuck building and single-family homes at the site.

Northpointe planned to spend up to \$30 million renovating the Shattuck building, which is aging and contains asbestos and lead paint.

The Common Council voted 4-5 in

SEE **Shattuck site** ON PAGE 4

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Neenah News photo by Bethanie Gengler

Bruce Lee Rose is shown in his studio playing one of the cigar box guitars that he has been making for about 10 years.

## Guitar maker composes own style

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

In the lower level of a home on Mulberry Lane, a multitude of stringed instruments adorn the walls of Bruce Lee Rose's studio.

Guitars of all shapes, sizes and colors hang between dozens of framed photographs showing musicians playing Bruce's guitars at concerts.

Ribbons and awards from fine arts fes-

tivals are dotted throughout, with vintage amplifiers stacked along the back wall.

The walls of the adjoining room consist of bookshelves that stretch from floor to ceiling, filled with Bruce's collection of reading materials. A small and intricately decorated bar is the room's centerpiece.

Wander a little farther in and there's a back room where Bruce builds and repairs guitars. He emerges from yet another room, carrying a beautifully preserved

130-year-old parlor guitar.

The guitar was found in a garbage can in rough shape, with broken braces and missing grids. Bruce took it apart and rebuilt it to its original glory.

Bruce is a luthier – a maker of stringed instruments. For about 40 years he has been making guitars under the name Rose Instruments in the Neenah home he

SEE **Guitar guy** ON PAGE 6

## Food pantry expands with move next door at SVDP

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

With soaring grocery prices and food insecurity for some area households, the St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) Neenah/Menasha Food Pantry is expanding later this year to meet the need.

The food pantry will be taking over the space at 1421 S. Commercial, next door to the SVDP resale store, that was formerly operated as a day care.

SVDP director of operations Jeremy Pingel said the relocation is driven by a sharp increase in the need for food in the community. He attributes that to 9% inflation in food prices and a decrease in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.



Neenah News

St. Vincent de Paul's Food Pantry is moving next door to its existing resale store on South Commercial Street.

Pingel said Feeding America noted in 2021 that the Neenah/Menasha area is underserved by food pantries. He said SVDP's own research showed about 14% of Neenah's and 13% of Menasha's population is below

the poverty level.

The pantry was operated by St. Mary and St. John parishes out of a church closet in Menasha for about 15 years. In February 2021, the location expanded into a full food

pantry utilizing a portion of the SVDP thrift store's retail space at 1425 S. Commercial. What started with about 50 families is now serving 1,400 households.

Last month, the pantry supplied 55,000 pounds of food to those in need, a record high for the location, which usually supplies an average of 45,000 to 50,000 pounds per month to residents of northern Winnebago County.

The USDA Economic Research Service defines food insecurity as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

SEE **Food pantry** ON PAGE 2

# Neenah News

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# Two school police liaisons approved

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

The Neenah Board of Education gave final approval Tuesday for two school resource officers (SRO) to continue providing law enforcement to the district.

The board also approved a contract related to the Horace Mann school playground design and installation, and went into closed session to discuss the potential sale of 16 acres of land on Jacobsen Road in Fox Crossing after a previously approved sale fell through.

With the new high school opening in Fox Crossing next year, the district had balked at funding one SRO in Fox Crossing and two in Neenah. Police contended that it's unsustainable for one SRO to cover the middle school and all 10 of the elementary schools.

NJSD had been funding two SROs by reimbursing the city 75% of the cost for the 52-week school year. Under the approved contract, NJSD will pay 75% of the costs but

for only 39 weeks of the school year. Taxpayers will fund the remaining 13 weeks, an estimated \$50,000.

NJSD will pay \$80,000 of the costs for employing each SRO for the first year that includes wages, holiday pay, health and dental insurance, retirement, cellphone service, training and conferences and a car allowance of about \$1,400 per quarter.

Fox Crossing remains in negotiations with the district over funding for an officer at the high school. Neenah's agreement takes effect next school year.

The board also approved a proposal for playground design and installation at Horace Mann Middle School, situated at 1021 Oak St. Lee Recreation will design and install the playground with a budget of \$400,000.

Lee Recreation's playground equipment is manufactured in Fond du Lac and uses direct bolt equipment connections rather than a collar fastening system, which is believed

to potentially increase maintenance costs.

Lee Recreation will complete the playground and playground surface installation by Aug. 18.

The board went into closed session after the meeting to discuss the sale of about 16 acres of land on Jacobsen Road. The district agreed to sell the land to Sivakumar Rajarathinam in November for \$460,000. School communications director Jim Strick said that offer fell through as the buyer had issues securing a loan.

The land was originally purchased by the district in 1971 for \$30,000. Situated between Spring Road Elementary and Clayton Elementary schools, it was considered as a potential future site for another school.

NJSD listed the land at an asking price of \$550,550; about \$35,000 per acre. It includes just over three acres of wetlands.

Tuesday's closed session was to review another separate offer on the property. No details on that offer have been made public.

## District names new IT director

The Neenah Joint School District instructional technology department will be led by a familiar face as district technology coach Rocco Marchionda replaces Matt Anderson, who is retiring after this school year.

Marchionda brings a classroom background to the position, having served as a kindergarten and third-grade teacher for 13 years in the Fond du Lac and Oshkosh school districts before coming to Neenah as



Marchionda

a computer literacy teacher at Horace Mann Middle School. Marchionda taught two years in Neenah and has served as a technology coach since 2014, including his current role as instructional systems analyst and manager.

"Rocco brings an educational background as a strong teacher and has continued to be a learner within the technology world," Superintendent Mary Pfeiffer said.

Marchionda earned a degree in child and family studies from UW Madison and a master's degree in educational technology from Marian University. He is a Google-certified educator and has a technology coordinator license.

## Candidate forums moved to Wednesday

Public forums with candidates for the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education and Neenah Alderman District 1 were rescheduled to Wednesday at City Hall due to this week's winter storm.

The first forum at 6:30 p.m. will include school board candidates, incumbents Deborah Watry and Tom Hanby, as well as challengers Brian Roeh, Lindsay Clark, Michelle Swardenski and Rocky Schafer. Voters will determine who will fill three seats on the board. Board member Amy

Morrissey is not seeking re-election.

The second forum will start at 7:45 p.m. between District 1 incumbent Cari Lendrum and challenger Alexander M. Collins.

The forums are organized by the League of Women Voters of Winnebago County and the first is co-sponsored by Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education. Both are nonpartisan local organizations.

Links to the recordings about a week later, as well as other election information, will be at [LWVWinnebago.org](http://LWVWinnebago.org).

