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Primary voters narrow local candidates list

Neenah News

Two candidates for a District 1 seat on the Neenah Common Council were selected in Tuesday's primary among three who were seeking to advance to the April 2 election, while six candidates for three open Board of Education seats were selected from among eight hopefuls.

Mark Ellis and Kristen Sandvick emerged from the primary as the two candidates that will be on the ballot for John Skyrms' Common Council seat after he announced he was not seeking re-election after one term. Ellis received 284 votes

SEE **Primary election** ON PAGE 12

Board votes to close Hoover school

Elementary enrollments shifting within district

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

In a split vote, the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education voted Tuesday to close Hoover Elementary School as part of its long-term facilities plan that includes redrawing boundaries to deal with shifts in enrollment.

Five of the nine board members voted to close the school, with Tara Brzezinski, Lindsay Clark, Michelle Swardenski and David Williams voting to keep it open.

The closure follows public opposition and concern expressed at several meetings and more than an hour of emotional pleas from parents, students and school staff to keep Hoover open at the meeting this week.

Built in 1953, Hoover serves students in 4K through fifth grade. Closing the school is expected to result in annual savings of about \$45,000 in operating costs and between \$470,000 and \$650,000 in staffing. Beginning in the 2024-25 school year Hoover students will transfer primarily to Horace Mann, with some being placed at Coolidge and Tullar.

Students entering fourth grade next

school year will be able to remain in the school they previously attended through the boundary exemption process. Staff members at Hoover will be relocated within the district and within their current employment classification.

The boundary revisions will impact students currently attending Lakeview, Horace Mann, Coolidge, Tullar and Hoover. The plan approved Tuesday included two changes from previous versions discussed.

The neighborhood bordered by Tullar Road to the east, Breezewood Avenue to

SEE **Hoover school** ON PAGE 11

New fire chief welcomed

Tesch succeeds Kloehn in Neenah-Menasha area

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue's new chief Travis Tesch never intended to be a firefighter.

Tesch was working at a factory after graduating from high school when an older co-worker teased him about what he was going to do to give back to the community.

"So I thought, well, I'll turn the tables on you a little bit and I went and joined my local volunteer fire department where I lived," he said.

Thirty years later, Tesch has experienced a robust career that recently landed him back in the Fox Valley overseeing four stations under the Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue (NMFR) purview, succeeding Kevin Kloehn, who retired last month.

Tesch is from Valders. Together with wife, Dawn, the couple have two daughters, 19 and 14, and a 13-year-old son.

He has a paramedic technical diploma, an associate degree in fire protection, a bachelor's degree in fire emergency management administration from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and a master's degree in administration from the University of South Dakota.

Tesch was most recently chief of the Watertown Fire Department and previously spent about 23 years with the Kaukauna Fire Department working his way up the ranks as firefighter, driver, lieutenant and assistant chief. He was working for Kaukauna when the cities of Neenah and Menasha consolidated their fire departments in 2003.

"So I'm sitting over in Kaukauna thinking, that's pretty neat," he said. "They're



Neenah News

Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue's new Fire Chief Travis Tesch is shown in the downtown Neenah fire station last week.

progressive, they're forward thinking, they're on behalf of both communities. They're looking at a new approach and a way to solve things. So I have been admir-

ing how things were done here for quite a while."

Tesch said things were good in Watertown but when he saw a listing last year for the open position as the NMFR chief, he couldn't shake the feeling that it may be his only opportunity to apply, so he threw his hat in the ring.

Tesch was hired for the position and took over last month. He said his predecessor set him up for success and also left some big shoes to fill.

Under Kloehn's leadership NMFR recently achieved the highest fire-protection rating nationally, joining nine other departments in Wisconsin and about 500 departments nationwide that have received the ISO Class 1 designation.

ISO stands for Insurance Services Office, the agency that reviews the fire prevention and suppression capabilities of communities and rates them from 1 to 10, with Class 1 the highest level.

"That ISO 1 is not something that just happens, or it's not a mistake, or you don't achieve it by accident; there's a lot of work that goes into it," Tesch said. "And it can't just be the work of two or three or five people at the top. It's really got to be everybody from the ground up on that kind of stuff."

NMFR's Neenah locations include Station 32 at 125 E. Columbian Ave., which is also the headquarters, and Station 31 at 1080 Breezewood Lane. Menasha's stations include Station 35 at 430 First St. and Station 36 at 1911 Manitowoc Road.

