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## Neenah's new spending plan unveiled

### Employee pay increases part of budget package

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah Mayor Jane Lang's proposed 2024 budget includes a 3.5% pay increase for city employees and about a 10% increase in health insurance costs.

Nonunion city employees' wages will increase by 1.5% in January and 2% as a cost-of-living adjustment in July.

"The ability of the city to retain our excellent workforce depends, in part, on our ability to provide our employees with appropriate compensation and benefits," Lang wrote in a

letter outlining the proposed budget.

There were three requests for new employees – a help desk support technician for the Information System's department, a police captain and a police investigator. Lang opted to only add the new investigator position and recommended that it begin in July, at an annual cost of \$129,550 for salary and benefits.



Lang

"The number of sworn officers has remained the same over the past 30 years, while the number of calls for service continue to rise," Lang said.

She noted that construction of a training center addition to the Neenah Police Department is nearing completion.

"The new facility will not only serve as a valuable tool for achieving the best results with training for our officers, it will also serve as a valuable tool for recruiting new high-quality officers," Lang said.

Plans to construct a new Neenah-Menasha fire station to replace Station 31 were canceled due to the high cost of new construction. Instead, the existing station will be renovated including replacement of the roof and service doors at an estimated cost of \$245,000, and \$100,000 for a detailed pro-

SEE **Budget plan** ON PAGE 7

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Photo by David Hall

## Across the waters

Wind turbines on the far southeast end of Lake Winnebago can be seen from Kimberly Point on a recent morning in Neenah. The Blue Sky Green Field wind energy center is in the Town of Johnsbury, constructed in 2008 with 88 Vesta turbines producing 145 megawatts of power for We Energies.

## County's ARPA funds for city going to road project

### Spirit Fund designation of \$145,000 approved

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

The Neenah Common Council voted last week to use \$145,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from Winnebago County's Spirit Fund as reimbursement for street resurfacing in a low- to moderate-income neighborhood.

The county created a Spirit Fund for its \$33 million in federal ARPA dollars in

March and voted to give each of the 21 municipalities or towns primarily located within Winnebago County \$145,000.

In July, the county issued new rules requiring each municipality to be reimbursed after spending the money. Then in August a revised agreement provided municipalities with an option for an advance, reimbursement or applying the allocation to an invoice for county work.

As of late October, about half of the municipalities have received their ARPA allocation from the county and all but the city of Oshkosh had identified planned uses for

the money. The Town of Wolf River had identified a project but was still deciding on usage for \$10,000 of the money.

The council unanimously approved applying Neenah's county ARPA funds as reimbursement for street resurfacing of Hunt Avenue, Brookwood Drive and Fairwood Drive, which has already been completed.

Director of finance Vicky Rasmussen said the area had a low PASER pavement condition rating of two on a scale of 1-10. The area also had a census block group composed of 71% of low- to moderate-income households.

"So it would help a neighborhood that had very poor streets and that are low to moderate income," she said.

The total project cost was \$486,851, funded with borrowed dollars and the \$145,000 reimbursement going back into debt service to reduce future borrowing.

Alderman John S kyrms thanked Rasmussen for her work in meeting the criteria to obtain the funds.

"I know it took a lot of effort and it's not easy to work with the county, particularly

SEE **ARPA funds** ON PAGE 15

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### Corrections

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

### About the newspaper

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# Military flags memorial set at Shattuck



An illustration shows the planned flag memorial in Shattuck Park.

Neenah News

Plans are underway to honor military veterans by installing a military service flag memorial in downtown Neenah's Shattuck Park.

Director of parks and recreation Michael Kading said the Veterans Association approached the city about six months ago to inquire about adding a memorial. After exploring possible sites, Shattuck was selected due to its visibility downtown.

Shattuck currently has three flags on display: the American flag, Wisconsin's flag and a POW/MIA flag. A granite monument is situated in front with an inscription reading, "In commemoration of those

who have or will pay the supreme sacrifice to help keep our democracy safe."

Placing the memorial flags in Shattuck would provide a central location to honor veterans. A conceptual rendering of the proposed memorial shows an additional six flags added behind the existing three, and two granite donor recognition monuments. The flags will be lit and not lowered.

The flag memorial and installation are estimated to cost just over \$139,000 and will be installed in partnership with the Veterans Association, the city and the community.

Kading said fundraising will take place in 2024 and he expects installation in 2025.

Shattuck Park hosts a Veterans Day program annually and will conduct this year's ceremonies beginning at 10:30 a.m. Saturday. American Legion Post 33 will lead the ceremonies.

Veterans groups will have a dinner that night hosted by the Stone Toad Bar and Grill in Menasha.

## Downtown hosts Luminary Night/ Cookie Crawl

Downtown Neenah will host its sixth annual Luminary Night from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Dec. 14 when the streets will be lined with a special holiday glow of hundreds of luminary bags.

The downtown district also will be hosting a Cookie Crawl sponsored by J.J. Keller & Associates during this time. Purchasing a passport allows the sampling of eight different holiday cookies at 10 locations.

The cost is \$11 per person and tickets can be purchased at neenah.org. Along with the passport, participants will receive a milk and a bag to carry the cookies. Businesses will remain open until 7:30 p.m.

## Correction

**NOV. 3, PAGE 11:** In a story about the Neenah High School cross country team taking second place at state, runner Elsa Gruber was making her second appearance in the WIAA state competition.

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# Automated teller skimming suspect jailed, charged

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A 28-year-old from Romania was charged with 10 felonies last week for placing card skimming devices on automated teller machines (ATMs) at several area Prospera Credit Union branches.

Micea Caran was arrested Oct. 24 at the Menasha Prospera location in a car with Illinois plates. A 13-year-old boy was a passenger.

According to a copy of the criminal complaint obtained by Neenah News, police were called to the Menasha Prospera branch on Oct. 20 for a report that a credit card skimmer was found on an ATM.

Skimmers are card readers illegally hidden within a targeted card reader that collect data from each card that is swiped. The skimmer was identified after the branch received several complaints from customers who attempted to use the ATM and noticed their cards were difficult to push in and remove.

A Prospera employee reviewed surveillance footage and obtained video of the suspect vehicle and suspects placing the device and tampering with the ATM on several occasions from Oct. 17-19. The employee also notified police that the same suspects may have placed skimmers at Grand Chute and Neenah Prospera locations.