## Food pantry

FROM PAGE 1

Pingel is a 1994 Neenah High School graduate who moved away from the area. Upon returning, he was surprised by the amount of food insecurity in the community.

"Our current facilities aren't able to handle that many people," he said. "The floor space is one thing but storage wise, we were not able to keep as much food on hand as we need to serve that kind of population."

When Feeding America and The Emergency Food Assistance Program have extra food, Pingel said the pantry has to turn it away because of a lack of cold storage facilities. That will change with the new location opening later this year.

The Neenah Common Council voted last week to use \$115,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding, including state and federal COVID-19 response funds, to assist in the purchase and installation of a walk-in freezer at the pantry. A walk-in cooler will also be installed, funded in part by Feeding America.

SVDP is taking over ownership of the new location in June, with plans to remodel with demo work on walls, floor work, removing day care-related items and installing retail coolers, freezers and shelving.

The pantry operates on a grocery store model, with guests shopping for the items they prefer. Aside from food items, it also offers diapers and hygiene products.

The move will provide space for an expanded selection and additional frozen and refrigerated options such as meat and vegetables.

While the current location requires pantry visitors to wait inside the resale store, the new location will provide a more private and dignified entrance.

The pantry is free to residents, with a form of ID for all household members and proof of residency in Neenah or Menasha required for registration.

Between the thrift store and food pantry, the Neenah SVDP has 25 paid employees and 275 active volunteers.

The pantry is supported by the community. It accepts donations of food and personal hygiene items and is in need of monetary donations to support the expansion, with plans to open the new location this fall.

"There is a definite need in the area and I don't see that going away any time soon," Pingel said.

The pantry is open for limited hours on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. A full list of pantry hours, additional information and a link to donate is at [svdpsneenah.org](http://svdpsneenah.org).



Photo from Neenah Historical Society



## Ice storm backup

On Feb. 22, 1922, the area was hit with a devastating ice storm that wiped out communications. After phone lines came down in the storm, an emergency wireless communication center was set up on the third floor of the Bergstrom Paper Co.



Neenah News

The former Eagle Nation building is shown at 206 Main St. in Neenah.

# Lawsuit over fatal 2015 standoff goes to mediation

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

The city of Neenah is headed to mediation in a civil rights lawsuit that alleges police treated hostages at Eagle Nation Cycles as criminals instead of victims during a 2015 standoff.

The standoff took place on Dec. 5, 2015, at the former Eagle Nation location at 206 Main St. when Brian Flatoff, 53, of Stevens Point, started a confrontation over a motorcycle.

Flatoff took several parties hostage at gunpoint. The police response led to a four-hour standoff. At one point Flatoff opened fire on police and shot one of the officers in the helmet, which caused a minor abrasion.

About an hour after Flatoff arrived at Eagle Nation, hostage Michael Funk, 60, of Neenah, was shot and killed by police while trying to escape. Funk was carrying a gun. Police did not issue a warning before opening fire.

The two officers who shot Funk were not charged and his widow's wrongful death lawsuit against the officers and the city was dismissed.

Flatoff was convicted of 14 felonies and sentenced to 100 years in prison.

Eagle Nation owner Steve Erato was in the building at the time of the standoff along with Michael Peterson, Ethan Moderson, Ryan Moderson and George Fuerte. The five parties filed a lawsuit in 2021, alleging they were handcuffed and taken into custody unlawfully.

Their attorney, Walter Stern, argues

they were detained and arrested without probable cause or warrant, violating the Fourth and 14th amendments.

Documents contend the victims suffered pain, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other trauma due to the experience. They're asking for an award of compensatory and punitive damages.

Stern, of Kenosha, is also representing a Neenah man in an unrelated case filed last year that alleges a Winnebago County Sheriff's officer unlawfully arrested the man and he subsequently spent six months in jail for a charge that was later dismissed.

Eagle Nation and Neenah police were involved in a \$50 million lawsuit at the time of the 2015 standoff, alleging police used extreme force during a 2012 drug raid. The raid resulted in Erato's conviction for misdemeanor drug possession for less than a gram of marijuana. A judge dismissed Eagle Nation's lawsuit against the city in 2016.

In 2021, 22-year-old Roger Ridgeway was found stabbed near Eagle Nation. The city considered it a nuisance site and it shut down later that year. The former Eagle Nation building is currently leased by Bergstrom Automotive for storing auto parts.

Stern submitted a letter to the court late last month, notifying the judge that the parties would like to pursue mediation.

The city met in closed session last week to discuss a potential settlement offer. A mediation and settlement conference is set for March 14.

# Fox Cities businesses expect strong year

Neenah News

Most Fox Cities businesses reported an increase in their gross sales and profits last year compared with 2021, while about half of those asked in the 2023 Fox Cities Economic Outlook Survey expect those sales and profits to continue to rise this year.

The survey was conducted in January, distributed and administered by the Chamber Regional Partnership. Participation included 153 businesses and organizations with operations in the Fox Cities region.

About 54% of those surveyed expect their 2023 employment numbers to stay the same as last year while about 41% believe they will increase salaries between 4% and 5%. Another 32% expected salary increases to stay below 3%.

About 25% of businesses who took part

said they were planning a capital expansion this year, while 58% said they had no such plans. Just above half said they have recovered since the onset of the pandemic, 32% said they were at the same level and 17% experienced a decline in business.

Finding work talent continues to be the biggest challenge for businesses in the Fox Cities, with more than 60% listing that challenge ahead of other factors such as work ethic, housing and the cost of doing business.

More than 80% of business leaders rate the Fox Cities as a good or excellent region to do business, the highest number in four years, and continue to rate the region as a good or excellent place to live.

The results do not represent a statistically valid sample but are intended to offer general insight into the regional economy.

# Foundation academic scholarships available

The application deadline for Oshkosh Area Community Foundation academic scholarships for Neenah High School students is March 15.

Each year, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation and its affiliates award more than \$450,000 in new and renewed

scholarships. Scholarship awards range from \$500 to \$10,000 and are generally available to high school seniors in good academic standing.

For a list of scholarships and criteria, visit [OshkoshAreaCF.org](http://OshkoshAreaCF.org) under Scholarships.

# Business news roundup

Lily & Sparrow has opened a shop in the former Mom and Pop Place location at 117 W. Wisconsin Ave. and has its grand opening March 3 and 4. The business, owned by Bradley and Courteney Hinsel, with a location in Winneconne specializes in handcrafted wood signs. More information is at [lilyandsparrowco.com](http://lilyandsparrowco.com) or on its Facebook page.