Tesch said after coming from a more rural area he's impressed with the amount of resources the fire department has.

"So walking into here - the first fire call I'm on - it's nice to see three fire engines and a ladder truck show up instead of just

SEE **New fire chief** ON PAGE 11



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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.

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Special event safety barriers sought for city

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The Neenah Common Council was expected to vote this week to purchase barriers to keep residents safe during parades and other large events.

Neenah police and several city departments have been working for years to bring public safety barriers to the city after the November 2021 incident where Darrell Brooks Jr. drove around safety barricades and into the Waukesha Christmas Parade crowd, killing five adults and an 8-year-old child and injuring dozens.

Assistant Police Chief Jeff Bernice wrote in a memo that other incidents closer to home in the past five years include an intoxicated driver who joined the Neenah High School homecoming parade on Wisconsin Avenue, a wrong-way driver who drove into the Labor Day parade on Wisconsin Avenue, a person who attempted to drive into the Labor Day parade from Church Street but was stopped, and an intoxicated driver who hit a city vehicle parked as a barrier during a streetball event.

“Securing the perimeter of these activities is a major component of a safety plan and the responsibility of our juris-

diction,” Bernice wrote. “This task is the primary focus of law enforcement that utilizes other key players to support the mission.”

The city has already been implementing some safety strategies during events such as positioning city-owned vehicles along strategic avenues of approach. This week police requested city approval for about \$246,000 to purchase 28 mobile barriers, two trailers and other accessories.

Included with the request was a letter from Waukesha Police Chief Daniel Thompson advocating for Neenah to implement vehicle barriers for special events and noting their use in Waukesha.

“You could visibly see the confidence by the citizens in feeling safer and more relaxed due to the presence of the barriers,” Thompson wrote.

Neenah’s barriers will be mobile and can be disassembled by a small team without the use of heavy machinery. The barriers will create a secure vehicle

perimeter with ingress and egress points for emergency response units and authorized vehicles.

“It is not about if a situation will occur here in the city of Neenah, but when,” Bernice wrote. “Only with proper mitigation and collaboration among organizations can we create a truly safe environment for our communities.”

The funds for the barriers will come from the 2024 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and are separate from \$300,000 the city of Neenah requested from Winnebago County’s ARPA funds for the barriers. That request, along with \$185,000 for Menasha to purchase the barriers, still needs to be approved by the full county board.

Bernice said if the city receives ARPA funds for the barriers, that money will supplement CIP funds to purchase additional barriers to bring the total count to 62 and build a storage facility for them.

If Menasha also obtains the barriers, Bernice said the two communities will collaborate to provide a safe environment during events.

“This is a necessity for the protection of our citizens,” he said.



Bernice

Correction

FEB. 16, PAGE 3: A story on Common Council candidates participating in a League of Women Voters forum held Feb. 8 didn’t include Jeffrey Linski as a candidate for the District 3 seat. Both Linski and William Pollnow Jr. will be on the ballot for the April 2 election.

Board on Aging looking for county advocates

Neenah News

The state’s Board on Aging and Long-Term Care, using a grant it received last year to develop a Volunteer Advocate Program for assisted living communities, is recruiting volunteers in Winnebago County to advocate for residents of those facilities.

The board has noted an increase in assisted living communities in Winnebago County as it seeks volunteer advocates to contribute two hours a week to support residents and families with concerns they may have regarding their rights in those communities.

The state agency supports residents in both skilled nursing homes and assisted living communities through the Regional Ombudsman Program and Volunteer Ombudsman Program. The Medigap Insurance Help Line is also part of the State Health Insurance and Assistance Program. Licensed insurance professionals help with insurance concerns at no cost.

Those interested in becoming a volunteer advocate can call 800-815-0015 or contact Kim Verstegen at 920-366-4201 kim.verstegen@wisconsin.gov. The board’s website is longtermcare.wi.gov.

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Neenah Historical Society photo

Epic sleet storm

On Feb. 22, 1922, Neenah was struck by a disastrous sleet storm. Power and communication lines were damaged so badly that it was almost a week before normal operations were restored.

Edward Jones

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New group helps young people navigate foster care

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

After being one of the about 7,000 children and teens in foster care annually in Wisconsin, Laura Kuehl knows what it's like to experience domestic violence, homelessness, substance use, mental health challenges and teen pregnancy.