Police recovered a card skimmer from the Neenah Prospera ATM on Oct. 24 that was placed the day before. A camera was found buried in the grass near the driveway and another was concealed in a piece of trim on the ATM machine recording the PIN pad. The two cameras and skimmer were removed and placed into evidence.

Later that same day, a Prospera employee notified police that the two suspects were back at the Menasha location. Police took both suspects into custody. Neither spoke English so officers used Google Translate to speak with them.

A Romanian identification card listed the driver as Caran. It was noted in the report that Caran spoke with police as though he understood English until the officer mentioned the investigation, at which point he stated, "No, no, no, no English."

Caran's fingerprints taken at the Winnebago County Jail came back to Memet Erdal, who has an active warrant through New Jersey and is believed to either be an alias or the real identity of Caran.

The 13-year-old told police he's from Dallas, Texas, and was in Wisconsin to hang out with some girls. He said Caran was an acquaintance that was going to introduce him to girls. District attorney Eric Sparr said that as of Monday there are no

charges filed against the juvenile, but because of his age, he can't provide additional information.

Inside the vehicle, officers found a pair of needle-nose pliers, \$1,630 in cash, four receipts for denied transactions from a Prospera ATM, a credit card reader/encoder and a surveillance camera box that matched the camera model recovered from the Neenah ATM.

Sixteen Visa cards were also found in the car and were determined to have been re-encoded, meaning the information on the front of the card was different than that saved onto the strip. Re-encoding scams involve downloading stolen data onto a card used to withdraw money or make purchases.

Police later determined that about 20 minutes before Caran was arrested he tried to withdraw \$300 from a Menasha man's account but was only successful in withdrawing \$30. Caran was seen withdrawing money from the ATM four more times after withdrawing cash from the man's account.

Caran was charged with improperly possessing a credit card scanning device to transfer information, identity theft, misappropriating ID, two counts of improperly using a credit card scanning device and five counts of credit card forgery. He remains in the Winnebago County Jail on a \$200,000 cash bond.

Prospera Credit Union risk manager James Guard said only a small number of accounts had unauthorized transactions due to the card readers and the individuals affected have been notified.

Fox Communities Credit Union, which has a Neenah branch, announced last week that ATMs at several of its locations were also recently compromised by skimming devices. Fox Communities noted it's still investigating the timeframe but believes the skimmers were placed on the ATMs between Oct. 19-28.

Fox Communities did not identify which branches were affected and it's unclear whether the devices are connected to those found at Prospera locations around the same dates.

## Neenah High debate team gains honors

Neenah News

Neenah High School's debate team has been recognized with several honors since the start of the school year.

Isabella Chandik and Chloe Sieman were among four Wisconsin students and 287 nationwide to receive the National Speech and Debate Association Speaking and Service Award. The honor is given to students who achieve in debate and complete and document at least 100 hours of service during a given school year.

The Neenah High team also received a 100 Club award for accumulating points based on student and coach achievements in competition and service. Schools must accumulate at least 132 points over the course of the year. Each student can earn up to eight points toward the trophy in their high school career. Neenah was one of seven Wisconsin high schools to receive the award.


Team coach Andie Peterson-Longmore received a Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction honor by the National Society of High School Scholars. She is now eligible for the organization's Educator of the Year award.

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# Harassment fines issued in ongoing neighbor dispute

## Feuding Doty residents draw frequent police calls

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A dispute among neighbors on Doty Island that has prompted dozens of police responses since 2021 ended up in Winnebago County Circuit Court on appeal last week.

Whitney Hoeft, who lives on Fourth Street, testified that she has called Neenah police about 50 times to report harassment from her rear neighbor on Fifth Street, Blaythe Uerkwitz.

"It makes me angry because I don't have any privacy in my own home," she said. "I get scared because it's very unnatural, unpredictable behavior."

Gary Priessnitz, who is next door to Uerkwitz, testified he has also experienced harassment, describing Uerkwitz's behavior as "screaming, rude, loud."

"I just want him to leave me alone but he won't; he just keeps harassing us," Priessnitz said.

Judge Bryan Keberlein presided over the case, which involved harassment and disorderly conduct municipal convictions that Uerkwitz was appealing. Uerkwitz represented himself and attorney David Rashid represented the city.

Hoeft testified she has known Uerkwitz for about eight years and they were friends. About three years ago, she said Uerkwitz was interested in a romantic relationship with her and she declined.

"He didn't accept that," she said.

Police calls reviewed by Neenah News indicate Hoeft repeatedly reported Uerkwitz for blowing a foghorn while she was doing yard work, placing a camera on a pole

looking into her yard, shining lights into her home and repeatedly reaching into her yard to pet her dog or give it treats.

Several records note Uerkwitz placed signs in his yard facing Hoeft's to antagonize her. One of the signs included her friend's name and referred to the friend with a derogatory term.

In October 2021, Uerkwitz was issued a municipal citation for disorderly conduct and entered into a deferred prosecution agreement.

In July 2022, Uerkwitz was issued the municipal citations for harassment and disorderly conduct that he was appealing last week. The next month, he was issued a misdemeanor charge for disorderly conduct and a judge granted Hoeft a restraining order.

In July, Uerkwitz was issued a municipal citation for driving his moped on the sidewalk in front of Priessnitz's home.

In September, Uerkwitz was issued five criminal misdemeanor counts of disorderly conduct and five for bail jumping. According to the complaint, Uerkwitz drove past Hoeft on a motorcycle while she was walking her dog and yelled out to her, repeatedly walked and drove past her house and repeatedly placed cameras facing her residence in violation of the restraining order.

Two days after his arrest on the 10 misdemeanors, Uerkwitz filed a petition for a temporary restraining order against Priessnitz that was denied last week.

Uerkwitz testified he was never romantically interested in Hoeft and her restraining order was only granted because he missed the court hearing. He said he didn't know that shining a light or walking in a public right of way constituted harassment and thinks the complaints are "tit for tat" responses to

complaints he's made about Hoeft. Records show Uerkwitz repeatedly reported to police that he was being harassed by Priessnitz.

Uerkwitz said he feels he's being targeted by police. Last year he submitted a citizen complaint alleging officers didn't act in good faith and without malice and didn't do their due diligence.

Neenah community policing coordinator Joe Benoit said Uerkwitz has made several complaints about officers, adding that anyone can make a complaint and some of Uerkwitz's complaints were lodged after police determined the conduct he reported was not a violation.

"Then the officer has to explain that and the caller disagrees with the officer and then calls for a supervisor to make a complaint," he said. "And the supervisor then has to go through the same motions. And then the caller wants to complain against a supervisor."