The Sensory Club of Neenah, an open concept sensory gym with multisensory environment spaces to serve individuals with disabilities in the Fox Valley, will have its grand opening March 11 at 976 American Drive. The club will offer a wide range of therapeutic sensory-motor equipment and a private multi-sensory environment room available to club members during hours of operation.

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# Gym lets canines, owners stay active indoors

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A gym on South Commercial Street is going to the dogs with the grand opening of Neenah K9 Rec Center last weekend.

Nita Diaz opened the dog gym at the former location of Gym35 Fitness, situated at 1526 S. Commercial.

When Wisconsin weather is bad, dog owners often struggle to find a space to exercise their companions indoors. For owners of reactive dogs, finding private space to exercise at any time of the year can be problematic. These are problems that Diaz hopes to solve.

Diaz is well known in the Fox Valley dog community, having opened Clever K9s in Kaukauna and SwimDog Wellness Center in Appleton. She said she has often heard dog owners talk about the need for an indoor dog park in the area.

With human membership at Gym35 declining, Diaz decided to convert the location into a gym for dogs.

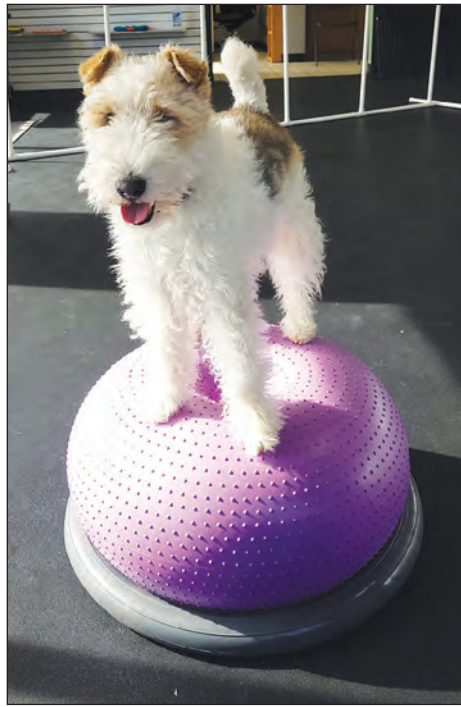
"I think this is a great compromise of having an indoor controlled space that's affordable for everybody," she said.

The business offers rentals of the 1,000-square-foot rubber floored open space, with access to agility and dog fitness equipment, and dog toy treat puzzles.

Diaz plans to expand the business into a full canine fitness center complete with dog treadmills for an added workout.

The space is available for private rental by members and nonmembers, and for group get-togethers, birthday parties and other events.

The business is also hosting workshops, canine fitness coaching and training classes for all skill levels including agility, tricks and scent work.



Above: Wire fox terrier Django demonstrates a balance exercise.

At right: Border collie Dolce gets some attention from owner Nita Diaz after working out on some of the agility equipment at the Neenah K9 Rec Center.



Diaz noted the scent work training is the same method used to train drug detection dogs, with essential oils used in place of drugs. The dogs are trained to complete an interior, exterior and vehicle search.

"It really works their mind," she said. "You'd be amazed at how tired your dog is after scentwork class because dogs are such experts at using their nose."

Professional canine fitness trainer Becky Heiner said the fitness coaching she's offering is especially beneficial for senior dogs, those going through rehab due to injury or surgery and for puppies and

sporting dogs to prevent injuries.

"It's like personal training for people to help dogs be fit and live a longer, healthier life," she said.

K9 Rec Center members pay a yearly fee of \$50 per household, which includes the opportunity to rent the gym for 45 minutes for \$10. Nonmembers can purchase a one-day 45 minute gym pass for \$25. Members also receive the first chance to sign up for classes and a 15% discount on class fees.

Gym users attend an in-person orientation before their first visit and provide

proof of their dog's vaccinations. No staff is on site during the private gym rentals and the area is monitored by camera.

Once users set up a rental time, they're texted a unique key code that allows them to enter and use the space, which remains secure from other members.

More information along with class and membership signup is available at [neenah-k9reccenter.com](http://neenah-k9reccenter.com).

Diaz said K9 Rec Center is a safe place for people to bring their dog to play.

"Tired dogs make happy owners," she said.

## Shattuck site

FROM PAGE 1

December against rezoning the property.

Neenah resident Tamara Hasz came forward at the meeting and said she intended to purchase the site.

The district has not taken action on Hasz's offer and asked for additional details of her development plan, particularly due to the district's Health and Wellness Center being situated at Shattuck. Under the proposal with Northpointe, the center would remain in place, saving the district about \$600,000 in relocation expenses.

The school board approved an extension to Northpointe's purchase offer through April, with the developer paying

\$5,000 in earnest money. The extension is to allow more time for Northpointe to develop a plan for the property with the city.

Collins is challenging sitting council member Cari Lendrum for Alderman District 1. He said the way the city handled the rezoning consideration of Shattuck is what persuaded him to run for council.

Collins said he's frustrated that the site was not actively marketed by the school district.

Communications director Jim Strick noted the site was listed for sale in early 2021 with the real estate agency NAI Pfefferle. As of last week, the Shattuck site is still an active listing on the NAI Pfefferle website.

"The school district is merely the seller

of the property and is awaiting Northpointe to work with the city to develop a plan for development," Strick said.

Collins noted in his campaign material that his opponent Lendrum supported rezoning the Shattuck site for redevelopment.

Lendrum said rezoning the property would add a beautiful development to the community and add a large increment to the city's tax base. She noted the proposed apartments would have a stringent landlord screening process and annual tenant reviews.

"We have an extreme shortage of workers in Neenah, as is evident by all of the help-wanted signs we have all seen around town, and we need to do everything we can to keep and attract additional workers to support our local economy,

including providing a range of housing types," she said. "This project would have helped do just that."

In addition to the rezoning concerns, the city is being sued by two residents over efforts to enforce a sign ordinance in relation to the Shattuck rezoning. The city has temporarily halted enforcement of the ordinance due to the lawsuit.

Resident Kris Payette told the council at a meeting last week that the uncertain nature of what's ahead for the Shattuck site is causing stress and worry.

"I just kind of feel like I'm twisting in the wind with not knowing where that's going to go," she said. "I'm just here to state my ongoing concern and hope that we can find a collaborative way to stay within our current zoning."



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# Merganser varieties stand out amid river of ducks

By Rob Zimmer  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

On many occasions over the past few weeks, I've received observation reports and questions about "loons" in downtown Neenah, along the river. With such great interest out there, I thought it would be a good topic to address, since I am sure many others have the same questions.

