

# Neenah News

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## County shifts health orders oversight

### Director loses some COVID-tied authority

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

In a move that some residents are calling political, the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors voted last week to strip the health director of some of the powers granted during the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

The county board passed an ordinance in November 2020 that gave Health Di-

rector Doug Gieryn the ability to enforce orders that do not include a general workplace shutdown in order to suppress communicable diseases.



Gieryn

The process works like this: The Health Department drafts an order and then releases it publicly as an advisory. The order then goes to the county board for a vote. If it passes by a

majority, the order goes into effect.

The ordinances considered by the board

last week were brought forward by Supervisors Brian Defferding, Conley Hanson and Jacob Floam. They first proposed an ordinance to change the definition of an individual order to remove its applicability for groups of people or gathering spots, limiting enforcement to one person only.

The second ordinance made it so that general orders require a two-thirds majority vote to pass; or 24 of the county's 36 districts voting in favor.

Whereas general orders issued by the Health Department previously had a du-

SEE **County health** ON PAGE 10

## INSIDE



### Senior Standout

Neenah's Ziebell leads Rockets attack  
Page 11

### Park plans

Arrowhead updates reviewed by city  
Page 4



Photo by David Hall

### Falling in place

Downtown Neenah is taking on a wintry holiday look with the recent snowfall and ice skating at The Plaza.

## GAIN provides extra support to girls' sports teams

By MaryBeth Matzek  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Lacrosse is growing in popularity among high school students with many girls trying the sport for the first time in high school. For Neenah High School coach Paul Kelly, it was essential to have equipment available to students interested in the sport.

He turned to Girls Athletics in Neenah (GAIN) to help purchase uniforms and equipment, especially as lacrosse transitioned from a club sport to a WIAA-sanctioned sport within the past year. Kelly recently used \$5,000 in GAIN funds to purchase 60 new varsity and JV uniforms, which covered about half the cost.

"We also have the money to help purchase nets, balls, team jackets and extra equipment for girls who are just trying

lacrosse out for the first time," he said. "Our program has really relied on GAIN because it not only provides funding but it also gives our girls the opportunity to take part in team bonding, such as baking for a recent event, which they can then count toward volunteer time."

Founded in 1984 by parents as a non-profit group to advance girls' athletic programs in grades 7-12, GAIN offers support to all girls sports teams except for basketball, which has its own separate organization that partners with the boys team.

"We provide equipment and supplies not covered in the traditional athletic budget," said Jamie Nichols, the organization's vice president. "The school has an athlet-

SEE **Sports support** ON PAGE 10



Submitted photo

Neenah High School's girls lacrosse team celebrates a win at Rocket Stadium.

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# Neenah News

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It is the policy of Neenah News to correct all errors of fact. For correction information call 920-385-4512.

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# Police responses noted for third quarter

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

The Neenah Police Department responded to 18,412 calls from January through September, according to quarterly reports submitted to the Public Services and Safety Committee.

Of those calls, 6,534 came in from July through September, with 1,104 attributed to traffic stops.

## Meth charges filed in Fox Crossing case

Neenah News

A Neenah man made his initial appearance last week on charges of possessing methamphetamine and three counts of possessing an illegally obtained prescription.

An investigator with the Lake Winnebago Metropolitan Enforcement Group (MEG unit) received a tip in June that Timothy Wilson, 34, was selling methamphetamine out of a residence in the 1200 block of County II in Fox Crossing, according to the criminal complaint.

In July, officers collected abandoned refuse from the address that was examined and several indicators of drug use were located, including THC packaging, syringes and a gem bag that tested positive for methamphetamine.

The MEG unit executed a search warrant at the home Aug. 3 and located suspected marijuana, methamphetamine, LSD, drug paraphernalia and prescription drugs.

Wilson is free on a \$1,000 signature bond with conditions that he not possess or consume illegal controlled substances or drug paraphernalia without a valid prescription.

The National Incident-Based Reporting System categorizes crimes into those against people, which includes murder, rape and assault; those against property, which include robbery, bribery and burglary; and those against society, which include gambling, prostitution and drug violations.

Both Neenah and Fox Crossing have experienced challenges with illegal vehicle entries this year, which may contribute to the 67% of crimes that were against property in the third quarter; followed by 19% against people and 14% against society.

There were 259 arrests in the third quarter, which is about the same amount as the first and second quarters.

There were 118 traffic citations in the third quarter for a total of 726 issued through September. The third-quarter ci-

tations were up by about 24% in comparison to the third quarter of 2022.

Police issued 453 parking citations in the third quarter, with the greatest number of parking tickets in Blue Lot at 214 S. Church St., Silver Lot at 119 W. Doty Ave and Green Ramp at 109 N Church St.; with a combined total of 94 tickets.

There were 129 reportable automobile accidents in the third quarter for a total of 398 accidents in the first nine months of the year. There were six arrests for operating while intoxicated in the third quarter for a total of 27 OWI arrests through September.

There have been eight fatal overdoses in the first nine months of this year, with one pending toxicology results. That's in comparison to eight fatal overdoses in Neenah in the entirety of 2022 and seven in 2021.

## Infant's injuries bring abuse charges

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A Fox Crossing father accused of physically abusing his 10-month-old baby was arraigned Thursday in Winnebago County Circuit Court.

Martin Ellis, 27, is charged with a felony count of child abuse-recklessly causing harm for allegedly causing the infant's arm to fracture.

According to the criminal complaint, on July 29 the infant's mother left her with Martin for two hours at a home in the 2300 block of Southwood Drive while she was at work. When she got home the baby was crying.

The mother later brought the child outside and set her down so she could crawl around and noticed she would not put weight on her left arm and screamed when she tried to do so. When the mother questioned Martin, he said he could not tell

her what happened and said she may have fallen off the bed.

The child was taken to the emergency room and diagnosed with an acute buckle fracture of the left forearm, a bruise to the upper left arm and a bruise to the right inner thigh. A nurse practitioner determined the injuries are diagnostic for physical abuse.


Fox Crossing police were dispatched to the home around 6:40 p.m. at the request of a county juvenile intake employee who received a call from the emergency room treating the infant. The employee wanted to do a face-to-face meeting with the family to find out what caused the injuries.

While en route to the home, the child's mother called and requested medical assistance for Ellis, who had self-inflicted wounds. During questioning, Ellis said the child was crying and he squeezed her. He said her arm may have twisted when he set her down but that he never hit her.

Ellis is free on a \$1,000 signature bond with the conditions that he take medication as prescribed by a physician and not physically discipline children.



Ellis



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Dr. F. Mark Moore will discuss his time serving in the medical corps during the Vietnam War. Copies of the book will be available for sale.

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All ages are invited for a special after-hours Swiftie Party! Celebrate all things Taylor Swift with a DJ, photo station, crafts, and more.

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Neenah Historical Society photo

## Holiday tradition

Jerry Sturges (from left), Stanley Drews, and Harold Gullickson hang Christmas decorations at Hall in 1952.

# City public parking fees to increase

Neenah News

The city of Neenah is increasing its fees for parking permits and citations for the first time in six years.

The city divides parking into Tier 2 spaces, which are permit spaces in the Silver Lot (Marketplace); and Tier 1 spaces, which are all other permit spaces outside of the parking ramp.

Residents purchasing parking permits can expect increases from \$1 to \$8 depending on permit type. Tier 1 passes will cost \$3 per day or \$25 per month and Tier 2 passes will cost \$6 per day or \$40 monthly. Ramp parking passes will be \$30 per month.

Public works director Gerry Kaiser wrote in a memo that increases to the

parking citation fees are being requested in coordination with the permit fee increases to minimize the possibility of incentivizing violations.

Class C violations include heavy vehicle parking, time limit zones, permit parking zones and re-parking within a time limit zone. A first-offense violation results in a warning, while subsequent offenses will increase to a total of \$20 to \$55 depending on prior offenses.

Class B violations – parking orientation, no-parking zones, loading zones, interfering with a parking officer, overnight parking, snow emergencies, and parking on private property – will also increase to a penalty of \$20 to \$55, depending on pre-

vious offenses.

Parking in handicapped zones is a Class A violation and the penalty will remain at \$150.

According to the Neenah Police Department's annual and quarterly reports, 2,610 parking citations were issued in the city last year. From January through September of this year, 1,112 parking citations were issued.