Benoit confirmed that police have responded to the neighborhood dozens of times but said they respond to every call regardless of whether there is a violation of the law.

"We do respond to that, because we believe it's our duty to make that personal connection with our citizens," he said. "And some might say that people take advantage

of that but nevertheless, we don't lower our standards of service because some people call us frequently."

In ongoing neighbor disputes, Benoit said there is a chance the microaggressions will escalate.

"I would say that statistically, there's a likelihood of that and that's why we advise to get a restraining order and to call us every time so we can establish a pattern," he said.

Rashid told the judge it's abundantly clear Uerkwitz engaged in a code of conduct that harasses and intimidates Hoeft and Priessnitz.

Keberlein agreed, noting that Uerkwitz's conduct serves no legitimate purpose, finding him guilty of both counts and ordering him to pay fines totaling \$500.

Benoit said neighbor disputes can negatively impact residents' quality of life and those who have questions or concerns about their safety are welcome to call and speak with an officer or go to the police department and meet with an officer in the lobby.

"Because, especially as somebody is dealing with an issue that has gone on for months or years in some cases, nobody should be living in an uncomfortable situation or a situation that's permanently frustrating you and if we can help in resolving that we're more than happy to do so," he said.

## Chloride monitoring program seeks volunteers

The Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance is running a chloride monitoring program that is looking for volunteers to monitor small streams, rivers and tributaries.

Free monitoring kits and training is provided with participants getting training and monitoring from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday and noon to 1 p.m. Thursday at the Watershed Alliance office in Appleton.

Online training is an option but materials will either have to be picked up in the office or mailed. Go to [fwwa.org](http://fwwa.org) for sign-up information.

The effort will bring awareness to chloride runoff from road salt and other sources by collecting data for the general public on chloride toxicity in local rivers and streams.

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# Job fair set to focus on UW Oshkosh employees

Neenah News

The Fox Valley Workforce Development Board has initiated a rapid response to recently announced layoffs of 140 staff at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, including a private job fair set for Monday at the Oshkosh Convention Center.

The university announced the staff layoffs Oct. 16, which will impact one of every six employees effective Jan. 20.

A typical rapid response effort by Workforce Development Board, depending on the size of the dislocation and amount of notice provided, includes communication with employees to discuss retraining and job search benefits under the Workforce Opportunity and Investment Act (WIOA), a private job fair, resume writing sessions and other skills-building efforts at the area's job center or satellite location.

All of these services are free and covered by the U.S. Department of Labor's WIOA funds.

Workforce board staff will determine if any are interested in shifting to careers outside of higher education. Skills and interest assessments may be completed, updated resumes created and job search plans built. Some may require additional training at local technical college or other training providers.

The private job fair is set from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Nov. 13 at the Convention Center, 2 N. Main St.

Employers with an interest in meeting with workers need to register at [foxvalleywork.org](http://foxvalleywork.org). Registration for employers is free.

More information is at [foxvalleyjobcenters.com](http://foxvalleyjobcenters.com) or calling 920-997-3272.

## Deer meat donation program promoted

The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) encourages hunters to donate Wisconsin-harvested deer through the DNR's Deer Donation Program. The program helps stock food pantries for the upcoming holiday season and supports residents in need.

Since the program began in 2000, hunters have donated 98,000 deer, totaling more than 3.9 million pounds of venison.

Wisconsin has a network of venison donation partners, including county land and water conservation departments, food pantries, charitable organizations, USDA-Wildlife Services and

participating meat processors, who all help implement and administer the program.

"This is a great opportunity for hunters to showcase their sportsmanship and help individuals in their local communities facing food insecurity," said DNR program administrator Grace Nugent.

Hunters and non-hunters may also support the Deer Donation Program through a monetary donation at any Wisconsin Hunting License sales location or online through their Go Wild account.

Visit [dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov) to learn more about the program.



Photo by Pat Mahoney

## Dodgeball competition

The Rotary Club of Neenah held its fourth dodgeball and pickleball tournaments Saturday at the Community First Champion Center in Greenville. Teams of eight ages 12 and up participated in the competition that supports the Rotary's Strive program and scholarships for middle and high school at-risk students.

## Piano Monster Concert invades UW Oshkosh Music Hall

For the first time since 2018, an Oshkosh stage will be decked out with six pianos and dozens of pianists performing simultaneously in a "Monster Concert" at 7 p.m. Saturday at the UW Oshkosh Arts and Communications Music Hall.

Twenty duets and trios will be performed en masse, showcasing more than 50 piano students and teachers from the area. The program features an array of arrangements for four to six hands per piano, including John William's "Cantina Band" from Star Wars, "You'll Be Back" from Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Hamilton," Jerry Lee Lewis' "Great Balls of Fire" and a special tribute to veterans with "America

the Beautiful" and "Fly With Eagles."

Thousands of musicians from the area have taken part in the 13 previous Monster Concerts since 1990. This is the second performance co-hosted by the Fox Valley Music Teachers and Oshkosh Area Music Teachers Associations, and co-sponsored by UW Oshkosh and Heid Music, who are providing the venue, grand pianos and digital keyboards.

Proceeds will benefit, in part, a scholarship and continuing education fund for local students and teachers.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10, or three for \$25, and may be purchased in advance at Heid Music stores in Oshkosh and Appleton or at the door.



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# J. J. Keller & Associates marks 70 years

Neenah News

J. J. Keller & Associates Inc., a leader in safety and regulatory compliance solutions across North America, is celebrating 70 years in business.

Founded Nov. 1, 1953, by World War II veteran John J. “Jack” Keller, J. J. Keller started as a one-man consulting firm specializing in transportation regulations for motor carriers. The Neenah-based company has since expanded its expertise and solutions to regulatory complexities for a range of industries and serving more than 500,000 companies.

Rustin Keller, the third-generation leader and current president and chief executive, reflected on the company’s humble beginnings.

“My grandfather’s vision was to assist motor carriers in navigating the complex regulations associated with an emerging intrastate trucking industry in 1953,” he said. “His dedication and experience in transportation for Wisconsin paper companies laid the foundation for what J. J. Keller has become today.”

With more than 2,000 associates in the United States, Canada and Mexico, and a Center of Excellence in India, J. J. Keller has become a comprehensive provider of safety and compliance solutions. Its offerings include consulting and training services, managed services, content subscriptions, cloud-based solutions and a range of physical products. These solutions help employers ensure the safety of their employees and mitigate the risk of noncompliance with a multitude of regulatory bodies such as the U.S. Department of Transportation, Department of Labor, EEOC, OSHA and the EPA.