Hopefully this is not disappointing news to many, but these are not loons that are currently haunting the waters of downtown Neenah. They are a species of diving duck called a common merganser. There are also plentiful red breasted mergansers, as well as common goldeneyes.

The river truly is alive with birds.

Unique and unusual on their own, the mergansers are just as fascinating as loons, though they lack the haunting and ethereal voice. Mergansers, like loons, are fishing birds. They dive beneath the surface to capture fish with their sharp, sawtooth bills.

The specific bird most commonly mistaken for a loon is the common merganser. Very similar in size and in the way they hold their body on the water, the common merganser can easily be mistaken for a loon.

Its overall black and white color is also similar, though not identical to the loon. Rather than the checkerboard back of the common loon, the common merganser has a pure white back, with blackish wings and neck. The black color, when seen up close, is actually a deep, dark, iridescent green.

The bill of the common merganser is long and thin and bright orange in color, unlike the thick, black bill of the common



loon. Still, as they hold their bodies similar to a loon, low to the water, sometimes with just their neck sticking up, these birds are easily mistaken for loons.

The red-breasted merganser is another bird often mistaken for a loon for the same reason as the common merganser. These birds hold their bodies low to the water, with just their necks sticking up. Both male and female red breasted mergansers have crested heads, unlike that of the common loon.

Another diving duck present along the river now in huge numbers is the common goldeneye. Because of its distinct black and white color, this is another bird often mistaken for a loon.

The mergansers and goldeneyes dive repeatedly for food on the river bottom. Again, similar behavior to the common loon.

Bring along a pair of binoculars and take a closer look at these amazing birds along the "River of Ducks." Kimberly Point, Riverside Park, as well as downtown bridges and the Loop the Lake trail, are great duck-watching spots.

The loons, for sure, will be arriving in about a month to six weeks. Normally, as soon as the ice goes out on Lake Winnebago, the loons appear, almost as if by magic.



Photos by Rob Zimmer

Merganser types on the Fox River in Neenah include the common merganser (left photo) and common goldeneye (above).



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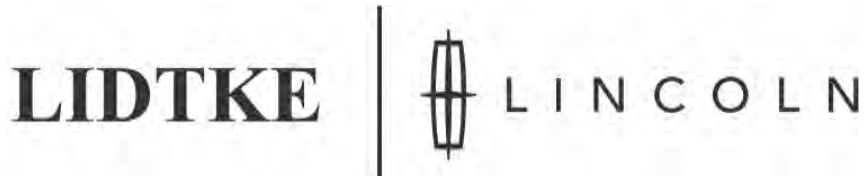
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# Calendar of events

## Friday, Feb. 24

Starfire, 6 p.m., Winncrest Banquet Hall, 2788 Towne Court

## Saturday, Feb. 25

Tolerated Vandalism, 9 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

Annual magazine and DVD/CD sale, 10:30 a.m., Neenah Public Library

## Monday, Feb. 27

Book Club, 10 a.m., "Eleanor," Neenah Public Library

## Wednesday, March 1

LWV candidate forums, 6:30 p.m., Neenah City Hall, 211 Walnut St.

## Saturday, March 4

Art Activity Day: Fish magnets, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass  
Charleyville live music, 5 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

## Sunday, March 5

Giants of Jazz Series: Lawrence University Jazz Quintet, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

## Saturday, March 11

Night at the Museum fundraiser, 7 p.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

## Sunday, March 12

Fox Valley Chorus, 3 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 200 S. Church St.

## Monday, March 13

Neenah's 150th Celebration Kick-off, noon, City Hall, 211 Walnut St.

Monday Matinee: "Ticket to Paradise," 1 p.m., Neenah Public Library



Neenah News photo by Bethanie Gengler

Bruce Lee Rose holds a 130-year-old parlor guitar that he restored.

## Guitar guy

FROM PAGE 1

shares with his wife, MaryAnne.

For many years Bruce repaired instruments under the name Guitar 911, and although he quit doing that he still finds himself doing repairs for friends.

About 10 years ago Bruce and MaryAnne heard Wisconsin musician Pat MacDonald play a cigar box guitar at Summerfest. The body of the handmade guitars are made from discarded wooden cigar boxes.

The style dates back to the 1800s, when instruments were made out of the materials available.

Bruce's great-great-grandfather carried a cigar box fiddle during the Civil War and his great-grandfather owned a cigar box guitar in the late 1890s.

Hearing the twang of MacDonald's cigar box guitar inspired Bruce.

"It looked like fun so I built some but every time I built one somebody would want it so that's when we got talked into doing a show," he said.

For many years he and MaryAnne displayed the cigar box guitars at various fine arts shows and festivals, winning more than a dozen awards.

"I think part of it was that at every art festival there would be tons of jewelry makers and photographers and glass artists, the basic categories," he said. "But there was never anybody doing anything like this."

Bruce considers his instruments to be "works of art meant to be put to work."

He pointed out a bright orange cigar box guitar that he decorated with flames.

When he started making cigar box guitars and banjos, no one in the area had ever seen them before. The first time Bruce and MaryAnne heard one of the cigar box guitars played locally, it drew a lot of attention.

"When he did the next set and came up with the cigar box the whole bar got up

and went to the stage and started taking pictures and asking him, 'Where'd you get that and what is that?'" MaryAnne said.

The couple stopped showing the guitars at festivals just before the pandemic, when shipping became about three times more expensive.

When he started out, Bruce would build the guitars but buy the innards. Now his guitars are completely custom, right down to the pickups, which he winds by hand. A pickup converts the vibrations into electrical signals to send to an amplifier.

"Every little thing with the pickup makes a difference and the sound of the guitar starts with that," he said. "Sound starts with pickups and ends with speakers."

He's made and repaired acoustic and electric guitars, ukuleles, dulcimers, mandolins and banjos, to name a few.

In recent years, Bruce has transitioned to primarily making electric guitars. Some of them are on display at Island Music at 858 Fox Point Plaza. Bruce's pickups and electronics are available at Madsen Guitars at 1516 Park Ave. He also takes custom orders through his website at roseinstruments.com.

Local musician Bobby Evans plays a Bruce Lee Rose guitar and said they're the finest guitars around. Other notable local guitarists using a Rose guitar include Neenah native Kelvin Kasper, blues musicians Cathy Grier of Sturgeon Bay and Lil' Davy Max of Redgranite.

Bruce made a guitar out of a turpentine can for the Madison group Aaron Williams and the Hoodoo.

For a talented luthier, the Fox Valley is a great place to be.

"The music scene in this area, I think you'd be hard pressed to find anything close in an area this size," he said. "It's phenomenal. There's some real world-class musicians here."