The most recent adjustments to the city's parking permit and citation charges were made in 2017. Kaiser said for the past two years the city's Parking Utility would have operated at a significant deficit without the inclusion of ARPA funds to cover administrative costs.

# State park, forest, trail passes for 2024 available

State park and forest annual admission stickers and trail passes for 2024 are now on sale from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which recommends purchasing stickers by Dec. 8 to receive them before the holidays.

Resident and nonresident annual admission stickers are available online and

at individual state park and forest properties via drive-up window service, self-registration kiosks or over the phone. State trail passes are available only at individual properties or licensed vendors.

Vehicle stickers provide access to more than 60 state parks, forests and recreation areas across Wisconsin. An annual sticker or

a daily admission pass is required on all vehicles visiting state parks and recreation areas.

An annual vehicle admission sticker costs \$28 for Wisconsin residents or \$38 for nonresidents.

# Metro area jobless rate drops to 2.3%

Neenah News

The Oshkosh-Neenah metropolitan area and Winnebago County saw a drop in its unemployment rate from 3.0% to 2.8% between September and October, according to preliminary data from the state Department of Workforce Development.

Last September's jobless rate in Oshkosh-Neenah and the county was at 2.3%.

The non-seasonally adjusted data shows jobless rates in Metropolitan Statistical Areas declined in all of Wisconsin's 12 metro areas over that period. Unemployment rates also decreased in 33 of Wisconsin's 35 largest cities and in all but one county.

Estimates of unemployment and employment statistics are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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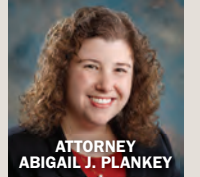
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Neenah News

Arrowhead Park continues to be in development as the city seeks to better incorporate it into the greater downtown area.

# Arrowhead Park plans add to downtown offerings

## Waterfront space has been work in progress

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah's newest development plans for downtown Arrowhead Park include a pedestrian overpass, amphitheater, community gardens and a rooftop restaurant overlooking the water.

Other notable improvements in the works: a four-season community building, destination building for events, innovation building for park facilities, celebration lawn, sculpture garden and playground.

The northwest section would feature natural landscaping, prairie grass, woodland, nature trails and hard service trails. The proposed shoreline has fishing spots and opportunities to access the water.

The city paid RDG Planning & Design \$47,000 to create a new conceptual master plan for the park this year, which was presented at a Parks & Recreation meeting in November.

"The waterfront in Neenah will be a nationally recognized destination where people gather to celebrate, recreate and explore," said Mike Bell of RDG Planning.

The 30-acre Arrowhead Park dates to 1950 and is situated just west of downtown Neenah along Little Lake Butte des

Morts. It sits atop land created from paper mill waste that contaminated the water with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and includes the former Fox Valley Energy Center that has been demolished. An active rail runs along the southern edge of the property.

Mayor Jane Lang noted the plan presented at the meeting is not the final version.

"As we start the process of having a little bit more information available relative to Arrowhead, I think it's important for us to think about the fact that we've been pursuing this for 50 years," she said. "This is a process that takes a tremendous amount of time and thought, and it starts and stops, but I am so personally grateful for all of the work that has been done over the past year."

Bell said important considerations in developing the newest plan were that it provides a clear direction on what developments could be, enhances the site and the entire park system, incorporates well with adjacent space and is a cornerstone within the city.

"We want to leverage opportunity, create a destination for not only Neenah but

the surrounding area, really celebrate the water ... create unique places, seamless connection to not only its direct adjacencies but the larger metropolitan series of destinations, and then don't overdevelop," he said.

Earlier this year the city installed a pier, gangway and quiet water launch in Arrowhead, costing about \$620,000. For next year, the city budgeted about \$2 million for park construction, parking and increasing connectivity to the city.

Moving forward, the city is waiting on cost estimates from RDG. Funding is expected to come from the private sector, nonprofits and grants.

"These are the areas, the circles, the zones that we'd say probably want to have further study, greater investigation of not only the size, how to build them, who are the partners and how much it's going to cost and when to build," Bell said.

Lang said the plan is a point in the process for the commission to consider and comment on.

"This has been an educational, eye-opening process all the way along but what I think we're gaining in this process is invaluable," she said.



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**World Relief Fox Valley** is seeking

apartment setup volunteers to provide a safe and welcoming home for refugees upon arrival. Those interested are required to complete an application and will be contacted when a move-in opportunity is scheduled. Contact Taylor at [twittman@wr.org](mailto:twittman@wr.org) or 920-231-3600.

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# Electric rates adjusted for WPS, other utilities

Neenah News

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin last week reviewed requests by Wisconsin utilities to increase electric rates, including limited requests by We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) to modify 2024 rates that were set last year.

Wisconsin Public Radio reported that the commission approved a 2.5 percent electric rate increase for We Energies and a 2.6 percent rate decrease for WPS.

Regulators last year authorized WEC Energy Group, which owns We Energies and WPS, to seek recovery from projects going into service this year and in 2024, as

well as operations and maintenance costs at retiring coal plants. WPS, which services Oshkosh and a majority of Winnebago County, had sought an overall rate hike of nearly 15% that was originally reduced to 8.8% and now sits at 6.2%.

An average WPS residential customer will see an estimated \$3.14 decrease in their monthly electric bill.

We Energies customers in Neenah and other parts of northern Winnebago County will see their electricity bills rise by nearly 13.5% after the adjusted rate increase, which according to WEC Energy will help fund new utility-scale solar and natural gas generation.

The average residential customer for We Energies can expect an estimated \$3.89 increase in their monthly electric bill next year.

The PSC was not able to modify profits in the WEC cases due to their limited scope, Wisconsin Public Radio reported. Regulators reduced profits for We Energies and WPS last year.

“Energy affordability and energy burden is always an important part of our decision as we work to balance the interests of customers and the utility companies,” commission chair Rebecca Cameron Valcq said last week.

The Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin

(CUB) asked the PSC to slash utility profits and provide more manageable rate increases for customers in all the state rate cases.

Tom Content, the organization’s executive director, said he’s encouraged by regulators’ focus on affordability. CUB had advocated for profit rates closer to 9.3 percent.

Content said the PSC told We Energies and Alliant that it wants to see customer savings from coal plant retirements rather than seeing utilities profit off dead coal plants. The commission asked We Energies for a comprehensive analysis on how to save customers money as coal plants retire.

# Local pitch contest winners advance from regional competition

Twelve entrepreneurial pitch winners who advanced from local competitions hosted by collaborative partners vied for additional prize money at a regional pitch competition this week hosted by New North Inc. in Green Bay.

The 12 participants were competing this Thursday for broader investor attention, along with prize money of \$2,000 for first place, \$1,000 for second place and \$500 for third. The top winners will be invited to give an update to an even wider investor/business audience during the New North Summit on June 6 at Lambeau Field.

“We were excited by the wide range of creative business ideas shown at these local pitch events,” said Barb LaMue, president of New North. “It demonstrates the vibrancy of the entrepreneurial community across the New North region.”

Twelve local partnering organizations hosted six pitch events during Startup Week in Wisconsin. First-place winners at the local events received \$1,000 cash, while second-place finishers were given \$500 each. In all, 39 entrepreneurial pitches were made during the local qualifying events in collaboration with 10 local partners, including FVTC Venture Center, Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce and UW Oshkosh Small Business Development Center.

Details of the 12 companies:

- AMW Arts, presented by Arianna McCormick-Wilson: Educates the local community in the value of art, both monetarily and in enriching people’s lives.

- Bodhi Bow Wow LLC, presented by Quentin Wood: Provides services to pet dog owners with the focus on teaching people to train their dogs, using behavior modification as opposed to behavior management.

- Food FIXR, presented by Grace Hammeister: A Food as Medicine HealthTech company, it seeks to reclaim the health of people and the planet.

- HeyGov Inc. – ClerkMinutes, presented by Dustin Overbeck: Digital platform designed to modernize municipal operations by addressing the inefficiencies of handling forms and payments, while increasing user experience.

- Kids in Combat Boots, presented by Deanne Herber: Recognizes military children for their service to our country with a sustained recognition program, resources

and a globally accessible community.

- Little Sips Play Cafe, presented by Mikala and Joey DeBone: This play cafe will serve as a safe, relaxing, educational play space and cafe for children ages 0-6.