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Photo from J. J. Keller

Jack Keller, founder of J. J. Keller & Associates, is shown in this 1953 photo.

health care, education and industrial organizations use the company’s expertise to create safe work environments and simplify complex government regulations.

Keller noted the advancements made since the company’s inception.

“The wide range of expertise and technology-based solutions we offer today would likely have surpassed even my grandfather’s entrepreneurial imagination,” he said. “However, what I believe he would easily recognize is our commitment to carrying forward his legacy of protecting people and the businesses they run.”

The company’s anniversary coincides with Nov. 1 being Great Place to Work Certification Nation Day, which honors companies nationwide. Great Place to

Work is the global authority on workplace culture and identifying outstanding employee experiences.

“Our associates have ranked J. J. Keller as a Great Place to Work seven times,” Keller said. “It’s an honor bestowed on us by our associates, and it shows our true care for associates – something our founder, Jack Keller, instilled when he put ‘Associates’ in the company name.”

To commemorate the 70-year milestone, J. J. Keller has released a new eBook that provides an overview of the company’s journey, highlighting achievements, milestones and the values that have guided it. To access the book, visit [issuu.com/jjkeller/docs/jjkeller\\_70thanniversary-book](http://issuu.com/jjkeller/docs/jjkeller_70thanniversary-book).

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# Plea date pushed back for ex-pastor sexual assault case

By Jonathan Richie  
NEENAH NEWS

The courtroom was prepared for a plea hearing Oct. 31 in Oshkosh as the first snow of the season flew outside, but due to a paperwork issue the plea for a former youth pastor accused of sexually assaulting a child has been pushed back a month.

Jordan R. Huffman, 52, is facing counts of first-degree child sexual assault and child enticement with sexual contact, and three counts of felony bail jumping. He remains in custody on \$1 million cash bond.

Huffman was convicted of repeated sexual assault of a child in Portage County in October. The former Plover youth pastor was sentenced to 20 years in prison followed by 20 years of extended supervision.

Andrea Winder represents Huffman in

both cases. She attended the hearing via phone call and said Huffman had been transferred from Portage County Jail to Dodge Correctional Institute in Waupun.

Assistant District Attorney Tracy Paider said a writ of habeas corpus was written to the Portage County Jail to get Huffman to the plea hearing but then learned he had been transferred. A writ of habeas corpus is used to allow an inmate to be transferred from a correctional facility or jail to a courthouse for court appearances.

Paider said the district attorney's office will write up a new request to have Huffman in person.

A new plea hearing has been set for Nov. 28. If convicted on both child sexual assault and child enticement, he faces a maximum of 55 years in prison followed

by up to 30 years of extended supervision.

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.

Dispatch used GPS to track the caller's phone. Fox Crossing police officers 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 his 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 stayed in the car and called 911. When Huffman returned to the vehicle, he brought the victim inside the hotel room where he continued assaulting him.

The victim told authorities he pretended his mom was calling and told Huffman he needed to be taken home. 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.

## Budget plan

FROM PAGE 1

professional evaluation of additional needs that will keep the building in good condition.

"As our service area expands, it may become necessary in the near future to consider the possibility of a third station in the city," Lang said. "We remain committed to providing the very best public safety services to our community, and we are steadfast in our support of and pride in both our police and fire departments."

Some of the additional capital projects:

- \$3.15 million for street upgrades including \$654,000 for two portions of Doty Avenue, \$644,000 for Cedar Street, \$500,000 for Quarry Lane, \$308,000 for two portions of Stevens Street, \$250,000 for Bayview Road and \$209,000 for North Street.
- \$1.96 million for Arrowhead Park con-

struction, parking and increasing connectivity to the city.

- \$1.5 million to acquire property downtown for redevelopment.
  - About \$358,000 for six new squad cars.
  - \$740,000 for Jewelers Park Drive enhancements including curb, gutter, storm sewer, overlay, trail and launch parking, sound barrier and landscaping improvements, funded by tax incremental financing.
  - \$300,000 to rebuild the courts at Southview Park.
  - \$251,000 for interior, exterior and pavement repairs at the Tullar Garage.
  - \$250,000 for public safety barriers during special events.
  - \$20,000 to install kayak rental pods, with \$10,000 expected to be covered by grant funding.
- The total proposed budget is \$77.3 million, a 4.7% increase. The operating tax levy will increase by about \$150,000 or 1%, which

is the maximum allowed under state law. The tax levy will drop by 1.24% to \$20.4 million next year.

The assessed tax rate will decrease by just under 25% for property owners, to \$6.57 per \$1,000 of valuation. The reduced rate is attributed to the 31.23% increase in assessed property value due to a revaluation this year.

The 2024 debt service levy will remain the same due to the city's increase to the Transportation Assessment Replacement Fee (TARF) from \$23 to \$40, generating an estimated \$400,000 additional revenue for street and sidewalk reconstruction.

Although the operating levy will increase, the overall levy to taxpayers will drop by about 1% due to the closure of tax incremental financing (TIF) districts 5 and 6 which brought in a combined total of \$44 million of new tax base to the city.

TIF is an economic development tool where some municipalities assign parcels in

need of development into TIDs, collect tax revenue on the base value of the properties within the TID and divert the surplus tax revenue from the city, school district, county and technical college and toward economic development projects.

"The successful closure of TIF districts 5 and 6 highlight the importance of the city's ongoing investment in TIF districts as well as the hard work and dedication of city officials and business leaders, past and present, to foster the growth of Neenah," Lang said.

Lang thanked finance director Vicky Rasmussen and deputy director Andy Kahl for their work in establishing the 2024 budget.

"Our team is strong, dedicated and committed to continuing to provide the very best for the citizens of Neenah, and we remain firm in our convictions to make the best decisions for our entire community," Lang said.

A public hearing is set for Tuesday followed by a council vote on the final 2024 budget.