He considers his guitars a hobby, rather than a career.

"I just like tinkering with stuff," he said.

## Jake's fundraiser for products underway

Jake's Network of Hope is currently low on several items in its warehouse, including several larger sizes of diapers, all pull-ups, and pads and tampons.

The Neenah-based nonprofit partners with more than 230 local organizations to give out free disposable hygiene products for those who struggle to afford them.

Executive director Scott Sawinski recently hired development director Jenn Harper to help raise funds for the organi-

zation to be sustainable and continue to fit the need in the community. The hiring resulted in a wager he couldn't turn down for a good cause.

If Harper can raise \$5,000, enough to purchase two pallets of supplies from the National Diaper Bank, Sawinski vowed to make an appearance at its April 29 Hits for Hope pro wrestling fundraiser event in a cloth diaper.

Go to [www.jakesnoh.org](http://www.jakesnoh.org) for details.



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# Public library calendar

Visit [www.neenahlibrary.org](http://www.neenahlibrary.org) for details.

- March 1**  
Mah Jongg Meetup, 5:30 p.m.
- March 2**  
Open Chess Night (all ages), 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam, 6 p.m.
- March 3**  
Fitness Friday: Boot Camp, 9:15 a.m.  
Chair Yoga, 10:30 a.m.  
First Friday Concert Series: Steven Paul Spears and Linda Sparks, 2 p.m.
- March 5**  
LEGOs in the Library (ages 5 and up), 1 p.m.  
Giants of Jazz program: Miles Davis, 2 p.m.
- March 6**  
Adult Afternoon Program: Winter Legends and Lore, 2 p.m.
- March 7**  
Toddle Time (ages 12-24 months), 9:15 a.m.  
WeeRead Storytime (all ages), 10:30 a.m.
- March 8**  
Musical Movers (all ages), 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meetup, 5:30 p.m.
- March 9**  
Wild Child Adventure Storytime at Fritse Park (all ages), 10 a.m.  
Open Chess Night, 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam, 6 p.m.
- March 10**  
The Price is Right!, 7 p.m.
- March 11**  
Jewelry Workshop (ages 8-18), 10:30 a.m.

- March 13**  
Monday Matinee: "Ticket to Paradise," 1 p.m.  
Short Story Night at Lion's Tail Brewing Co., 7 p.m.
- March 14**  
Toddle Time (ages 12-24 months), 9:15 a.m.  
WeeRead Storytime (all ages), 10:30 a.m.  
Tech Talk Tuesday: A Guide to Online Security, 1:30 p.m.  
Legal Assistance Clinic, 4:30 p.m.  
The Next Chapter on Zoom, 7 p.m.
- March 15**  
Musical Movers (all ages), 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meetup, 5:30 p.m.
- March 16**  
Wild Child Adventure Storytime at Fritse Park, 10 a.m.  
Open Chess Night, 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam, 6 p.m.
- March 17**  
Fitness Friday: Balance and Strength, 9:15 a.m.  
Share a Story: Intergenerational Storytime at Valley VNA (registration required), 10 a.m.  
Chair Yoga, 10:30 a.m.
- March 19**  
LEGOs in the Library (ages 5 and up), 1 p.m.
- March 20**  
Memory Cafe: Karate America, 1:30 p.m.  
Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club: "The Widows of Malabar Hill" by Sujata Massey, 6:30 p.m.

- March 21**  
Toddle Time (ages 12-24 months), 9:15 a.m.  
WeeRead Storytime (all ages), 10:30 a.m.
- March 22**  
Musical Movers (all ages), 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meetup, 5:30 p.m.
- March 23**  
Wild Child Adventure Storytime, 10 a.m.  
Open Chess Night, 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam, 6 p.m.  
History Program-Fox River Valley and Native American Heritage, 7 p.m.
- March 26**  
Sunday Concert: Sylvia Hong and Michael Rector, 2 p.m.
- March 27**  
MMBK: "Bell Jar", 10 a.m.
- March 28**  
Toddle Time (ages 12-24 months), 9:15 a.m.  
WeeRead Storytime (all ages), 10:30 a.m.  
Movie Talks: "Slumdog Millionaire" A new movie discussion group. Watch the movie at home and discuss with us, 6:30 p.m.
- March 29**  
Musical Movers (all ages), 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meetup, 5:30 p.m.
- March 30**  
Wild Child Adventure Storytime, 10 a.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam, 6 p.m.
- March 31**  
Fitness Friday, 9:15 a.m.  
Chair Yoga, 10:30 a.m.

# Valley Transit rekindles driver incentive program

Valley Transit, the Fox Cities' public transportation service, is offering a hiring bonus incentive for the next five qualified candidates with a valid commercial driver's license (CDL).

A \$5,000 sign-on bonus will be provided to full-time new hires and \$2,500 for part-time positions. Valley Transit offered a sign-on bonus last year that successfully recruited bus drivers.

The reinstated hiring bonus includes part-time maintenance utility workers in addition to full-time and part-time bus drivers because these positions require a valid Class A or Class B CDL with a passenger endorsement and no air brake restriction.

Those interested in the roles are not required to have their CDL to apply but will need to be able to acquire and maintain one along with a federal medical card as a condition of employment. For more information, visit [myvalleytransit.com](http://myvalleytransit.com).

### 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](mailto:editor@oshkoshherald.com) to get more details.

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## Prep sports roundup

### GIRLS BASKETBALL

#### Neenah wraps up outright FVA title

Neenah easily dispatched Oshkosh North, 69-47, in its regular-season finale last week to claim the program's first outright Fox Valley Association title since the 1978-79 season.

The Rockets finished the conference season with a 17-1 record with 15 of the wins coming by double digits.

The Rockets are the first team outside of Hortonville, Kimberly and Appleton North to win an FVA title since the 2011-12 season.

Allie Ziebell led the way for the Rockets finishing with 19 points and 11 rebounds, while Ava Kok chipped in 15 points and eight assists.

Sammie Buss also reached double figures with 13 points for the Rockets, who hit 11 3-pointers in the game.

#### Zephyrs capture another Big East North crown

St. Mary Catholic put the final touches on a Big East North championship last Thursday when the Zephyrs capped the regular season with a 73-21 trouncing of Hilbert.

The Zephyrs finished 18-1 in league play.

Chloe Vogel scored 21 points to lead the way for the Zephyrs, who had five players finish in double figures.

Nolie Anderson was the next highest scorer with 12 points, while Lauren Ripley had 11 and Emily Vogel and Elianna Brenn each finished with 10 points.

Audrey Norville totaled 10 rebounds and seven assists in the victory.