- Molo Asian BBQ, presented by Ping Cheng: Asian restaurant that will provide good healthy food and a unique experience to the community, offering customer involvement in the preparation process.


- NEW Compost LLC, presented by Connor Freimuth: Partnering with plant cultivator, the company will maximize profits by utilizing sustainable eco-friendly organic products and methodologies to reduce the need for conventional cultivation practices.

- Preempt Physical Therapy, LLC, presented by Sara Ziegele: Helps workers recover from costly preventive overuse injuries, educating people on the ‘why’ behind their injuries while translating it to safer, more sustainable work.

- Protean Footwear, presented by Michaela Heling: Combines the advantages of three different pairs of baseball and softball shoes – metal, molded and turf – into one pair, using patent-pending technology.

- SmartWell LLC, presented by Christian Timm: Device that transforms a groundwater pump into a smart pump capable of tracking water usage, identifying water leaks, forecasting pump failure and increasing the life of a well.

- Vente Tours, presented by Emily Hubbard: Digital platform to redefine travel by bridging the information that a traveler needs with access to products and services a small business can provide, which may have limited or no online reviews.



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# Former pastor pleads guilty in sex assault case

By Jonathan Richie  
NEENAH NEWS

A former youth pastor already in prison for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old in Portage County was in the Winnebago County Courthouse on Tuesday to plead guilty in a separate case of sexually assaulting a 12-year-old from Appleton at a Fox Crossing hotel.

Jordan R. Huffman, 52, plead guilty to first-degree child sexual assault and felony bail jumping. He committed this offense while out on \$100,000 cash bond in the Portage County case. He was found guilty by Judge Daniel Bissett on Tuesday morning and will have a sentencing hearing next year.

Huffman was sentenced in Portage County in October to 20 years in prison followed by 20 years of extended supervision for two counts of repeated sexual assault of same child. In that case first-degree child sex assault was dismissed on prosecutors motion and three counts of child enticement with sexual contact were dismissed but read in for sentencing purposes.

The most serious offense Huffman is facing in Winnebago County is the felony B count of first-degree sex assault – sexual contact or sexual intercourse with a person under age 13. The maximum penalty is a \$100,000 fine or 40 years in prison followed by up to 20 years of extended supervision or both.

Huffman's attorney Andrea Winder told Bissett that a plea deal had been reached with the state in the case and agreed to by Assistant District Attorney Tracy Paider, who is prosecuting the case for the state.

Winder said the deal included Huff-



Jordan Huffman sits with his attorney Andrea Winder in a Winnebago County Courtroom on Tuesday.

man serving three years of initial confinement followed by three years of extended supervision to run consecutively with his Portage County case. Huffman could be serving the Portage County case prison sentence until 2043, meaning he could be in prison until 2046 and then spend the next 23 years on extended supervision.

Huffman is currently serving his sentence in Dodge Correctional Institution.

Bissett does not need to follow the parameters of the plea deal and could hand down the maximum sentence. He explained to Huffman that by pleading

guilty to these serious offenses he will have a strike on his record toward Wisconsin's Three Strikes laws.

Wisconsin's three-strike and two-strike laws are in place for serious repeat offenders. Serious sex crimes, which include first-degree sexual assault of a child, are included in both two- and three-strike laws.

Individuals with a strike on their record could face added penalties for subsequent felony charges with a third strike potentially leading to 25 years to life sentence without parole if convicted.

The two-strike law states if the person is a "persistent repeater" for a second serious

child sex offence they should receive life in prison without the possibility of parole or extended supervision.

A sentencing hearing in the case is scheduled for Feb. 9. Bissett said several letters supporting Huffman have already been submitted to the court for sentencing. Paider said she doesn't anticipate a restitution hearing.

According to the criminal complaint, on May 19 a juvenile called 911 stating he was in a vehicle at a hotel after being kidnapped and needed help. Fox Crossing police arrived at the hotel on Holly Road and saw a vehicle leaving the parking lot. Officers then initiated a traffic stop.

As the officer exited the squad car, the victim exited the front passenger door of the suspect's vehicle and Huffman was arrested.

The victim told officers he was communicating with Huffman through Snapchat earlier that day and Huffman sent him nude photos. The victim had the Snapchat location on and a short time later Huffman showed up at his house. The victim stated he went with Huffman because he was "going to probably kill me or something."

Huffman began assaulting the victim during the drive to the hotel. When they arrived, Huffman went inside to rent a room and the boy called 911. When Huffman returned to the vehicle, he brought the victim inside where he continued assaulting him.

Surveillance footage showed the victim exiting the hotel room and running to the car, with Huffman behind. The victim dialed 911 again while in the vehicle and police initiated the traffic stop and arrested Huffman.

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# Asphalt paving scams targeted local homeowners

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A Texas man dubbed the “Asphalt Gypsy” is facing 30 criminal charges in eight counties for contractor fraud targeting elderly homeowners across Wisconsin.

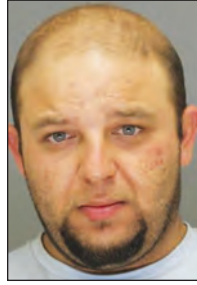
The state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) issued a consumer alert in September that stated traveling asphalt crews were reported in the southeastern portion of Wisconsin.

The traveling scammers show up unsolicited and offer a low price to sealcoat or blacktop a driveway, according to DATCP. Sometimes they claim to have leftover asphalt that needs to be used up. After agreeing on a price, the scammers typically begin the work and then demand a much larger final payment to finish.

In some cases, only a base coat is applied and not a top coat. In others, the work is botched. DATCP reports some scammers may take payment up front and run off with the money without completing any work. The scammers are often from out of

state, unlicensed and move quickly from town to town, making it difficult to track them.

Mico Miller, 29, is currently facing 19 felonies and 11 misdemeanors in Winnebago, Brown, Shawano, Calumet, Dane, Waushara, Outagamie and Columbia counties for the scams. He was convicted of a felony count of theft by false representation in Waupaca County in 2021 and ordered to pay \$5,500 in restitution.



Miller

According to criminal complaints, on July 27, 2020, Miller and another male showed up at a home in Brown County and offered to seal the driveway for \$600. After starting on the driveway, Miller demanded a new payment of \$10,500 before settling on \$3,000.

The next day, Miller approached a couple in Winchester and offered to seal their driveway for \$500. Miller and a partner

began sealing the driveway and halfway through informed the victim that the front end of the driveway already cost \$5,000 and if he wanted the driveway finished he would have to pay an additional \$6,000.

The homeowner said they argued over the price and Miller commented that the victim and his wife had nice stuff and lived in an expensive home. The victim said at that point he felt threatened that if he didn't pay, Miller would come back and take his belongings. He said he knew he had been scammed and just wanted Miller off his property so he paid him \$5,100 cash.

Three days later, Miller allegedly approached a 77-year-old Omro man and his wife who were sitting in their garage. A younger male was with Miller and stayed in the vehicle. Miller presented a business card with the name Jets Asphalt & Sealcoating Repair and an Appleton address. He informed the couple he would like to do work on their driveway, offering a deal of \$38 per gallon of sealant.

Miller spent 45 minutes working on the driveway and then requested \$7,500 as payment, claiming he used 241 gallons of product. The victim said he was embarrassed and scared and felt he owed Miller money for the service he provided.

The victim gave Miller \$500 cash and wrote a check for \$7,000. Miller tried to cash the check the next day but the bank was suspicious of the transaction and told Miller it didn't have the funds on hand. The victim later met Miller at the bank and consented to the funds being dispensed.

Investigators noted the asphalt sealing was poorly done and was peeling and sticking to the tires of vehicles five days

after it was applied. A local sealcoating business was consulted and sent out an employee who could not determine what product was used as it didn't appear to be a sealant of any kind. The employee stated on the high end the driveway would take about 20 gallons of sealant and cost at most \$500.

Brown County officials subsequently arrested Miller and the boy who was with him in Grand Chute on Aug. 4, 2020. Authorities found \$7,000 cash on Miller. The boy was identified as Miller's 12-year-old nephew who was in Wisconsin for about 30 days to work.

In a statement to investigators, Miller allegedly admitted he was misrepresenting how much product he was putting down and overcharging people. He said the information on his business card was made up with a random address.