"My experience in foster care was horrific," she said. "I was abused in foster care."

Kuehl, now 36, recently spoke with Neenah News to share her story of resilience that led to the creation of a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide resources to foster youth so they don't experience the same challenges she did.

Kuehl entered the child welfare system when she was 11. Without enough homes for the number of youth in need, she was bounced around to various foster placements both within and outside of the county. The more angry and traumatized she became, the more places she was sent to.

An estimated 90% of youth with five or more foster placements will enter the justice system, according to the Juvenile Law Center.

Kuehl landed at Milwaukee Academy, a residential facility for troubled girls, then at a militant-style group home with constant corrections from staff and rules that included no eye contact and no physical contact.

"It just is this constant reminder that your brain is broken," she said. "You get so sick of it that you want to fix it."

When foster youth in Wisconsin who aren't adopted turn 18, they age out of the



Submitted photo

Laura Kuehl has formed HeadsUp with a mission to provide resources to foster youth.

system and face many challenges. Only about half will graduate from high school, about 20% will become homeless, and an estimated 70% of former foster women will be pregnant before they turn 21.

Kuehl became part of those statistics. "I was pregnant at 17; I experienced homelessness before I hit 18," she said. "I dabbled with substances, I had the mental health complexities of depression and anxiety, I dropped out of high school. You know, I did all of the things that you would expect someone who has experienced trauma to do."

It took years for Kuehl to come to understand that what she experienced in foster care was abuse. Somehow she came out on the other side and became a new

statistic as one of the less than 3% of former foster youth that graduate from college. She married a wonderful man and gave birth to two more children. Her kids are now 18, 10 and 8.

With life going well, the family decided to give fostering a try. That opened Kuehl's eyes to the reality that her experience in the system was not unique.

"It is just systematically broken," she said. "No matter how good the home is, or how good the social worker is, it is just going to continue to harm families and children until there's a system overhaul."

Although one woman can't single-handedly overhaul the child welfare system, Kuehl knew she wanted to use her experience to help others who may be in a similar position. Over the course of about three years she began examining the gap in support for foster youth with a question in mind: "How can we best bring the community to support these young people who are falling through the cracks?"

That's how HeadsUp was born. The organization serves foster youth ages 16-24 in Winnebago, Outagamie and Calumet counties. It officially became a nonprofit in October with Kuehl as founder and board president.

Youth who have been bounced around to different homes are living in a trauma state, Kuehl explained, and may not understand life skills that seem basic to those who grew up in a traditional household.

"Foster care is one of the most traumatic situations to be in because you never know where tomorrow is or what to-

morrow looks like," she said. "You don't have time or energy to be thinking about, 'How do I wash dishes?' or 'How do I do my laundry?' It's just not there."

Kuehl said compared to their peers of the same age, foster youth often navigate a complex web of hardships with little to no support.

"We're not setting them up for success," she said. "We're watching them fail."

HeadsUp will have a satellite office in the Boys & Girls Club of Oshkosh Hyde Family Community Center beginning March 1 and has plans for an office in Outagamie County. Current and former foster youth are referred to HeadsUp for resource navigation, personalized advocacy and mentorship.

For youth currently in the foster care system or who've aged out, Kuehl wants them to know that support is available and that they can call HeadsUp for help.

"If there's a particular barrier that one youth is facing, we're able to just kind of see what we can find to remove," she said. "And if we're not able to, then we have some barrier relief funding that we use to just take care of that ourselves."

She shared that what sets HeadsUp apart is its special foundation, led by individuals who've personally experienced foster care and juvenile justice, providing an authentic understanding of the hurdles that youth face.

"The organization stands as a testament to the power of lived experiences and the potential for positive transformation when individuals come together with a common purpose," she said.

More information is at headsupfc.org.

Calendar of events

Friday, Feb. 23

Short Pay Riders, Tom Thiel Trio and Eric Krueger & The Sheesh, 9 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

Saturday, Feb. 24

Stronger Together benefit for Dana Swanson, 1 p.m., Old 41 Saloon, 293 S. Green Bay Road.

Monday, Feb. 26

Motivational speaker Terrence Talley, 5 p.m., Pickard Auditorium

Saturday, March 2

Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

Thursday, March 7

A German Bohemian Immigration, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Friday, March 8

Joe Guerra, 6:30 p.m., Faith Global Methodist Church, 1025 Tullar Road

Jake Deringer Project with Modern Joey, 9 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

Saturday, March 9

Jim Hart Scholarship Fund Concert, 7 p.m., The Ballroom at the Reserve, 116 S. Commercial St.