### BOYS BASKETBALL

#### Zephyrs avenge loss to Panthers

Three players finished with 17 points and four finished in double figures overall as St. Mary Catholic knocked off Reedsville 74-64 in a Big East North game Friday.

The Panthers had beaten the Zephyrs, 72-68, earlier this season. That was the last time St. Mary Catholic has lost as it has rattled off 10 consecutive victories since then.

St. Mary Catholic scored 44 points in the first half to take a 10-point halftime lead and then played even with the Panthers the rest of the way.

Danny Griffith, Charlie Nackers and Fisher MacKenzie each scored 17 to lead St. Mary Catholic, which hit 13 3-pointers in the game. Cole Uhlenbrauck also reached double figures with 10 points.

MacKenzie added a game-high nine rebounds for the Zephyrs.

#### Neenah can't hold off Kimberly in second half

The Rockets were outscored 44-35 in the second half as Kimberly rallied for a 73-65 win last Friday.

Neenah held a slim 30-29 lead at halftime.

Cal Klesmit led the Rockets with 19 points, while Brady Corso finished with 12 and Jackson Schomann added 11.

Neenah went 24-of-25 from the free-throw line.

# Gaerthofner earns state medal to lead Rockets

Neenah News

Drew Gaerthofner picked up some state hardware and the Neenah High School swimmers registered a trio of top-10 finishes at the WIAA Division 1 Swim Meet at Waukesha South High School last Saturday.

Gaerthofner, a sophomore, earned his way on to the podium with a fifth-place finish in the 100-yard breaststroke. He finished with a time of 56.22 seconds, which was four-tenths faster than his sectional time.

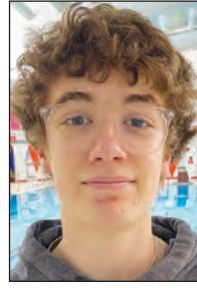
Abram Muller of Madison West set a state record in winning the event in a time of 53.20. Arrowhead's Lance Johnson was second, more than a second behind. Gaerthofner finished roughly seven-tenths of a second behind Sam Wolf of Middleton.

Gaerthofner was also part of the Rockets' 200-yard freestyle relay that place 10th overall.

Gaerthofner, Julian Kuehn, Quinn Koepfer and Tanner Trustem posted a time of 129.17 in the event, edging out Sun Prairie West by six-hundredths of a second to finish in the top 10. The foursome's time was about seven-tenths of a second faster than their sectional finish.

Middleton won the event with a time of 1:22.74.

The remaining top 10 finisher for the



Gaerthofner

Rockets was diver Ryan Foucault, who placed ninth in his final high school meet.

Foucault, who placed 15th at last year's state meet, totaled 361.05 on his 11 dives, finishing just behind Oshkosh North's River Reeves.

Foucault was in 11th place after the preliminary and semifinal rounds, but moved up two places in the final round of dives to take ninth.

David Krol of Homestead won the state title with a score of 518.45 – the only diver to top the 500-point mark at the meet.

Other finishers for the Rockets were Trustem, who placed 19th in 200-yard individual medley and 21st in the 100-yard breaststroke and the 200-yard medley relay team of Gaerthofner, Trustem, Braden Loudon and Joshua Youngwerth finished 15th.

As a team, Neenah finished 17th among the 41 schools who scored at the state meet, finishing with 42 points. Sun Prairie West was just ahead of the Rockets with 46 points.

Middleton claimed the Division 1 title with 288 points, while Arrowhead was a distant second with 211 points. Madison Memorial was third with 180 points, followed by Homestead (174.5) and Madison West (158).

Neenah was the highest finishing Fox Valley Association program at the meet as only Oshkosh North/Lourdes Academy (11) and Appleton North/East (7) scored points in the meet.

## Neenah hockey wins regional title

By Dustin Riese  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

A second-period goal by Beckett Davidson, backed by an impressive effort in net by Caleb Moore, carried the Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team to a 2-1 win over the West Bend Ice Bears last Thursday to claim a WIAA Division 1 regional title.

"This was a great hockey game between two hungry teams," head coach Jeff Lindemann said on the win. "This was a terrific battle between a pair of good goalies as Moore and (Charlie) Eckert did phenomenal in goal. Both came up with big saves throughout the night, especially Moore as he was able to keep us in the game until the offense came through for us late."

The play of both netminders meant goals would be at a premium and with the score tied 1-1 late in the second period, the Rockets made the most of their chance to take the lead for good.

With about three minutes to go, Calvin Zinda played the puck to Ryan Johnston, who then found Davidson in some open space. Davidson then did the rest to push the Rockets back into the lead.

"All five of our skaters were having an incredible shift," Davidson said. "Not only were we working hard, but we were working well together and communicating on the ice. That hard work paid off for us with that goal as Johnston gave me a great pass and I finished with a backhanded shot."

Lindemann loved the work his offense showed on the goal-scoring shift.

"That game winner from Davidson was all about hard work," Lindemann said. "The team was putting together a great



Davidson

## Rockets fall to Bay Port

The Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team dropped a 5-1 decision to Bay Port in a WIAA Division 1 sectional semifinal Tuesday night.

Richie Bernice scored the Rockets' lone goal midway through the second period to tie the game at 1.

The Pirates regained the lead late in the period and then scored three goals in the third period to collect the win.

Calvin Zinda and John Kriz assisted on the Bernice power-play goal.

Caleb Moore made 35 saves in the loss.

shift and they started to create some opportunities on goal. That paid off in the end as their constant pressure allowed for that second goal."

Moore, who finished with 20 saves, stopped all five shots in the final period to preserve the win and advance the Rockets into sectionals.

Both goalies came up with notable saves in the first period but it was a power play late in the period that helped Neenah break through.

Cooper Zinda took an assist from Davidson to tally the first goal and the Rockets carried a 1-0 lead into the second period.

West Bend, which got 29 saves from Eckert, evened the score early in the period as the teams combined for 22 shots on goal in the stanza.

But the Rockets never buckled, coming back with Davidson's goal to pull back in front.



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# Neenah wrestlers punch ticket to state tournament

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

With his biggest match of the season a mere 45 minutes or so away, Neenah senior Eric Schaufelberger had a plan to be ready to go.

"I had something to eat to get my glucose level back up for energy, and then I played some Clash of the Clans," the Rockets' 195-pounder said. "After the (third-place match), I just wanted to get my mind out of wrestling for a little bit."

Schaufelberger may want to take that same approach this weekend in Madison.