Warrants for Miller's arrest were issued in three counties in 2021 for missed court appearances. He was arrested this July and incarcerated at the Calumet County Jail on similar charges. He's due back in court for sentencing Dec. 28 in Brown County and Jan. 11 in Winnebago County.

DATCP advised residents in need of driveway resurfacing to contact local contractors, to gather multiple bids and never pay the full price of a project up front.

If approached for unsolicited asphalt paving or sealing services, residents are recommended by DATCP to turn the workers away and contact law enforcement with a description of vehicles and license plate numbers.

Residents who have been scammed by a transient asphalt crew can file a complaint at [ConsumerProtection.wi.gov](http://ConsumerProtection.wi.gov).

## Negligent 911 calls prompt citation

Neenah News

An intoxicated Fox Crossing woman was issued a police citation Sunday for misusing 911 after calling six times in five days.

According to the Fox Crossing Police Department, the woman lives on Lakeview Lane and called 911 just before 5 a.m. Nov. 22 saying she needed help. Arriving officers found the woman intoxicated and informed her that if she needs police for a non-emergency situation she needs to call the non-emergency number.

Two days later, the woman called 911 while intoxicated to say “Happy Thanksgiving.” She did not need police assistance and told officers she didn't remember calling and was lonely. She was warned that future misuse of 911 could result in a citation.

At around 7:30 p.m. Sunday, the woman called 911 to report footprints in the snow on her property that were from an officer who had responded earlier in the day when she called 911. The woman then called 911 twice more while officers

were en route to ask where they were. Police found the woman “highly intoxicated” and cited her for misuse of 911, which is a \$237 fine.

Community liaison officer Dan Wiechman said misusing 911 causes challenges to police and diverts time from other responsibilities.

“Not only is the dispatcher now speaking with the caller, gathering the non-emergency information, entering a call for law enforcement response, and communicating with us while we investigate the matter, this ties up their ability to address other communication center priorities, perhaps an actual emergency call that comes in,” he said.

When responding to these types of calls, Wiechman said police typically issue warnings and provide resources for utilizing the non-emergency phone number.

“However, repetitive, blatant misuse will generate a harsher outcome and can result in a citation as indicated in the incident we recently dealt with,” he said.

## Lego thefts reported at Fox Crossing store

Neenah News

Bricks & Minifigs Fox Valley in Fox Crossing has fallen victim to theft of Lego products, which has become a recent trend nationwide.

When Bricks & Minifigs opened its doors in April, theft was not a major concern to owners Joe and Sarah Schmidt but has become an issue over time as customers have walked out the door with unpaid products.

Joe Schmidt told WBAY TV last week that a male individual was caught on sur-

veillance camera stealing Lego products while on a shopping trip with his family. Schmidt says they would like to talk to the man who has been identified.

Many Lego stores, including Bricks & Minifigs, now require customers who want to sell their own Legos to sign off on the sale to register the transaction. A paper trail can help police track larger, more expensive Legos that have been stolen and have a high value on the resale market. Schmidt said they do it for any type of product that they buy or trade.

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# AI starting to affect elections as legislative review awaited

By Phoebe Petrovic  
WISCONSIN WATCH

Heading into the 2024 election, Wisconsin faces a new challenge state lawmakers here have so far failed to address: generative artificial intelligence.

AI can draft a fundraising email or campaign graphics in seconds, no writing or design skills required. Or, as the Republican National Committee showed in April, it can conjure lifelike videos of China invading Taiwan or migrants crossing the U.S. border made entirely of fictional AI-generated footage.

More recently, a Super PAC supporting a Republican presidential candidate's bid to make the Milwaukee debate stage on Aug. 23 used an AI-generated video of that candidate to fundraise — which one campaign finance expert called an “innovative” way around campaign finance rules that would otherwise ban a Super PAC and candidate from coordinating on an ad.

Technology and election experts say AI's applications will both “transform” and threaten elections across the United States. And Wisconsin, a gerrymandered battleground that previously weathered baseless claims of election fraud, may face an acute risk.

Wisconsin lawmakers have not taken official steps to regulate use of the technology in campaigning, even as other states and Congress introduce and begin to implement guardrails.

The state Assembly's recently formed Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force is exploring AI's role in elections, business, government and other aspects of daily life and is chaired by Republican Rep. Nate Gustafson from Fox Crossing.

Rep. Scott Krug, R-Nekoosa, chair of

the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections, told Wisconsin Watch he hasn't “related (AI) too much to elections just yet.”

In the Senate's Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections and Consumer Protection, “it just hasn't come up yet,” said Sen. Jeff Smith, D-Brunswick.

Election committee members in both chambers expressed interest in possible remedies but doubt that they could pass protections before the next election cycle.

Rep. Clinton Anderson, D-Beloit, is drafting a bill that would mandate disclosure of AI, sometimes called “synthetic media,” in political ads, something experts call a basic step lawmakers could take to regulate the technology.

“If we wait til 2024, it's gonna be too late,” Anderson said in an interview. “If we can get this minimum thing done, then maybe we can have a conversation about, ‘What's the next step?’”

“No matter where you fall politically, I think you should want some transparency in campaigns,” he added.

Several lawmakers said AI repackages old problems in new technology, noting voters have encountered deceptive visuals and targeted advertising before.

But generative AI makes such content cheaper, easier and faster to produce. New York University's Brennan Center for Justice notes that Russian-affiliated organizations spent more than \$1 million a month in 2016 to produce manipulative political ads that could be created today with AI for a fraction of the cost.

Dietram Scheufele, who studies science communication and technology policy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said that while some of the doomsday pre-



Wisconsin Watch photo

Rep. Scott Krug, R-Nekoosa, chair of the Assembly elections committee, is open to regulating the use of AI in elections, but legislation may not be ready in time for the 2024 election.

dictions about AI are overblown, “we're definitely entering a new world.”

The technology, he said, “gets real creepy real fast.”

Scheufele cited a prior study in which researchers morphed candidates' faces with the participant's own face in a way that remained undetectable to the participant. They found that people who were politically independent or weakly partisan were more likely to prefer the candidates whose faces had been — unbeknownst to them — morphed with their own.

“This was done a long time ago before the idea of actually doing all of this in real time became a reality,” Scheufele said. But

today, “the threshold for producing this stuff is really, really low.”

Campaigns could micro-target constituents, crafting uniquely persuasive communications or advertisements by tailoring them to a person's digital footprint or likeness. Darrell West, who studies technology at the nonpartisan Brookings Institution, calls this “precise message targeting,” writing AI will allow campaigns to better focus on “specific voting blocs with appeals that nudge them around particular policies and partisan opinions.”

AI will also quicken the pace of communications and responses, permitting politicians to “respond instantly to campaign developments,” West wrote. “AI can scan the internet, think about strategy, and come up with a hard-hitting appeal” in minutes, “without having to rely on highly paid consultants or expert videographers.”

And because AI technology is more accessible, it's not just well-funded campaigns or interest groups that might deploy it in elections. Mekela Panditharatne, counsel for the Brennan Center's Democracy Program, and Noah Giansiracusa, an assistant professor of mathematics and data science, described several ways outside actors might use the technology to deceive or influence voters.

Aside from using deepfakes to fabricate viral controversies, they could produce legions of social media posts about certain issues “to create the illusion of political agreement or the false impression of widespread belief in dishonest election narratives,” Panditharatne and Giansiracusa wrote. They could “deploy tailored chatbots to customize interactions based on voter characteristics.”

They could also use AI to target elections administrators, either through deluges of complaints from fake constituents or elaborate phishing schemes.