Monday, March 11

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

Wednesday, March 13

Katie Reed from Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance: Phosphorus in Our Waterways, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library



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Local woman among those hit with catheter scam

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

A local woman was recently the target of a nationwide catheter billing scam and she wants others to be aware so they take steps to detect fraud.

The Neenah woman, who is the widowed spouse of a veteran, asked not to be named. She received a statement in the mail Feb. 9 that showed billing to her Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) in the amount of \$8,200.

"I always get things in the mail for medicines and things like that and it always looks like that so I didn't think much of it," she said.

Medical reimbursement claims are often in a greater amount than the final payout. The woman's bill showed that CHAMPVA did not cover the claim, but her other health insurance paid the company \$5,485; about 67% of the requested amount.

As she looked at the statement, she couldn't figure out how she accrued the charge, which appeared to be for four separate orders of urinary catheters billed at \$2,050 each. The charges came each month, nearly to the date, from January through April 2023. She received the statement more than a year after the charges began being billed.

The woman called CHAMPVA and asked what the charges were for. The representative told the woman that she was in the hospital three times in the past year, which she said isn't true. The representative said she couldn't say what the equipment was for.

The woman later visited the local Vet-

erans Services office where an officer did an internet search of the company that billed her and informed her the charges are likely fraudulent.

The billing appears to be part of a nationwide scam where fraudsters bill private insurance or Medicare for catheters or other medical supplies that weren't requested, used or received, and insurance pays out.

The nonprofit health care organization National Association of Accountable Care Organizations (NAACOS) and the Institute for Accountable Care released a report this month finding that Medicare payments for catheters in the U.S. increased from \$153 million in 2021 to \$2.1 billion in 2023.

About 40,000 Medicare patients nationwide were billed for catheters in 2021 and that number skyrocketed to more than 450,000 last year. Wisconsin is one of 14 states the report identifies as seeing more than a 1,000% increase in Medicare catheter payments from 2022-2023.

The report attributes the increase to suspected fraud and notes that nearly all the billing was due to seven durable medical equipment suppliers in New York, Texas, Florida, Connecticut and Kentucky that began operating in 2022.

It is unclear how the fraudsters obtain personal information for submitting claims, which typically require a Social Security number and policy number. Some scammers will call members pretending to be from Medicare or private insurance to obtain personal information.

It's also possible the information was

obtained in a data breach such as a 2022 incident outlined on the Department of Health and Human Services website where personal information including the member ID number and Social Security number of 12,358 Wisconsin Medicaid members was compromised.

The company that billed the Neenah woman for catheters is Konaniah Medical Equipment & Supplies of Grand Prairie, Texas. Neenah News called Konaniah but the number was disconnected.

In August, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) flagged Konaniah over consumer complaints alleging it falsely charged insurance or Medicare for medical supplies. Twenty-six BBB complaints were lodged against the company over the past nine months, with the majority alleging fraudulent charges for urinary catheters and diabetic meters.

The ACO report does identify a Texas company as one of those responsible for the bulk of the Medicare catheter charges, but that company is billing patients under the name Pretty in Pink Mastectomy Boutique in El Paso. The business' phone number has been disconnected.

A legitimate Pretty in Pink Boutique in Tennessee not affiliated with the insurance billing received so many angry calls from people who were a victim of the scam that it updated its website with

information on how to report Medicare fraud.

A spokesperson for NAACOS said that fraudulent billing affects the viability of Medicare and impacts the financial stability of doctors, hospitals and other health care providers.

Earlier this month, the Washington Post reported that three officials confirmed a federal investigation into the allegedly fraudulent billing.

To detect fraud, BBB suggests residents check their insurance Summary Notices and Explanations of Benefits for services, products, or equipment that insurance paid for that wasn't requested or received.

The National Council on Aging suggests on its website to never provide a Medicare card, Medicare Number, Social Security card, or Social Security number to anyone but a doctor, pharmacy, or people who work with Medicare to assist beneficiaries.

Residents who suspect fraud should report it to the Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General online or at 1-800-HHS-TIPS and to the Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

The Neenah woman targeted also shared advice: "Be more aware of what your bills are."