The senior beat Kimberly's Blake Berry, 4-3, in the second-place wrestleback to earn his first trip to the WIAA Individual State Wrestling Tournament. He joined teammates Declan Koch, Jacob Herm and Eli Gast in earning spots in the field for the tournament, which began Thursday at the Kohl Center.

"I don't know how to describe the feeling. It's phenomenal," Schaufelberger said. "Ever since freshman year when we went to Team State, I've wanted to make it there."

Schaufelberger beat Emerson Orth of West Bend East by pin in his first match but lost to nationally ranked Connor Mirasola of West Bend West in the semifinals. He then earned a major decision win over Oshkosh West's Kieran Patrick (13-0) to set up the showdown with Barry and a trip to state at stake.

After a scoreless first period, Schaufelberger won the toss in the second and chose to be in the bottom position. It was the position he wanted and made the most of it, getting an escape and a takedown to take a 3-1 lead into the final period.

"I chose bottom; I knew I could slow it down a bit, catch my breath and then get it back to neutral and start driving it from there," Schaufelberger said.

Barry scored a reversal 12 seconds into the third period to tie the score, but Schaufelberger scored the match-clinching point seven seconds later with an escape and then fended off the Kimberly wrestler the rest of the way.

Gast will also be making his first trip to the state meet as the senior finished second at 170 pounds.

He pinned Oshkosh North's Jamual Raglund-Schreck in 24 seconds in his first match and then outdueled Beaver Dam's Mason Grow for a 5-1 decision to reach the finals. That all but sealed Gast's state trip.

"Last year, I lost (at sectionals) in the semifinals so it's been a lot of mental training to just get over that loss and be ready and prepared for today," Gast said. "Then it's just wrestling in a good position, taking my time and get the most points I could."

Both Schaufelberger and Gast have wres-



Neenah News

Above: Neenah's Eli Gast works for control of Kaukauna's Judah Hammen in the 170-pound title match.

At right: Eric Schaufelberger celebrates with his coaches after winning his second-place wrestleback.

ted at different weights all season for the Rockets, but had no trouble adjusting to their respective divisions Saturday.

"We moved them around to give them the best opportunity to advance to the state tournament," Neenah head coach Kylee Kleuskens said. "Those guys are really dangerous. Both of those guys, their goal is to get on the podium at Madison. Obviously, it will be a bit of a challenge but they are more than capable of doing it as long as they go out and execute."

Koch, a freshman, and Herm, a sophomore, anchor the other end of the Rockets' lineup. Koch finished second at 113 pounds while Herm, who was the state runner-up last year at 106 pounds, was the runner-up at 126 pounds Saturday.

Last year's second place at state was definitely on the mind of Herm as he took the mat on Saturday. But only because it had been there all season.

"I thought about it quite a bit. I like to put stuff in the past but it's kind of hard to put that stuff in the past," Herm said. "Last year, I wrestled good but looking back on it, I wrestled sloppy."

Herm pinned West Bend West's Easton Mueller in 24 seconds in his first sectional match at 126 before winning a hard-fought 5-0 decision over Oshkosh West's Edwyn Schroeder. In the finals, he came up short against Kaukauna's Lucas Peters.

"I've lost to him four times but the only one that really counts is the (match) that is left," Herm said. "I want my revenge on my second place from last year. Just maintain the position this year and wrestle smart and that is what is going to get me my first place."



Koch breezed through his first two matches with a pin and major decision but lost in the finals to Hortonville's Wyatt Skebba, 1-0. Skebba used an escape in the third period to score the match's only point.

Koch was the aggressor over the last 90 seconds of the third period, but Skebba was able to keep him from penetrating enough to score a takedown.

"I practice with him a lot so he kind of knew what I do so he was a little more cautious," Koch said. "I knew I had (a state trip) in me. That semifinal was a really good win for me. I really wanted that finals match but I'll have to get it next week."

Kleuskens was pleased with the way the two underclassmen wrestled Saturday.

"Our two little shredders. Those guys are hammers," Kleuskens said. "Those guys found a way to win some tough matches. Declan had to beat a guy who was 47-1, which is tough to do and Schroeder would probably make the podium at state and Jacob was able to handle him."

With the state trips earned, the goal for all four was simple - return with some hardware.

"My goal is to place at state and be on the wall of champs for us," Schaufelberger said. "Just build off of this."

For Gast, earning a state medal has been something he's been dreaming about for a long time.

"I've been wrestling for more than a decade and my goal is to place at state so this is a good steppingstone to get there," Gast said. "I feel like the whole season is leading up to the postseason. Those are the results I'm looking for. They are the ones that matter."

For Herm and Koch, it isn't just a medal they want. It's a specific one.

"I'm coming for that title," Koch said. "(The key for me) is I have to be able to get away on the bottom. I'm confident on my feet, I just have to be able to get my one (point) on the bottom."

The four state qualifiers were the highlight of the Rockets' show at sectionals but Neenah also got strong finishes from seniors Jayden Sheppard (132) and Nick Novak (160).

Sheppard lost a 7-5 decision in his semifinal match when Oshkosh West's Ryland Schneider scored a last-second takedown. He bounced back to win his third-place match but did not get the chance to wrestleback.

Novak won his opening-round match by a 5-4 decision but lost his next two bouts to take fourth.

Eli Armatti (120) and Nate Cleveland (285) each lost in the first round for Neenah.

"Sectional Saturday is definitely the hardest day of the season," Kleuskens said. "We got four through to state and we are excited about those four, but it's hard not to have a broken heart for a couple of those seniors who just missed out. Those will always hurt. I'll probably never get over a couple of the hard losses that took place today."

## Two Neenah girls make state tourney

The Rockets had two girls qualify for the WIAA Girls State Tournament from last Saturday's wrestling sectional.

Freshmen Joelle Reay and Kylee Kurszewski will be representing the Rockets this weekend in Madison as the girls state tournament will run in conjunction with the boys state tournament for the first time.

Last year was the first time a girls state tournament was held.

Reay (13-7) advanced in the 100-pound division but did not have to wrestle at sectionals to finish first as she was the only wrestler in the bracket.

Kurszewski beat Kimberly's Myah Ellsworth in 35 seconds and then topped Hortonville's Hannah Huza in 3:33 to take first at 114 pounds.

Bianca Quinonez (107) and Ava Armatti (132) each took second.

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# Schlomann finds, fills role for talented Rockets

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

Sometimes there is just that one player that has a knack for getting under an opponent's skin.

He doesn't have to talk trash or play dirty, but every play he's there. Right there. Every play. The only way to escape his clutches is to take a break and find a seat on the bench – and he may just plop right down next to that player anyway.

Teammates love to have those players along side them, while players on the other teams dread those nights.