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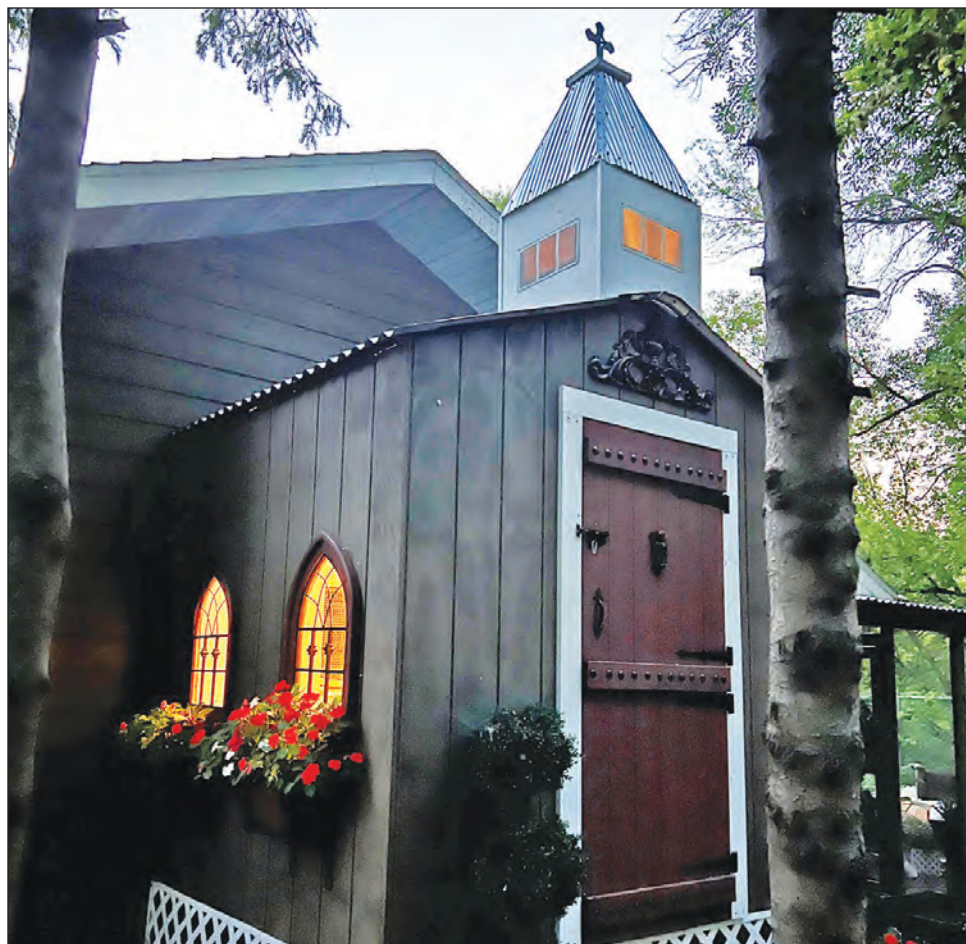


Photo from Jeanne Amstadt

The custom chicken coop at the Amstadt home in Neenah.

## Custom chicken coop becomes family project

Neenah News

Jeanne Amstadt in south Neenah had a chicken coop built by her son-in-law for a Mother's Day gift that evolved into a customized "chicken church" over the summer.

"This is our first go with chickens and we are getting eggs regularly," Amstadt said. "It's been so wonderful for our family. To do it as a family project was so fun."

She said she got some of the decorative pieces from a trip to Italy and her grand-

daughters helped with the painting.

"My daughter is the 'chicken whisperer,'" she said. "They jump up in her lap and on her shoulders when she comes in the coop."

The family bought day-old chicks from Tractor Supply the first week in June and kept them in a small pen in the garage while the big coop and its run was being built.

"We have started getting eggs about two weeks ago from our girls," she said. "All eight have names and most come when they are called."

# Calendar of events

### Saturday, Nov. 11

Veterans Day observance, 10:30 a.m., Shattuck Park  
Speed Puzzling Tournament, 5 p.m., Neenah Public Library

### Wednesday, Nov. 15

Hollywood Master Directors: Howard Hawks and "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,"

1 p.m., Neenah-Menasha YMCA

### Saturday, Nov. 18

Neenah Animal Shelter Pop-up Shop, 8 a.m., Marketplace downtown

### Sunday, Nov. 19

Fresh Christmas Greens Pop-up, 10 a.m., Red Door Mercantile

### Wednesday, Nov. 22

HO Malone with Isiah Driessen, 9 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St., Neenah

### Sunday, Nov. 26

Sunday Concert Series: Christo's Novelty Combo, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library



Neenah Historical Society photo

## Service at the front

Nancy Kimberly was a member of a Red Cross Clubmobile, a mobile service club that provided servicemen with food, entertainment and connection to home on the front lines during World War II. In July 1943, Nancy was assigned to the U.S. Army's 34th Division in North Africa and Italy.



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# Neenah girls head to state after winning sectional title

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah High School will be well represented at the WIAA Division 1 State Swimming & Diving Championships on Saturday.

The Rockets qualified for the state meet in all three relays, while also sending three individuals – Rylie Bauman in the 50-yard freestyle, Emma Bottensek in the 100-yard backstroke and Naomi Cortina in the 100-yard freestyle and 100-yard backstroke.

That contingent will be excited to compete at the Waukesha South Natatorium this weekend and may take a bit of a boost with them after winning the sectional title by one point over Bay Port last Saturday.

Neenah entered the final event – the 400-yard freestyle relay – needing to take at least second place to secure the sectional crown and the foursome of Bottensek, Anna Mulroy, Alliyah Lima and Cortina did just that.

“Our coach came over to us and we were in this little huddle (before the race) and she was like, let me break it down for you,” Bottensek said. “We went up behind the block and there was a lot of tension but as a team we were very connected.”

Bay Port won the race with a time of 3 minutes, 38.1 seconds, with the Rockets finishing a close second more than two seconds ahead of third-place Green Bay Southwest.

“Watching them beat the other team was really exciting,” Bauman said. “We were literally jumping for joy.”

That second-place finish gave the Rockets a total of 314 points for the meet, which edged Bay Port’s total of 313 earning Neenah its first sectional title in a non-COVID season since 2015.

“Before the last relay, we were talking about it with our coaches so we put it all out there. I definitely think that helped push us a little bit,” Cortina said. “It was so exciting. I wasn’t sure if we would have a chance to win it going into the meet.”

Cortina posted the only sectional win



Neenah News

Representing Neenah High School at the WIAA Division 1 state swimming meet Saturday will be (front, from left) Emma Bottensek, Alliyah Lima, Mia Lerner, Breleigh Maurer; (back) Naomi Cortina, Rylie Bauman, Anna Mulroy and Kacie Stamm.

for the Rockets, placing first in the 100-yard freestyle, while collecting a third-place finish in the 100-yard backstroke.