Clothes Closet tops 10,000 served mark

Neenah News

Community Clothes Closet is now serving more than 10,000 active clients for the first time, an unprecedented 61% increase over last year. Each month in 2022, the agency saw an escalating increase in new clients.

"We provided nearly 430,000 articles of clothing to families in need across the region. It was incredible to see so many people coming to us to shop and, thankfully, we have been able to keep pace so far," said executive director Lisa Jones. "Our sup-

porters and volunteers are working hard to meet the growing needs in the future, but it's a very concerning trend."

People who demonstrate financial need are referred to Community Clothes Closet from more than 70 area social service agencies. Clients can shop twice a month for a year and everything is free.

Community Clothes Closet has been serving northeast Wisconsin since 1980 and received recognition at the 2023 Wisconsin Innovation Awards for its Traveling Closet program.

Former city attorney facing child porn charges

Neenah News

Outagamie County human resources director and former Neenah city attorney Adam Westbrook was arrested last Friday on charges of possession of child pornography and sexual exploitation of a child.

Westbrook, 34, was booked into the Sauk County Jail on Feb. 16 after Neenah police and the state Department of Justice were among the agencies that executed a search warrant at his Neenah home and arrested him.

According to the criminal complaint, Westbrook recorded four videos of a pre-pubescent naked male child engaging in sexually explicit conduct in a hotel in Lake Delton last month and sent them to Ra-

cine County sheriff's deputy Preston Kite.

The videos were discovered by the Kenosha County Sheriff's Office during an investigation into Kite, who is accused of exposing himself in a public restroom while on duty Feb. 3 to a person who reported it to police.

Kite is facing charges of possession of child porn, lewd and lascivious behavior, disorderly conduct and five counts of sexual exploitation of a child.

Westbrook was employed by the city of Neenah for about four years as assistant



Westbrook

and deputy city attorney and selected as city attorney in 2021. He resigned in 2022 and took a position with an Oshkosh non-profit for about seven months, then with the city of Sheboygan as human resources director, which he resigned from after nine months. Most recently he was hired in September as Outagamie County's human resources director.

Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson said in a statement that Westbrook resigned the day after his arrest and is no longer associated with the county.

"We will continue to cooperate with authorities and do all we can to assist in the investigation," he said.

Westbrook was also employed in a part-

time paid volunteer position as a director and choreographer for the Menasha School District and as an assistant director for the Kaukauna School District. After his arrest, both school districts issued respective statements to parents that Westbrook would be terminated.

Westbrook was initially charged with four counts of possession of child pornography and four counts of sexual exploitation of a child. Those charges were dismissed after a federal charge of distribution of child pornography was filed Wednesday. Documents say Westbrook will be transferred into the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service.

Supervisors to vote on restricting public library book access

Neenah News

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors is expected to vote at its Tuesday evening meeting on a proposal to ban minors from accessing controversial books in the county's libraries.

The resolution, introduced by District 32 Supervisor Shanah Zastera and District 67 Supervisor George Bureau, would require libraries to create a secure adult-only section and a minor section. Youth would be required to show "proper authorization" to check out materials not specifically in the minor section of the library.

Under the Neenah Public Library policy, parents or guardians have the right to decide what material is appropriate for their children. For children under age 16, the policy notes the library will restrict a child's ability to check out materials if specifically asked to do so by a parent or legal guardian.

The Winnefox Library System, which

includes 30 public libraries from five counties and in which the Neenah Library holds membership, links its policy to an American Library Association (ALA) webpage, noting the organization opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials and facilities based on the age of library users.

The resolution being considered Tuesday specifically mentions the book "Gender Queer" as an example of a book that would be required to be kept in the newly created secure adult only section. The memoir by Maia Kobabe includes narrative and sexually graphic illustrations.

In 2020, the book was given an award by ALA as "books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults ages 12 through 18." It has repeatedly made the top of ALA's annual list of most challenged books.

The resolution that supervisors are considering would affect all taxpayer-funded

libraries in Winnebago County and any library that doesn't comply within six months by preventing minors from accessing materials considered "obscene, sexually explicit or graphic" would lose all funding from the county.

An additional resolution on the agenda

submitted by Zastera and Bureau would prevent libraries in the county from using any funds for or in association with the ALA. Similar legislation has been introduced by conservative lawmakers in several states recently, claiming the organization is exposing children to pornography.