Neenah High School senior Jackson Schlomann is the third-leading scorer for the Rockets at about 7.5 points per game, while he also ranks second on the team in rebounding. But to get the starting forward smiling, just start talking about being the player that other team's hate going against.

"I'm the guy that guards the other team's best player and shuts him down," Schlomann said before a practice earlier this week. "I take pride in that. I'm always up in their stuff."

And as much as Schlomann likes fulfilling that role, he truly enjoys seeing when all of his efforts start to wear on the opponent he is guarding.

"Sometimes, they will just start shoving me away or start talking to me," Schlomann said with an ear-to-ear grin. "It fires me up. It makes me go even harder."

There is a method to his approach, too.

It's not just taking the court and try to be annoying. Schlomann has a plan for getting an opponent off his game and he revels in the success he has had doing it.

"It's an anticipation mindset. You can't just react to everything they do. You have to guess and go which way you think they are going to go," Schlomann said. "And then use your hands. You can't just stand back and let them attack you."

For a program that routinely sports high-caliber offensive talent, Schlomann used the defensive-minded approach to earn minutes on the court.



Neenah News

Senior Jackson Schlomann thrives in a defensive role for the Neenah Rockets boys basketball team, while also being the team's third-leading scorer.

He has started every game for the Rockets this season and played in every game as a junior on Neenah's state championship squad.

"With the talent we had, it was a good way for me to get on the court and play," Schlomann said. "I just tried to be someone you can lock up the other guy."

Last season was certainly a special one for everyone associated with the Neenah

program and winning a WIAA Division 1 state title along with a Fox Valley Association crown was no easy task.

There were many close games and hard-fought battles along the way and the Rockets reached those heights by not looking too far ahead and focusing on each opponent as they came up.

Well, most of the team did that. "The whole season, I was focused on

## Senior Spotlight

(winning a state title), which I know is kind of a bad thing," Schlomann said. "You are supposed to be focused on the next game but I thought we had a pretty good chance to make it. It was a dream season."

Although the Rockets aren't running roughshod over the FVA with the same ease as last year, Schlomann believes this group can be just as successful.

And with the postseason right around the corner, he said the potential is there to put together another magical run.

"We can certainly do it. I think we are under the radar compared to last year," Schlomann said. "We shoot ourselves in our own foot sometimes, but every game, basically we have been right in it. So I think we have a chance to win every game."

Plus, the Rockets do have the experience of winning the title last year, which certainly is a plus in their favor.

Having played a role in that championship run last year, Schlomann certainly has taken a few cues from that experience and carried them on to this year's squad.

"The seniors last year were really good leaders and helped the underclassmen be in the right spots and do the right thing," Schlomann said. "That's something I've tried to do – be more of a vocal leader and bring that to the table."

Schlomann also experienced success on the football field this fall as a member of the FVA co-champions. He was an honorable mention all-FVA selection at receiver and led the Rockets with 212 receiving yards this season.

Yet, as much as he enjoyed playing football, basketball is still his favorite sport to be a part of.

"I'm just tighter with everyone because in basketball the team is always closer," said Schlomann, who plans to attend UW-La Crosse next fall. "I play sports because it's fun. Ever since I was little and going to games, I always wanted to be the ones playing out there."

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# Free-throw shooting helps Rockets close out Wildcats

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

A baseball team with an unhittable bullpen just needs to get to the late innings with the lead.

The Neenah High School boys basketball team can take the same approach. Get the lead, hold the lead and then turn it over to Brady Corso and Cal Klesmit to close things out.

Corso and Klesmit combined to go 8-for-8 from the free-throw line in the final minute Tuesday night to help the Rockets hold off Oshkosh West, 75-62, in a Fox Valley Association contest.

“It’s something we work on a lot,” Neenah head coach Lee Rabas said. “We struggled with it early in the year but have been better the last couple of games. Hopefully that continues.”

Oshkosh West had sliced a 22-point halftime lead down to seven with a little more than a minute to play.

Corso then dribbled nearly 20 seconds off the clock, forcing the Wildcats to foul him. The junior then calmly went to the line and drilled both ends of a bonus free throw situation, stemming West’s 21-6 run over a nine-minute span.

“You just try to regain your breath first. It’s the end of the game and you’re tired,” said Corso, who was 11-of-11 from the foul line in the game and has hit his last 24 free-throw attempts over the course of the last three games. “Then it just goes back to being in the gym by yourself and just practicing free throw after free throw to be prepared for games like this when it comes down to the end.”

Klesmit, who is 18-of-21 from the foul line in the last three games, then made two free throws with 36 seconds left to push the lead back to double figures. West would get its final basket with 21 seconds left before Corso finished the game with four free throws to secure the win.

Seeing the foul shots go in like that not

only helps the team on the scoreboard but can also boost the psyche of the squad – and for the Rockets, that was definitely needed.

“I think it was good to give our team some confidence in the last couple of minutes, to give us confidence to boost our defense which we needed,” Corso said. “We were streaky at times on the defensive end but we came out with the win and that’s all that matters.”

Neenah held West to just 24 points in the first half in building an 18-point lead and then held the Wildcats scoreless over a three-minute stretch midway through the second half to extend their advantage to 61-39.

West then erupted for 17 points over a seven-minute span – 10 straight at one point – as the Rockets were unable to maintain their defensive reign.

“At times we were good, at times we weren’t. We’re trying to play better defense than we have been playing,” Rabas said. “I’m a little disappointed in the drop off from first half to second half but glad to get a road win.”

Despite allowing West to close the gap in the second half, the Rockets never surrendered the lead and never trailed the entire night.

With the score tied at 4, Neenah got a driving layup from Corso and then back-to-back 3-pointers by Sam Coulthard before a three-point play from Corso capped an 11-0 run.

Coulthard certainly had the hot hand in the first half for the Rockets, knocking down four of the team’s seven 3-pointers before halftime while scoring 16 of his 24 points in the first half.

“He’s a streaky shooter and he’s a senior,” Rabas said. “He knows it’s getting down to that time and he’s going to go out playing his best and giving his best effort, which is what seniors should do.”

Corso led the Rockets with 25 points,



Neenah News

Charlie Wunderlich (23) drives past an Oshkosh West defender in the first half Tuesday.

while Klesmit also reached double figures with 10.

Neenah, which has won four of its last five games and six of its last eight, was slated to face Oshkosh North on Thursday in the regular-season finale before opening

up WIAA Tournament play against Stevens Point on Friday, March 3.

“It’s very important to finish strong,” Corso said. “You want to start playing your best basketball when playoffs come around.”

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