SEE AI in elections ON PAGE 9

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# Library calendar

- Dec. 1**  
9:15 a.m.: Fitness Friday: Boot Camp
- Dec. 2**  
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.: DIY cards, gift bags and wrapping paper  
6:30 p.m.: Ugly Cupcake Party with Eliza Evans and Amanda Cupcake
- Dec. 3**  
1 p.m.: LEGOs in the Library (ages 5+)
- Dec. 4**  
2 p.m.: Adult Afternoon Program: Hidden History & Mystery Behind Charles Dickens Writing "A Christmas Carol"  
6:30 p.m.: "Grunt Surgeon" book signing with author F. Mark Moore
- Dec. 6**  
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.: Stay & Play (0-6 years)  
5:30 p.m.: Mah Jongg Meetup
- Dec. 7**  
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.: Stay & Play  
5:30-8:30 p.m.: Open Chess Night  
6 p.m.: Ukulele Open Jam
- Dec. 8**  
10:30 a.m.: Footloose Friday
- Dec. 11**  
1 p.m.: Monday Matinee: "A Christmas Story Christmas"  
7 p.m.: Short Story Night at Lion's Tail Brewing
- Dec. 12**  
1:30 p.m.: Tech Talk Tuesday: Guide to Online Shopping and Security  
4:30 p.m.: Legal Assistance Clinic
- Dec. 13**  
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.: Stay & Play  
5:30 p.m.: Mah Jongg Meetup
- Dec. 14**  
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.: Stay & Play  
5:30 p.m.: Open Chess Night  
6 p.m.: Ukulele Open Jam
- Dec. 15**  
10:30 a.m.: Chair Yoga
- Dec. 17**  
1 p.m.: LEGOs in the Library (ages 5+)  
2 p.m.: Sunday Concert Series: Encore! Handbell Ensemble
- Dec. 18**  
10 a.m.: Monday Morning Book Club: "My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry"  
1:30 p.m.: Memory Cafe: Holiday Party  
6:30 p.m.: Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club: "The Graveyard Book" by Neil Gaiman
- Dec. 21**  
5:30 p.m.: Open Chess Night  
6 p.m.: Ukulele Open Jam
- Dec. 24-25**  
Library closed
- Dec. 28**  
5:30 p.m.: Open Chess Night
- Dec. 30**  
6 p.m.: Swiftie Party
- Dec. 31**  
Library closed

# AI in elections

FROM PAGE 8

"There is plenty of past election disinformation in the training data underlying current generative AI tools to render them a potential ticking time bomb for future election disinformation," Panditharatne and Giansiracusa wrote.

For Scheufele, one major concern is timing. It can take seconds for AI to create a deepfake; it can take days for reporters to debunk it. AI-driven disinformation deployed in the days before an election could sway voters in meaningful ways.

By the time people realized the content was fake, Scheufele said, "the election is over and we have absolutely no constitutional way of relitigating it."

"This is like making the wrong call in the last minute of the Super Bowl and the Patriots win the Super Bowl, even though they shouldn't have," Scheufele said. "They're still going to be Super Bowl champions on Monday even though we all know that the wrong call was made."

In the abstract, every single aspect of AI is "totally manageable," Scheufele said.

"The problem is we're dealing with so much in such a short period of time because of how quickly that technology develops," he said. "We simply don't have the structures in place at the moment."

But Wisconsin lawmakers could take initial steps toward boosting transparency.

In May, Washington state passed a law requiring a clear disclaimer about AI's use in any political ad. Anderson's team looked to Washington's law as a model in drafting a Wisconsin bill.

Printed ads with manipulated images will need a disclosure "in letters at least as big as any other letters in the ad," according to The Spokesman-Review. Manipu-

lated audio must "have an easily understood, spoken warning at the beginning and end of the commercial." For videos, a text disclosure "must appear for the duration" of the ad.

A similar bill addressing federal elections has been introduced in both chambers of Congress. A March 2020 proposal banning the distribution of deepfakes within 60 days of a federal election and creating criminal penalties went nowhere.

Krug called Washington's law a "pretty interesting idea."

"If (an ad is) artificially created, there has to be some sort of a disclaimer," Krug said.

However, he indicated Republicans may wait to move legislation until after Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, convenes a task force later this year on AI in government.

Sen. Mark Spreitzer, D-Beloit, another elections committee member, noted Wisconsin law already prohibits knowingly making or publishing "a false representation pertaining to a candidate or referendum which is intended or tends to affect voting at an election."

"I think you could read the plain language of that statute and say that a deepfake would violate it," he said. "But obvi-

ously, whenever you have new technology, I think it's worth coming back and making explicitly clear that an existing statute is intended to apply to that new technology."

Scheufele, Anderson, Spreitzer and Smith all said that Wisconsin should go beyond mandating disclosure of AI in ads.

"The biggest concern is disinformation coming from actors outside of the organized campaigns and political parties," Spreitzer said. Official entities are easier to regulate, in part because the government already does.

Additional measures will require a robust global debate, Scheufele said. He likened the urgency of addressing AI to nuclear power.

"What we never did for nuclear energy is really have a broad public debate about: Should we go there? Should we actually develop nuclear weapons? Should we engage in that arms race?" he said. "For AI, we may still have that opportunity where we really get together and say, 'Hey, what are the technologies that we're willing to deploy, that we're willing to actually make accessible?'"

*The nonprofit Wisconsin Watch (www.WisconsinWatch.org) collaborates with WPR, PBS Wisconsin, other news media and the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication.*

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## Sports support

FROM PAGE 1

ics budget that covers some of the basics so we at GAIN provide funds for equipment, new uniforms, team bonding and other things not covered by the school.”

GAIN awards funding to the different teams based on membership, concession sales, donations and volunteer hours. Each female athlete pays \$5 per sport each year to be a GAIN member.

“The membership fee gets that buy-in and support and isn’t too high so someone cannot pay it,” said GAIN treasurer Vicki Denzin.

The organization benefits sports that do not have high attendance at their events, Nichols said. For example, more concessions are sold at football games than during a volleyball game.

“If we consolidate the purchase across all teams of needed concession items, for example, it is cheaper than every sport on their own,” she said.

Teams earn funds selling concessions at games and meets. GAIN also has a partnership with Special Olympics to run its concessions.

“That’s been a wonderful partnership,” Denzin said. “It provides the athletes with a great opportunity to volunteer.”

Nichols said GAIN helps with team finances so the girls do not need to participate in different fundraisers.

“The organization also gets our students involved in community events, such as

the Special Olympics. Teammates recruit each other to participate and they not only raise funds for their teams but they are giving back to the community,” she said.

GAIN also ran concessions and provided meals for interested vendors at the Helping Hands Craft Fair, held in November at Neenah Middle School (the former high school). More than 30 lacrosse players took part in baking goods for the fair.

“Some of our core parents have been volunteering at youth events and tournaments to get in volunteer time as well. Without GAIN support, we wouldn’t be able to afford hardly any of the resources we receive from their organization,” Kelly said.

GAIN is always looking for more volunteers to get involved, whether it is parents or students, Nichols said.

“The pandemic decreased the information going out about school activities and people getting involved or even attending events,” she said. “GAIN has been around for decades and has played an instrumental role in helping different sports. We want to keep the word spreading about what we do.”

The organization also sells ceramic mugs made by Sunset Hill Stoneware to raise funds and receives donations, such as from Kimberly-Clark Corp. and other businesses that provide financial support to organizations their employees and spouses volunteer for.

“GAIN is all about reinforcing support to our talented female athletes and providing them with the support they deserve,” Denzin said.

## County health

FROM PAGE 1

ration of 60 days, the amendment limits orders to seven days unless otherwise authorized by the county board.

While the existing ordinance required the county board to vote on orders at its next regularly scheduled meeting date or within 14 days, whichever is sooner, the new ordinance removes any time requirements, meaning a health order could be strung along for weeks without a county board vote.

County resident Deb Martin told the board that politics should not be involved in the decision-making process and the supervisors need to consider the health of the entire county.

“I don’t understand these amendments,” she said. “I think they look politically motivated, totally, because of people mad about what happened during the pandemic.”

Lois Gruetzmacher, a citizen member of the Board of Health, said there are 1,000 reportable diseases that the health

department is expected to respond to.

“Changing these ordinances to this degree that makes them so at odds with what state statute has is just totally irresponsible,” she said. As she continued speaking, a county board supervisor interjected and cut her off, citing a two-minute time limit for speakers.

Oshkosh resident Mary Ann Offer said the county board making politically motivated decisions comes with the added effect of risking people’s lives.

“It is a really serious time, serious concern for our community, and that’s when we need to turn to our public health officials – the people who are the most up to date about what needs to be done,” she said.

While the majority of speakers during the public forum were opposed to the ordinances, Rosemary Barnard was one of several who spoke in support.

“We the people need a voice as well,” she said.