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Chamber survey finds employer optimism

Neenah News

Most employers in the region expect 2024 profits and gross sales to be ahead of 2023 while saying employment should remain the same, according to the Fox Cities Chamber's 2024 Economic Outlook Survey.

The survey is conducted every January to provide insights and create dialogue in the community. Questions take up profits, sales, employment, challenges and doing business in the Fox Cities.

Most employers surveyed view the Fox Cities favorably as a place to live, work and do business, while their biggest challenge

remains talent retention and attraction while not as significant as it has been over past years.

About 26% of those surveyed said they planned a capital expansion this year while 61% were not planning on an expansion. About half expect the Fox Cities economy to stay the same in 2024 while 41% were expecting economic growth.

When asked about the possibility of a recession 27% believed the nation is currently in one; 27.8% said not at all, while the remainder expect it to happen at various times in the next six to 12 or more months.

Middle school teacher receives Chamber award

Neenah Middle School science teacher Chris Jones received an Excellence in Education Shining Star Award from the Fox Cities Chamber.



Jones

Jones, in his 29th year of teaching, was founder of the middle school Velocity program, providing a project-based approach to learning. He also started the Neenah fish-

ing program that has been successful at the state level and active with events in the community. Jones was the district's Middle School Teacher of the Year in 2013.

The awards honor Fox Cities educators who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to supporting students in and outside of the classroom. Jones and the other recipients will be recognized March 21 at Butte des Morts Country Club. One of the 10 honorees will be selected as Fox Cities Educator of the Year.

Business news roundup

The Federal Aviation Administration announced last week that **Appleton International Airport** will receive \$3,420,000 to fund part of its concourse expansion project. The airport broke ground in 2023 on a \$66 million, 47,000 square-foot expansion of the main concourse slated for phased completion starting in late 2025. The grant will partially fund the construction of passenger boarding bridges, a solar/sustainability project, and additional mechanical equipment. The airport broke its own travel records in 2023 with total passenger arrivals and departures of 967,687, representing an increase of 14.27% over 2022. This made ATW the fastest growing airport in the state according to TSA numbers.

Borgman Capital has announced the sale of its portfolio company **Aerial Work Platforms Inc. (AWP)**, an equipment rental company with locations in Neenah, Sussex, Janesville and Kenosha, to Herc Rentals. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. Founded in 1979, AWP specializes in the rental, service and sale of aerial lift equipment including scissor lifts, boom lifts, telehandlers and forklifts. Borgman Capital acquired AWP in December 2020. Founded in 1965, Herc Rentals is one of the leading equipment rental suppliers in North America with 2023 total revenues of about \$3.3 billion and serves customers through about 400 locations with about 7,200 employees in North America.

Venture Muscular Therapy LLC held an open house earlier this month to welcome the public to its new massage therapy business that opened in late November

at 307 S. Commercial St. in Suite 103 of the Old Post Office in Neenah. Samantha Rehberg is a massage therapist and co-owner of the business with her husband, Jacob. They can be contacted at venturemusculartherapy@gmail.com or 920-931-4231.

Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel in Neenah was ranked No. 4 among the state's best resort hotels by U.S. News & World Report. The annual rankings highlight more than 37,000 hotels across more than 400 travel destinations. U.S. News said the rankings are based on methodology that includes each hotel's star rating, the aggregate opinion of published travel experts and overall customer satisfaction expressed in guest reviews on TripAdvisor.

Goodwill North Central Wisconsin recently elected new members to its volunteer board of directors. Members elected to serve four-year terms include Paul Belschner, president and chief executive of Base Cos.; Laurie Butz, president and chief executive of Capital Credit Union; Mike Lutz, retiree; and Jake Williquette, senior vice president of Graystone Consulting. Outgoing board members were Gary Lichtenberg and Gregg Curry.

ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah has achieved accreditation from Surgical Review Corporation as a Center of Excellence in Robotic Surgery. This accreditation recognizes ThedaCare's high standard of delivery of quality patient care and safety. ThedaCare offers robotic surgery at Neenah, Appleton, Berlin, Shawano and Waupaca hospitals.

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Master Garden event welcomes spring

By Rob Zimmer
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort is the place to be March 16 when the Outagamie County Master Garden Association brings its annual garden celebration to the Neenah conference center.

Each year in March, Outagamie County Master Gardeners host their annual spring garden conference, a full day of garden speakers and presentations, as well as vendors of garden art, plants and crafts.