It will be the second straight year Cortina is competing in four events at the state meet and she is looking forward to finishing her high school career on the big stage.

“It’s definitely really nice. The meet is so exciting and I’m glad to be going back in four events,” Cortina said. “(The experience) definitely does help. I remember being a freshman and it was just so overwhelming. Now, it’s different. I’m still nervous and still excited, but it’s not as overwhelming as it once was.”

Both Bottensek and Bauman are returning in the same events they swam at state last year.

Bottensek finished second in the 100-

yard backstroke at sectionals and will be seeded 14<sup>th</sup> in the state field this year. Her sectional time was about 1.5 seconds off the sixth-best qualifying time among the state qualifiers.

“For going to state, I have some goals I want to accomplish so I am a little nervous,” said Bottensek, who is also likely to swim on multiple relays. “I know we have a great team. I’m excited to go with them. We are very connected and I feel like it’s

giving us a step up.”

Bauman qualified again in the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 24.18 seconds, which earned her a third place at sectionals. She will be seeded 12<sup>th</sup> at the state meet.

But in the fastest race of the state meet, where the entire state field is separated by less than two seconds, anything can happen.

“There are a lot of people there and everybody is so close, the times are so similar, that you really have to believe in yourself and really want it to go for it,” Bauman said. “It’s really about applying everything you learned the whole season and really wanting it.”

All three individual qualifiers are expected to be part of Neenah’s relay lineups as well.

The 200-yard medley relay team that finished third at sectionals consisted of Cortina, Bauman, Lima and Kacie Stamm, while the second-place 200-yard freestyle relay foursome was made up of Bottensek, Mulroy, Stamm and Bauman.

The 200-yard freestyle relay team is the highest seed of any relay, ranking eighth entering the state meet.

Other top finishers from the sectional meet for Neenah:

Sydney Hansman, fourth in diving; Hannah Slabbert, sixth in diving; Bottensek, sixth in the 50-yard freestyle; Lima, sixth in the 100-yard backstroke; Mulroy, sixth in the 100-yard butterfly and seventh in the 50-yard freestyle; and Stamm, seventh in the 100-yard backstroke and eighth in the 100-yard freestyle.

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# Zephyrs stifled in Division 4 state title game



Neenah News

St. Mary Catholic's Kieran Barrientos takes on a pair of Shoreland Lutheran defenders during the second half of Saturday's WIAA Division 4 state title match.

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

For just the second time in 23 games, St. Mary Catholic's potent offense was unable to produce a goal.

And it couldn't have happened at a worse time.

Shoreland Lutheran withstood some early attacks and held the Zephyrs to just nine shots overall in collecting a 2-0 win in the Division 4 state title match at Uihlein Soccer Park in Milwaukee on Saturday. St. Mary Catholic, making its third state appearance, returned home with a silver ball trophy after taking second.

"It's an honor to be here but obviously it's not the result we wanted," senior AJ Groppe said. "We put a lot of hard work into this season. I'm really proud of these guys. It was a great run."

Coming off a state semifinal when St. Mary Catholic registered 29 shots and 14 shots on goal in a 1-0 win over Washburn/Bayfield, the Zephyrs had the majority of possession in the early going against the Pacers.

With the talent level up front the Zephyrs have, St. Mary Catholic head coach Elias Efthimiou believed the efforts would result in one of his players finding the back of the net.

"We started out great in the first 10 minutes by pressuring their defense with nonstop attacks which had me thinking we would be the first to score," Efthimiou wrote in an email to the Neenah News.

Braeden Brenn, who scored the lone goal in overtime in the semifinal win, said it wasn't anything specifically Shoreland Lutheran was doing defensively that kept them scoreless.

"It wasn't our night. Everybody has an off night and we didn't play the way we wanted

to play," Brenn said. "(Shoreland Lutheran) played great, all the credit to them."

The game remained scoreless until late in the first half when Shoreland Lutheran scored on a header by Brayden Van De Water.

Zephyr goalkeeper Hunter Schreiber got an arm on the strongly struck header but couldn't keep the shot out of the net with a little less than six minutes to play in the half.

The Pacers added their second goal in the 71<sup>st</sup> minute, and the two-goal deficit was too much for the Zephyrs to overcome in the final eight minutes.

"... Shoreland is a good team that stayed patient throughout the whole game and combined really great passes that led to us conceding two goals," Efthimiou wrote.

Leading scorer Kieran Barrientos led the Zephyrs with five shots in the match, while he and Brenn accounted for all four shots on goal in the game.

Will Lawniczak had the Zephyrs' best chance to score, sending a shot from in front of goal just wide to the right on a cross in the first half.

"We couldn't finish in the final third, which happens to the best of teams," Groppe said. "They happened to get one in and the momentum carried them on. It was a great game just an unfortunate situation in the end."

The Zephyrs finish the season with an impressive 21-2 overall record and led by 12 seniors created a memorable season capped by the magical tournament run.

"I'll never forget these guys. I'll never forget this team, the chemistry, the energy any of it," Brenn said. "It's a once in a

SEE **State soccer** ON PAGE 15

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# Rockets suffer Level 3 playoff loss to Papermakers

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

For the second straight season, Neenah High School's football season ended with a close playoff loss to Kimberly.

The Rockets again took the Papermakers to the final minute of their WIAA Division 1 Level 3 playoff game but couldn't convert a fourth down deep in Kimberly territory late and suffered a 14-7 loss.

"Our kids played hard. You walk away from the game and I mean you are sad that you lost but in the end, our kids did everything we asked of them," Neenah head coach Steve Jung said. "They went into a battle they believed they were going to win and it came down to the last minute again."

Neenah scored its lone touchdown of the game in the second quarter on a six-yard pass from Ashton Van Beek to Grant Dean. The score tied the game at 7 and things stayed even until midway through the fourth quarter when Kimberly took a 14-7 lead.

The Rockets answered with a potential game-tying drive, reaching just outside the Kimberly 10-yard line. But on fourth-and-4,

Van Beek and Dean couldn't connect on a pass for a first down and the Papermakers were able to run out the clock.

"I thought we had a great playcall and we just didn't get it done," Jung said. "We wanted to get the ball to Grant and we just didn't execute the play as well as we could have."



Jung

Dean finished with 113 yards rushing on 31 carries, while also picking up 43 yards on three receptions. Luke Jung led the Neenah receivers with seven catches for 68 yards.

Van Beek, who was playing again for an injured Evan Vanevenhoven, finished 12-of-26 for 140 yards.