Defferding, who represents District 6 in Neenah, posted on social media about the topic in October in advance of a Board of Health meeting. Defferding cited a 2021



Photo by BMMOG

## Museum acquisition

The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass recently announced the acquisition of an artwork by John Littleton and Kate Vogel titled “To Know a Veil.” The pour cast work was featured in the *Between Us* exhibition at the museum that ran through February 2022 and is one of the final pieces in the *Clarity Imprisoned* series. Museum officials said the acquisition, a tradition of supporting artists through purchase of their work, was made possible by 24 donors from across the U.S.

## UW Oshkosh graduates

These University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students from Neenah earned their degrees after completion of May-term or summer coursework:

Karina Fritsch, bachelor of business administration, management

Katlynn Mroczenski, master of social

work, advanced direct practice

Andrew Ohland, bachelor of science, environmental studies-policy & values emphasis

Rachel Reckner, bachelor of science, medical imaging (radiologic science)

Mary Soto, bachelor of science, Spanish (language option)

state Supreme Court decision in *Becker v. Dane County* that affirmed local health officers have the power to issue health orders without first obtaining permission from city and county officials.

“I’m not happy with it, period,” he said. “And I’ve been speaking with other supervisors around the county to talk about what we can do from here.”

Defferding told the Board of Health that it’s important that the county isn’t impinging on the public’s right to free assembly and civil liberties.

In his social media post, Defferding said the ordinances were intentionally written to make it challenging for the Health Department to issue a general order such as the Safer at Home order the county issued in May 2020 that put strategies in place to protect residents.

“Yes, indeed, that’s going to make it difficult to issue a general order – that’s the point,” he wrote. “It’s difficult by design. I feel we need better guardrails for our local government, we need better checks and balances, we need public health officers to provide constant justification to the people.”

In advance of the vote, Supervisor Paul Eisen tried to send the first ordinance back to the Board of Health, which failed.

Supervisor Andy Buck, who wore a mask during the discussion, attempted to limit the effectiveness of the second ordinance by proposing an amendment that would require a majority of those present and voting, rather than a two-thirds majority, for a health order to pass the board. That amendment also failed.

The board voted 19-15 in favor of passing both ordinances.

In a statement this week, Gieryn said the Health Department’s goal is to work together with communities to assure conditions where everyone has the opportunity to be healthy.

“We occasionally face threats of diseases like measles, hepatitis A, whooping cough or other outbreaks that require quick action to limit the spread of illness,” he said. “We trust that our County Board has a shared goal of ensuring the health and safety of our communities and residents and, if needed, will prioritize responding in a timely manner per the amended ordinances.”

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# Record-setting Ziebell embarks on senior season



Photo by David Hall

Neenah High School senior and UConn recruit Allie Ziebell recently joined the 2,000-point club for her career and hopes to lead the Rockets to a state tournament berth this season.

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

So, when a legendary coach from one of the most prestigious women's basketball programs in the nation calls, there are a number of ways to handle it.

Neenah's Allie Ziebell let the call go to voicemail.

That's right. Ziebell admits that the first time UConn women's basketball coach Geno Auriemma called her phone to talk to her, she simply didn't answer.

"I didn't have his number saved because I had never talked to him before, so I didn't answer it," Ziebell recalled. "Then he was on the phone with my dad and actually kind of hung up on my dad because I called him back. And I was like, 'Oh my gosh this is Geno Auriemma.' It was like surreal. It literally seemed fake.

"I can say I tried to act cool, but I cried. It was very emotional."

That first phone call, even with the confusion, started Ziebell down a path to joining the program she has been a lifelong fan of.

Although she didn't say yes immediately and did her diligence of checking out some of the other top programs in the country, UConn was too good to pass up. She always wanted to be a Huskie.

"When I was younger, (I wanted to go to UConn) because they won. As I got older, it was the work ethic of the program," Ziebell said. "When I visited, it was the people. They are just great people who

## Senior Standout



I would want to surround myself with. Then also, their work ethic, the way they play, their style, it was just so fitting."

Ziebell's foundation in basketball started at home. As the daughter of a Division III All-American and Hall of Famer at UW Oshkosh, there was likely some genetics passed along from her father, Mark, that have helped.

But Mark Ziebell was also a highly successful coach who knew how to teach the game. And while he imparted that knowledge on the players he coached at St. Mary Catholic, Green Bay Southwest and Fond du Lac, he also had plenty of time to make sure his daughter learned the game as well.

"I've never had a trainer. I've just worked out with my dad and we've done that since I was in like fourth grade and still do it to this day," Ziebell said. "He puts me through drills and gives me feedback. It's great to know he will give me honest feedback and he's not going to lie about anything. It's a great relationship with father and coach. We keep the two things separate pretty well."

Not that every workout happens with-

SEE **Senior Standout** ON PAGE 14



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# Neenah wrestling teams aim to continue success

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah wrestling coach Kyle Klueskens was certainly proud of last year's senior class.

It was a group that ended up being the top academic class he has ever coached with the Rockets as well as producing four state qualifiers. Some programs would suffer seeing a group like that walk off the mat, but that isn't the case for Neenah.

With a pair of returning state placewinners anchoring the lineup and a strong leadership nucleus to build around, Klueskens is ready to unleash this year's version of the Rockets on the rest of the Fox Valley Association.

"Every year is a different year and every year is a different team but I don't think we will miss a beat," Klueskens said. "With our process and how we develop these wrestlers is second to none."

The Rockets will feature a formidable 1-2 punch in the middle of its lineup in sophomore Declan Koch and junior Jacob Herm, who placed third and second, respectively, at the state meet last season. It was Herm's second state runner-up finish.

The duo combined for 81 wins last season and spent the offseason wrestling in the top tournaments around the country.

"Declan and Jacob are going to be our horses, our studs, leading the way on the mat," Klueskens said. "We are excited about a lot of guys but those are definitely going to be our top two. They will be favorites to compete for a state championship."

Herm will join senior Nate Cleveland

and junior Jaden Reay as co-captains for this year's squad.

Klueskens believes all three will be good leaders for the squad and has been impressed by the way the trio has seized the new role, especially Herm.

"He's taking another step forward in his leadership. Him embracing the leadership role and us challenging him to become a better leader, he's turning into a phenomenal one," Klueskens said. "It's helped his wrestling explode to another level. He's wrestling better than he has ever done."

Cleveland, who wrestles at heavy-weight, was also a captain for the Rocket football team and is coming off a 30-win season as a junior, while Reay – in just his second year of wrestling – finished just short of 20 wins.

"(Nate) has a personality that all of the kids feel comfortable with. He's a very hard worker but he also has the right personality to keep things light when we need, too," Klueskens said. "Jaden has an incredible work ethic and he will do anything for any of his teammates. We just have three great captains."

The Rockets have more than that, too.

Seniors Eli Armatti, a sectional qualifier, and Aidan Carey were fixtures in the varsity lineup last season and will be counted on again to be point-getters for the Rockets, while fellow seniors Logan Tessier, Tyler Gillig, Jesse Skelton, Jeremy Wiggs-Schmalz and Jorge Urbina also are expected to be in the Rockets' varsity lineup.

Sophomore Jaxon Ennis returns at the 106-pound class after wrestling on the varsity level last season.

Klueskens said Landen Sheppard is expected to hold down a varsity spot and

will join Koch and Herm in giving the Rockets a strong trio that should wrestle together in the Neenah lineup.

"We will have some younger guys who will emerge and have good seasons, too," Klueskens said.

One thing Neenah will have to adapt to is a new roster of weights that was introduced to high school wrestling.

There will still be 14 classes and the majority of weights do stay the same, but there will be subtle differences in the weight limits for some of the classes.

"I'm not emotional about it one way or another. It doesn't make a difference to us, really," Klueskens said. "We look to control what we can control and that's something out of our control. We just have to focus in on what we are doing day-to-day. We take it one day at a time and make sure we are doing the right things every day to put us in a position of where we want to be at the end of the season."

The Neenah girls team nearly doubled from last year's roster as first-year coach Maddie Ruckschadel heads up the program and its 10 wrestlers.

Leading the group will be a pair of sophomores in Joelle Reay and Kylee Kurszewski, who each competed at the state meet a year ago. Kurszewski finished sixth in her weight class, while Reay posted a pair of wins but fell just short of earning a place.

Ruckschadel believes both girls will be improved this season and that the experience of making the state tournament last year should certainly be a boost for the duo and the program.