This year, a change in venue brings the extravaganza to Neenah. The conference begins at 8 a.m. and runs until 3:45 p.m.

For the full day, garden conference attendees will enjoy a variety of garden-themed presentations.

Benjamin Futa will present two programs. First up, Principles of Garden Design with Perennials, a presentation designed to empower gardeners with the tools they need to create year-round beauty with reliable perennials.

Next, in his program Embracing an Alternative Lawn, Futa will share ideas and concepts for reducing turf space and filling it with a variety of plants that are better for our environment and landscape, as well as pollinators, birds and other wildlife.

Eamonn Lenaghan follows with a helpful and informational program on Pruning Trees and Shrubs. Often one of the most intimidating of garden chores this



program, geared toward homeowners, will give great tips for pruning trees and shrubs at home.

Invasive Plant Impacts and Control will be explored by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources invasive plant specialist Mackenzie Manicki. Invasive plants are everywhere you turn these days, including roadways, natural areas and gardens. Manicki will cover Wisconsin's invasive

species rule as it relates to gardening and provide valuable information.

Between programs and during lunch break, conference attendees will be able to shop and purchase items from garden and nature-themed vendors. Visitors will find garden art, live plants, garden books, repurposed garden items, chimes, trinkets, statuary and much more.

To register, visit www.ocmga.net.

Local UW Oshkosh graduates

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh 59th midyear commencement Dec. 16 recognized the accomplishments of students from its three campuses. About 700 earned bachelor's, associate, master's and doctoral degrees, including these students from Neenah:

Marcus Anschutz, Master of Business Administration

Kayla Ashley, Bachelor of Music Education, Music

Sydney Benny, Bachelor of Science, Human Services Leadership

Darik Buss, Bachelor of Business Administration, Marketing

Henry Hildebrand, Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting and Finance

Unemployment insurance process updated by state

The state Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is launching a project to upgrade the Unemployment Insurance employer portal while working on new tools to calculate benefits for claimants.

"The new employer portal will offer significant efficiencies and streamline processes for employers," said DWD Secretary Amy Pechacek. "Greater efficiency for employers will also speed processing times for claimants, reflecting our priority to improve service for all DWD customers."

Employers and others interested in learning more about the development of the employer portal project and other UI system upgrades can visit the UI Modernization webpage on dwd.wisconsin.gov and sign up for notifications.

DWD began working on modernizing its UI system in 2021 through a contract with Madison-based Flexion Inc. The UI modernization system development and infrastructure work is estimated to be completed by December 2026.

nance

Taylor Ironside, Associate of Science, Associate of Arts and Science

Natalie Kapp, Bachelor of Applied Science, Leadership and Organizational Studies

Erica Kirinovic, Master of Business Administration, Business Administration

Paige Larson, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Nursing

Abigail Lavery, Bachelor of Science, English and Sociology

Michael Lee, Associate of Science, Associate of Arts and Science

Tyler Lewis, Bachelor of Science, Microbiology

Kjersta Lind, Bachelor of Science, Psychology

Sunshine Lo, Bachelor of Science, Psychology

Emma McCarry, Bachelor of Science, History

Landon Nytes, Bachelor of Business Administration, Marketing

Joshua Peel, Master of Science, Mathematics Education

amics Education

Timothy Sommer, Bachelor of Science, Environmental Engineering Technology

Sarah Susor, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Lauren Welter, Bachelor of Arts, Interactive Web Management

At the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Amanda Argall from Neenah earned a Bachelor of Science, Exercise and Sport Science Major