"We went that far with a freshman quarterback who did a fabulous job all season for us," Jung said.

Van Beek, along with Dean, Luke Jung and Vanevenhoven will be a strong core of players who are returning for next sea-

son and something the coaches can build around.

"It's a great nucleus coming back," Steve Jung said. "We get a number of our linemen back a number of our linebackers. "We are bringing in a JV group that was undefeated in the FVA. So there is a lot of good to look forward to."

Jung also highlighted the departing senior class for their leadership efforts with the team this season and believes the group left a legacy that other classes can follow.

"We had real good leadership from our seniors. They got along well, they enjoyed practice and great things happen when you do all of those things," Steve Jung said. "The next step is building our athletes in our younger programs. Now we have the weight facilities

to really build good athletes. We've had good athletes in the past obviously, but now we have the ability to have a really strong lifting program from sixth grade up, which is something we haven't had in the past. That's going to help our football program and all sports in the Neenah School District. "

One thing that should also be a benefit to the Rockets is the return of the high-caliber coaching staff.

"I think this year at Neenah we have had our best football staff coaches wise that we have ever had," Steve Jung said. "We did an outstanding job of coaching our guys, technique-wise, scheme-wise and just getting them to buy in and believe in what we are doing. That's the best thing we have going at Neenah right now."

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# St. Mary Catholic's memorable run halted in state semifinals

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

Winning the first set of a volleyball match doesn't guarantee any team of a victory.

But coming up short to open the match, especially in a close set after taking a late lead, can be tough to overcome.

St. Mary Catholic had a chance to grab the opening set against top-seeded and four-time reigning state champion Howards Grove but couldn't finish off the Tigers, who went on to hand the Zephyrs a 25-23, 25-17, 25-19 loss in a WIAA Division 3 State Semifinal last Friday at the Resch Center in Green Bay.

"We really needed to take that first set to give ourselves a chance," St. Mary Catholic head coach Mike Mauritz said. "We were going to have to play a really solid, complete match in order to beat them and once we lost that first set, it put us in a hole."

The two Big East Conference members played a tight first set with neither team lead-

ing by more than three points the entire way, nor did either team string more than three points together the bulk of the time.

It wasn't until Howards Grove rattled off four straight points to take a 20-19 lead, drawing a Zephyr timeout.

Out of the break, an Eliana Brenn kill and an ace from Audrey Norville sparked a run of four points for St. Mary Catholic that pushed them back in front 23-20.

Howards Grove had an answer of their own and scored the next five points to take the set and the lead in the match.

"They had given us some out balls earlier in the set that didn't happen at the end," Mauritz said. "I think for the first time, the moment may have gotten a little too big for what we were used to."

Although the Zephyrs final four points came in a group, much of the set consisted of the two teams exchanging points.

"I think we were fighting back and forth and I think in order to win that set, we needed to get a couple of more points back to back to back instead of just we get a point, they get a point," Norville said. "We needed to go on runs and we didn't have the opportunity to go on runs in the set."

The Zephyrs started the second strong taking a 4-3 lead on a kill and then a block from Ellie Altfillisch, a 6-5 lead on Kate Nackers spike through a Howards Grove block and then tied the set at 10 on a kill from Rhiannon Reichenbacher.

The Tigers then scored 10 of the next 14 points to take control of the set and St. Mary Catholic managed only a Norville kill in the final six points as Howards Grove secured a 2-0 lead.

Howards Grove jumped out to an 8-1 lead to start the third set before Lauren Fischer kept the Zephyrs within striking distance.

The senior, who led the team with 13 kills, had a big spike to end an eight-point run by the Tigers and then after a sideout, blasted a spike through a Tigers' block attempt and followed with a tip that Howards Grove was unable to dig.



Eliana Brenn (9) and Audrey Norville (11) go up for a block against a Howards Grove player during the WIAA Division 3 state semifinal last Friday at the Resch Center.



Senior Lauren Fischer eyes up a serve against Howards Grove last Friday.

"We focused on trying to play point-by-point and go on after mistakes and for the most part we did that," Mauritz said. "We had a couple of times in the third set when we let it get away from us. We knew that Howards Grove was going to give us everything. They are a well-coached team. They play good defense. They serve tough and that's what they did today."

Brenn added seven kills for the Zephyrs, while Norville had five and Reichenbacher chipped in four.

Samantha Weiss and Virlee finished with 16 and 12 assists, respectively, while Brenn and Virlee each notched a team-high two aces.

Olivia Noel and Norville led the team with 16 digs apiece, while Virlee added 14.

Although the Zephyrs fell short of winning the state title, earning the program's

Stella Virlee capped the burst Fischer started with an ace to bring St. Mary Catholic to within 9-6.

"I feel like the team just started to drift apart because it's hard when you keep losing the point. I just reminded the team, enjoy it," Fischer said. "We kept rushing the game and we just needed to slow it down a little bit, just get a sideout. We were focused on winning the game right away and we just went a little too fast for our team."

After Howards Grove extended the lead back to seven points Fischer tallied another couple of kills to get the Zephyrs back within five, while back-to-back kills from Norville and Brenn later trimmed the deficit to 14-10.

The Tigers maintained the cushion throughout the rest of the set – the Zephyrs never got closer than three points – and scored the final three points of the set to end St. Mary Catholic's season.

SEE **State volleyball** ON PAGE 15

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# State volleyball

FROM PAGE 14

first trip to the Resch Center is something this group worked hard for and will definitely cherish.

"This is the hardest working team I've played with and we really deserved it," Norville said. "We fought every single game to get to the Resch and just being here is an experience that everyone should have. I'm glad we could bring our team here this year."

Added Fischer: "It was a great feeling (making it to state). It was definitely deserved. Our team pushed ourselves and it was a great feeling to come here today and play a solid volleyball game."

Now that the Zephyrs have made their first trip to the state tournament, Mauritz believes more could follow.

"I think it sets an attainable goal for the girls who will be returning and for our younger players," Mauritz said. "It takes a lot of work and it takes talent and it takes really good leadership on the team, but it does a lot for our program going forward."

# State soccer

FROM PAGE 12

lifetime thing."

Added Groppe: "I'll never forget this team. They have a special place in my heart."

The top-seeded Zephyrs advanced to the title game with a dominant performance against fourth-seeded Washburn/Bayfield, even though St. Mary Catholic needed overtime to notch the win.

St. Mary Catholic had a 29-3 advantage in shots in the game and held Washburn/Bayfield to just one shot in the second half and two overtime periods combined.