"We have high hopes for them to get back to state," Ruckschadel said. "It's super nice for our program to have the new girls

have someone to look up to and know that it is possible. Kylee and Joelle are young, too, so they have an opportunity to lead and grow."

The rest of the roster is a mix of girls coming back from last season, freshmen who have wrestling experience and about a handful of girls who will be new to the sport.

"We have a slew of brand new wrestlers so we are excited to include them into our program and get them up to speed," said Ruckschadel. "Some of them have real potential to win quite a few matches this year even though they are brand new."

Ruckschadel said the bulk of the roster will be between the 120-pound weight class and 132-pound, which means there will be plenty of competition in the practice room for spots.

"It's nice we have practice partners for each other and skill-wise we have girls that match up really nicely which, as a coach it helps tremendously," Ruckschadel said.

Neenah will open the season at the Kimberly Invitational on Saturday and are slated to participate in a handful of tournaments over the course of the season.

Although the Rockets will look to soar in every event they have, there is more to this season than just posting pins and registering pins for this squad.

"I think our goal is to get our returning state qualifiers back into the state tournament and hopefully add a couple more," Ruckschadel said. "But my main goal for our girls is just to gain a sense of our team. It provides us with a real opportunity to make it our team and we can make it what we want. I just want us try to establish ourselves as our own girls team within Neenah wrestling."

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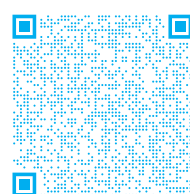
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# Reloaded Rockets ready to hit ice for 2023-24 season

By Dustin Riese  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Over the past decade, the Neenah hockey program has been one of the more consistent programs in the entire state.

Even with what they would call a bit of a down season last year that saw them go 14-12 overall, the Rockets still managed to finish 6-2 in conference play for second place before winning the conference tournament at the end of the season. All those experiences will help this team as they get set to begin another season.

“The Rockets had a slow start to the 22-23 season as we dropped two one goal home games,” head coach Jeff Lindemann said. “That set the tone for us in the beginning of the season as we knew we had a challenging nonconference schedule. Once conference play began, we started to play our best hockey especially toward the end of the season which is exactly what you want.”

That is once again the goal for the Rockets this season as they have the long-term aspirations of making it to state this season.

However, Lindemann and his players take a different approach to the season as they focus on the short-term picture, which helps the long-term picture take care of itself.

“Every team will have a goal to make it to Madison, even teams that have no chance,” Lindemann said. “We like to set our goals to be more in the present and more obtainable. If we reach those goals the rest will take care of itself. We have a goal to be where our feet are and push each other to get better each day: Be Better Today.”

As is the case for a lot of teams this season, the Rockets were a senior-heavy team in terms of their leaders last season and have lost a ton of production from last year’s squad.

Yet, the Rockets still bring back a nice blend of athletes that are multisport athletes at that.

Ben Cary is a senior who played AAA Hockey last season in Madison. He just

committed to Albany to play Division I lacrosse so he should be a nice addition on the offensive side.

Ty Laabs is a junior who is coming off a WEHL season this fall and Mark Sutton is a Team Wisconsin player and should feel a little more comfortable as he enters his sophomore season.

Patrolling the blue line are the Zinda brothers, Calvin (junior) and Cooper (sophomore). Both will be more comfortable entering their second season of high school hockey.

Perhaps the biggest battle on the team heading into the season is what to do in goal as the loss of Caleb Moore will be huge.

Seniors John Horneck, Aaron Jacoby and junior Owen Debbert are all options and all three are ready to prove they deserve the No. 1 spot.

“Once again we will be led by our senior class, as has been the case for several years,” Lindemann said. “These kids are multisport athletes who work hard and know what it takes to lead. I love the energy that they bring to the locker room and

the desire to make this season special for all the guys.”

As has been the case since the Badgerland conference was formed, St. Mary’s Springs is going to be the team to beat once again as they have been the class of that league for several years.

Neenah did get the best of them during the conference tournament last season in a 6-5 overtime thriller and because of that the Rockets are seen as the biggest threat to challenge the Ledgers this season.

While it is nice to get that kind of recognition, Lindemann knows that his team must focus on what they can control if they want to achieve their goals.

“We can’t worry about what other teams do, but instead focus on what we can control,” Lindemann said. “For us to be successful this season, the kids need to practice with a purpose, push each other to get better every day, and buy into our hockey family. If they can do that, the sky’s the limit for this team and I like our chances against almost anyone.”

## Prep sports roundup

### GIRLS BASKETBALL

#### Rockets open FVA slate by beating Lightning

Neenah pulled away in the second half to collect a 65-54 win over Appleton North in the first game of the Fox Valley Association schedule Tuesday.

The game was tied at 29 at halftime but the Rockets outscored the Lightning 36-25 after intermission to earn the win.

Allie Ziebell had another huge night finishing with 37 points – including a 20-of-23 performance at the free-throw line – while grabbing 20 rebounds.

Rowan Klesmit and Ellie Buss each added 10 points in the win for Neenah, which

went 30-of-34 from the free-throw line as a team, while the Lightning were just 5-of-16.

The Rockets improved to 4-0 with the win.

On Saturday, Neenah knocked off Homestead 78-64 in the Kettle Moraine Thanksgiving Classic as Ziebell poured in 39 points.

#### Klesmit added 17 points in the win. Zephyrs’ defense shines in win over Knights

St. Mary Catholic stifled high-scoring Lourdes Academy in a 77-41 win Monday night.

SEE **Prep roundup** ON PAGE 14

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# Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 13

The Zephyrs held the Knights to just 19 points in the first half in building a 14-point lead.

Emily Vogel led three Zephyrs in double figures with 22 points, while Audrey Norville scored 14 and Nolie Anderson finished with 10.

Lauren Ripley and Sienna Anderson each added nine for St. Mary Catholic, which went 13-of-15 from the free-throw line in the game.

## HOCKEY

### Rockets erupt in win over Fox Cities team

Neenah/Menasha/Hortonville co-op

hockey team blistered Fox Cities 9-0 in a Badgerland Conference game on Tuesday.

Ben Carey, Mark Sutton and Evan Hans each tallied two goals in the win, while Cooper Zinda, Cole Rothermol and Cartyr Simonson each had one. Calvin Zinda led the team with three assists.

The Rockets outshot Fox Cities 37-8 with Anthony Jacoby stopping all eight shots he faced to earn the shutout.

Neenah/Menasha/Hortonville is now 3-0 on the season.

On Saturday, the Rockets topped Madison West 4-1 with Carey scoring twice and Drew Drach and Ty Laabs each tallying a single goal.

Simonson, Sutton and Laabs tallied assists.

John Horneck made 36 saves in the game.

## BOYS BASKETBALL

### Zephyrs rally in second half to collect win

Fisher Mackenzie scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half to help fuel a 74-67 come-from-behind win over Bonduel for St. Mary Catholic on Tuesday night.

The Zephyrs trailed 36-28 at halftime but erupted for 46 points in the second half to secure their first win of the season. Mackenzie hit five 3-pointers in the second half in the comeback.

Braeden Brenn also finished with 18 points in the win, while Preston Fields chipped in with 14 points.

St. Mary Catholic opened its season last Saturday with a hard-fought 77-68 loss to The Prairie School.

Noah Czarneski led the Zephyrs with 21

points, including a 15-of-18 performance at the free-throw line. Brenn and Mackenzie added 15 and 14 points, respectively, while each finished with 10 rebounds.

Mason Uhlenbrauck also reached double figures with 12 points for the Zephyrs, who finished an impressive 22-of-32 from the free-throw line. The Prairie School was just 11-of-21 at the charity stripe.

### Neenah falls in season opener to SPASH

The Rockets suffered a loss in their season opener as Stevens Point handed Neenah a 55-47 defeat Tuesday.

Brady Corso finished with 27 points to lead the Rockets, who trailed 27-23 at halftime.

Charlie Wunderlich was the only other player in double figures for the Rockets with 11 points.

# Senior Standout

FROM PAGE 11

out a hitch.

“We butt heads sometimes,” Ziebell said. “We are both very competitive so if I’m not shooting well and he’ll make a comment and we will go back and forth at each other, absolutely. It’s fun.”

All of the work Ziebell has put in over the years helped earn her a special experience this summer when she was part of the U.S. U-19 National Team that won a gold medal at the Women’s World Cup in Spain.

Ziebell was the lone high school player on the team but played a key role in the team’s success. She averaged nearly seven points per game – including a team-high 20-point effort in a win over Argentina – while playing in all seven games of the tournament.

“It was really cool. Hearing the national anthem when you win, is a crazy feeling,” said Ziebell, who had never left the country before the tournament. “Because those girls were already in college and some of the best college players, it showed me some things I could work on. I need to be more physical and keep weightlifting to make sure I can be at that level when I get

to college.”

Making the national team was a big hurdle for Ziebell, who tried out for the U-17 national team the year before but wasn’t selected.

“You have your confidence, but in the back of your head you are a little nervous. But I think nerves make you realize you’re ready to take it on,” Ziebell said. “I had been there before and I had been rejected. I know that feeling. So, hearing my name called, and it was called last, it was really exciting and it was an experience I’ll never forget.”

Between her experiences playing on top-level AAU teams and with USA Women’s Basketball to her future endeavors with UConn, Ziebell may be most comfortable donning the Rocket red with her high school teammates.

Ziebell said her first basketball memories were playing YMCA basketball along with her friends – many of which became teammates with the Neenah program.

“I remember just being super little and like learning how to dribble a basketball,” Ziebell said. “I’m so excited to just finish

out my senior year but very sad to leave my teammates at the end.”

Ziebell will leave Neenah High School as one of the most decorated players in state history.

She is a three-time all-state selection by the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association and a three-time first-team all-Fox Valley Association selection, having earned Player of the Year honors in the league last season. She was also the 2022-23 Gatorade State Player of the Year.

Through the first four games of the season, she has scored a school-record 2,146 points becoming just the 35<sup>th</sup> player in state history to top the 2,000-point mark. Currently, she ranks 18<sup>th</sup> on the all-time scoring list in Wisconsin.

She has made 256 3-pointers in her prep career, while shooting better than 46 percent from behind the arc and is averaging 7.8 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 2.7 steals for her career with the Rockets.

What she does with those numbers over the next couple of months will likely leave marks that will never be repeated. But where she ends up in those categories is not in the forefront of her mind.

“I honestly have not thought of a goal for myself,” Ziebell said. “Really, it’s just winning and having a great senior year be-

cause this is the last time.”

The one achievement that has eluded Ziebell and her teammates is a trip to the WIAA State Tournament. The Rockets have lost in the sectional final – one step away from a trip to the Resch Center – the last two seasons, including a gut-wrenching loss against fellow FVA member Hortonville last March.

“It was such a close group and we played so well together, so falling short was just the worst experience,” Ziebell said of last year’s squad. “That group of girls is probably the closest group we’ve ever had so that loss still sticks with me.”

Ziebell believes this year’s squad can erase those sour memories and she hopes to finish her prep career at the state tournament in Green Bay.

“We definitely want to get there for sure. That’s the biggest goal and it always has been our goal,” Ziebell said. “We always talk about it. I think talking about it before every practice is our way of saying this is why we are here and this is why we are working hard and this is what we are working for.”

“We’ve all had that feeling of falling short for so many years now so I feel like this year is really the year to make a deep run.”



Ziebell

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# Calendar of events

## Friday, Dec. 1

A Very Neenah Christmas, 6 p.m., downtown Neenah  
Celtic Christmas with MPK, 6:30 p.m., Faith Global Methodist Church, 1025 Tullar Road

## Saturday, Dec. 2

Timeless Treasures Christmas Bazaar, 8 a.m., Peace Lutheran Church, 1228 S. Park Ave.  
Kids Holiday Event, 8 a.m., The Globe Coffee, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
The Grinch Family Breakfast, 9 a.m., Washington Park shelter  
Holiday Open House and Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum  
Santa Saturday, 9 a.m., Bergstrom Ford of Neenah, 525 S. Green Bay Road  
Ugly Cupcake Party, 7 p.m., Neenah Public Library

## Sunday, Dec. 3

Neenah-Menasha YMCA Music Recital, 1 p.m., St. Paul Lutheran Church

## Monday, Dec. 4

“Grunt Surgeon” book signing with Dr. F. Mark Moore, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library  
A Journey Back in Time with Neenah Historical Society, 10 a.m., Neenah-Menasha YMCA

## Thursday, Dec. 7

Neenah Boys Basketball Skate Night fundraiser, 5 p.m., The Plaza, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.

## Friday, Dec. 8

The Rocke Brothers, 6:30 p.m., CWORD Fellowship, 1020 Tullar Road  
Footloose Friday, 10:30 a.m., Neenah Public Library

## Saturday, Dec. 9

Ugly Sweater Shuffle, 8 a.m., Loop the Lake Trail  
Christmas Giving Fundraiser, 5:30 p.m., Lucky Dog’s

## Sunday, Dec. 10

Neenah Community Band Concert, 3 p.m., Neenah High School

## Obituaries

### Roger J. Loos

Roger J. Loos, age 82, passed away surrounded by family members on Friday, November 17, 2023. He was born on November 28, 1940 in Oshkosh to Emil Loos and Bernette (Matsche) Loos.

Roger was a very talented musician and was occasionally hired as a background player for famous performers, including Johnny Cash and Frankie Avalon. He was featured as the “World’s Fastest Saxophone Player” on the Knight Records 7” 45 RPM recording of “Yakety Sax Express” with the traveling band “Golden Catalinas” in 1965. He was also a member of several other local Oshkosh bands, including “Corrugated Glass” and “Sundance” for many years.

Roger was a man of all trades, a very good cook, and a huge fan of the outdoors; he enjoyed fishing, traveling to scenic parts of the US and Canada, and,

most recently, took great pleasure in going on daily drives down to the shore of Lake Winnebago in various Fox Valley cities.

Roger was preceded in death by his wife, Betty (Schmude) Loos; his parents; his son, James Roger Loos; his brothers, Thomas Loos, and Gerald Loos.

He is survived by his children, Scott Loos, Randee (Eberhard) Loos-Herzog, Laurie (Michael) Drexler, Jason (JJ) Loos, Jennifer (Christopher) Stelzner, and Nathan (Katarina) Loos; his grandchildren, Nicolas (Mimi) Herzog, Nathaniel Stelzner, Joshua Stelzner; and his great grandchildren, Eleanora Herzog and Bennet Herzog. He is further survived by his siblings, Robert (Sandy) Loos, Howard (Kathleen) Loos, Arthur (Roni) Loos, Christine Schroeder, Jeffrey (Kathy) Loos, Janet (Dennis) Radig; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A private memorial will be held for close friends and family at a later date.



### Richard Hobbs

Richard Hobbs (Dick) unexpectedly passed away on November 11, 2023 surrounded by his family. Dick was born on June 4, 1945 in Oshkosh to Harold Sr. and Rosalie (Monroe) Hobbs. Dick met the love of his life, Billie Van Malsen. Dick and Billie were married on December 21, 1966.

They went on to raise two daughters and six grandchildren.

Dick proudly served in the U. S. Army during the Vietnam War from 1966-1968. He was stationed at Fort Sill, OK where he trained soldiers in artillery combat. In Dick’s younger years he loved to race cars and his love of cars continued throughout his life. He was a classic car enthusiast. Some of his happiest days were spent cruising in whatever car was lucky enough to have him as its owner. The ‘55 Chevy was one of his favorites, but he graduated to the Corvette in his retirement.

He was a hard-worker and had a long

career in the water conditioning business. He retired from Culligan in 2012 and has since enjoyed time with his family. Dick was a loyal and faithful husband and family man who always did the right thing.

Towards the end of his life, he joined the Catholic Church with Billie and never missed a week.

Dick is survived by his loving wife Billie, his two daughters, Jodi (Mike) Blank of Neenah, Nicole (Gary) Meyer, Neenah; a brother Harold Jr. (Judy) Hobbs of Appleton; his grandchildren, Braiden, Ryllin, Liz, Alex, Colton and Nora. He is further survived by sister-in-law Robin (Rob) Thayer, and many other aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins.

A Christian Mass will be celebrated for Dick on Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 12:00 pm in St. Peter’s Parish Most Blessed Sacrament, 435 High St., in Oshkosh with Father Jerry as celebrant. A time of visitation will be held at church prior to the mass starting at 10:00 am until the time of Mass, followed by military honors.





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