Brenn scored on a rebound with about four minutes left in the second overtime period for the game-winner.

"The biggest takeaway from this soccer season is the growth and development of the players. It was gratifying to see players improve their skills, learn from their mistakes and become better teammates. It was also rewarding to see players develop a passion for the game and a sense of accomplishment," Efthimiou wrote. "... this year was a lot of fun and a rewarding experience. It was gratifying to see



Neenah News

AJ Groppe controls the ball during the second half against Shoreland Lutheran on Saturday.

my players develop their skills and reach their full potential. It was also exciting to win games and compete at a high level."

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# ARPA funds

FROM PAGE 1

when it's something like this, so thank you for your effort to go find this money to help us out," he said.

The Town of Neenah used its county ARPA dollars as an advance to install a restroom in Keating Park, while the Village of Fox Crossing was reimbursed for the purchase of a vacuum leaf truck.

Aside from the county ARPA dollars, the city of Neenah was also directly allocated about \$5.5 million in federal funds. The money must be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

Neenah used \$1.7 million in 2022, which included \$1.3 million transferred to the general fund for public safety costs, \$175,000 for the Kimberly Point pedestrian path and parking lot, \$100,000 for Shattuck Park, \$50,000 for installing fiber in Arrowhead Park, \$25,000 for the North Park Avenue sidewalk, and \$17,400 for a culture study and logo work.

The 2023 budget included utilizing \$2.15 million in ARPA dollars, including \$1.38 million transferred to the general fund for

public safety costs, \$225,000 transferred to the general fund for one-time inflation costs, \$97,570 for a behavioral health officer and \$25,000 for grant-writing resources.

Next year, the city is planning on using \$62,500 to partially fund the behavioral health officer position, \$1.3 million transfer to the general fund for public safety costs and \$700,000 for design and construction of the Arrowhead waterfront district.

The city's estimated ARPA balance remaining at the end of next year will be \$91,424.

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# Kid Scoop

THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE  
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## World Kindness Day!

November 13 is World Kindness Day! Join people around the world on this day and commit random acts of kindness!

### The Lion and the Mouse

This famous Aesop fable tells of the importance of kindness.

**Late one night in the jungle...**

**Gotcha!**

Please don't eat me, sir!

And why not?

If you'll be so kind as to set me free, I'll pay you back by helping you some day!

**YOU? Help ME? HA! HA! HA! Haaaa-ha HAAha!**

**LATER**

**HELP! HELP! Someone PLEASE help me!**

It's you! Oh my gosh! Hunters tied me up! They'll be back any minute!

Don't you worry! I'll chew through those ropes in no time!

Thanks, little buddy!

### Celebrate World Kindness Day!

There are many simple ways to celebrate World Kindness Day. Read the list below. Choose one thing you could do. Draw a picture or write a sentence about the action you pick.

- Be generous with your smile!
- Give 10 hugs in one day!
- Start a conversation with a new student or someone who looks lonely.
- Smile at people who look sad.
- Write a nice note to someone having a bad day.

Standards Link: Social Studies: Students understand the importance of individual action and character.

### Kindness Acrostic

Find a word or phrase in the newspaper that begins with each letter in the word **KINDNESS**. Use these to create an acrostic poem.

**K** \_\_\_\_\_

**I** \_\_\_\_\_

**N** \_\_\_\_\_

**D** \_\_\_\_\_

**N** \_\_\_\_\_

**E** \_\_\_\_\_

**S** \_\_\_\_\_

**S** \_\_\_\_\_

Standards Link: Writing applications: Write in a variety of genres.

- Discuss these questions:**
1. What unexpected acts of kindness did the lion and the mouse each do?
  2. How did acts of kindness change both their lives?

Standards Link: Civics: Know character traits that contribute to the health of American democracy.

### Kid Scoop Puzzler

#### Missing Vowels

The vowels are missing from this famous quote about kindness. Can you replace them all?

A = ☺ E = ☆ I = 🌸 O = ❤ U = ☾

“H \_ m \_ n k \_ ndn \_ ss h \_ s n \_ v \_ r w \_ k \_ n \_ d  
 th \_ st \_ m \_ n \_ r \_ s \_ ft \_ n \_ d th \_ f \_ b \_ r \_ f  
 fr \_ p \_ pl \_ . A n \_ t \_ n \_ d \_ s n \_ th \_ v \_  
 t \_ b \_ cr \_ l \_ t \_ b \_ t \_ gh .”

—Franklin D. Roosevelt  
 32nd President of the United States

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

### Double Double Word Search

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

KINDNESS  
 COMMIT  
 RANDOM  
 PLANET  
 LONELY  
 AESOP  
 ACROSTIC  
 QUOTE  
 ROPES  
 STUDENT  
 JUNGLE  
 POEM  
 HUGS  
 ACTS  
 WORD

R T C I T S O R C A  
 N S S T C A P D W M  
 S S O E T O U Q O H  
 E E M P S Q M D R U  
 L N P E L E N M D G  
 G D A O O A Y K I S  
 N N G P R I N D O T  
 U I Q T L O N E L Y  
 J K A T N E D U T S

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

### Random Rocks of Kindness

Read the news story below. Fill in the missing words on each blank line using the words in the word box.

In 2018, Tiffany Lester of Regina, Saskatchewan in Canada wanted to do something kind for \_\_\_\_\_ in her community. She and some friends started painting rocks and \_\_\_\_\_ them around the community.

People in the community \_\_\_\_\_ going outdoors to \_\_\_\_\_ for the rocks. Some started painting more rocks and hiding those. When people find a rock, they are asked to post the \_\_\_\_\_ on social media.

What do they do with the rocks? Most of them \_\_\_\_\_ them again, to keep the fun going.

Children are \_\_\_\_\_ off their digital devices and spending more time \_\_\_\_\_ trying to find the rocks.

Gather some friends and paint and hide kindness rocks. That would be an act of kindness for your community!

- |          |         |
|----------|---------|
| OUTDOORS | HUNT    |
| PEOPLE   | ENJOYED |
| HID      | TURNING |
| LOCATION | HIDE    |

You can visit the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation at [randomactsofkindness.org](http://randomactsofkindness.org)

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**Write On!**

### World Kindness Day

List three ways you will celebrate World Kindness Day.

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- Local newspapers keep readers up-to-date on their own communities.
- Local newspapers benefit nearby businesses.
- Local newspapers can strengthen communities.
- Local newspapers can benefit children.

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