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SENIORS	Kristian Masuga
Korbyn Akstulewicz	Connor McNulty
Cullen Josiah Arboleda	Jack Meixl
Elijah Armatti	Petra Mirembe
Jacob Arneson	Mack Moore-Nokes
Amelia Bart	Lizzet Muros
Artion Bekteshi	Jennifer Murphy
Gerardo Benitez Varible	Evan Olson
Kyra Berry	Khally Olson
Owen Blenker	Tanner Olson
Matthew Boardman	Adaerya Paulson
Benjamin Broeders	McKinna Peters
Adam Buckholz	Noah Porsche
Vincent Cardoza	Alayna Sauer
Benjamin Carey	Arianna Sheridan
Jeremiah Cowling	Jesse Skelton
Tristan Croy	Ryder Spang
Alysen Dordel	Paige Stielow
Ava Drach	Megan Stoveken
Carter Eccles	Aubrey Strong
Adrian Fifield	Nigel Thao
Alexander Fifield	Jorge Urbina
Avery Fischer	Zakary Vanlerberghe
Jackson Glaeser	Samuel Volkman
Dorothea Grambihler	Brendan Wallenfang
Ava Gramer	Landen White
Wade Harrmann	Owen Young
Phillip Heu	Samantha Zehner
Isaac Jacque	
Justin Janssen	
Kyle Joneson	
Alex Karlin	
Logan Kelbert	
Leia Kersten	
Tristan Khang	
Taylor Larsen	
Mia Lassiter	
Braden Leibold	
Aidan Leon	
Madelyn Lewis	
Brayden Licht	
Katelyn Lietz	
Riley Lind	
Adam Lorrig	
Emma Mantel	

JUNIORS
Ian Altan
Valeria Alvarado
Evelyn Bleier
Savannah Blocksom
Braydon Bosshart
Jack Brown
Nolan Bruce
James Carpenter
Carter Catlin
Ivan Cendejas
Keely Chang
Jenna Clark
Allison Corrente
Maxim de Montigny
Owen Debbert

Neenah High School

Neenah High School has announced first-semester "B" honor rolls (3.0-3.499 grade point average).

Raziel Dixon	Braeden Ross	Lincoln Derks	Mason Peitersen
Benjamin Donaldson	Desirae Sattler	Corban Ducommun	Marcos Perez-Gonzalez
Carter Downs	Zayne Schmitt	Owain Elliott	Annabelle Perry
Joseph Drawenek	Andrew Schumacher	Caroline Ellis	Hudson Peters
Eliza Egonut	Natalie Smith	Nicholas Elter	James Pfeifle
Orion Erck	Emily Snider	Aydan Flenz	Lorelai Piepiorka
Ashlyn Erickson	Keely Sosnovske	Simon Galvin	Cole Rothermel
Anna Fanelli	Emily Stadler	Jaaziel Garza	Jack Runnerstrom
Cole Fenske	Jaxon Strauch	Jesse Gostas	Cayden Ryan
Hannah Forbes	Bennett Stuckel	Dane Granditzke	Karter Schmalz
Eliza Fritz	Helen Suprise	Jacob Hang	Zachary Schneider
Jarith Haecker	Drake Swokowski	Collin Hasenfus	Aidan Schumacher
Isadora Hagenow	Quinton Taylor	Rain Hensel	Angelina Star
Matthew Hang	Nickolas Teska	Romulus Her	Suriya Thao
James Holubek	Skyler Van Buren	Collin Herrick	Lazam Useini
Taylor Kappell	Madalyn Vandenberg	Kaylee Hoelzel	Hailey Van Wie
Dalaena Khang	Emmalee Verbrick	Kayleigh Hoelzel	Malachi Vang
Marley Koepfel	Elizabeth Waite	Luke Johnson	Eleazar Vargas
Rebecca Konkle	Jack Weinholzer	Annalise Jones	Elias Vargas
Caitlyn Kufahl		Brook Konrad	Jaden Vondracek
Jack Landreman	SOPHOMORES	Anthem Kotze	Andreas Walgenbach
Jack Lee	Makenna Akstulewicz	Isabella Krull	Kal El Wallenfang
Finn Lettau	Ella Alexander	Roman Lange	Audrey Wehner
Landin Lukasavage	Connor Amsler	Brady Lawatsch	August Weinholzer
Spencer Malliet	Hailey Arens	Josther Lugo Palermo	Mikayla Westbrook
Isabelle Martin	Riley Bartizal	Sophia Ly	Kaden Weyenberg
Kaegan McIntosh	Cole Bauer	Haylie Lynch	Audrey Wilgreen
Alison Medina	Gideon Benner	James Maguire	Kara Yang
Ella Meunier	Ronak Bhattacharjee	ShuaCua Yang	ShuaNha Yang
Sidney Montanye	Braelyn Boss	Kyleigh Mathe	Manning Zehner
Luke Moran	Isabelle Bugge	Haley Miller	
Jack Morrissey	Caden Buhrandt	Hannah Miller	FRESHMEN
Nadiyah Mssika	Kaitlyn Burt	Dylan Missall	Stephanie Alfaro
Victoria Ochs	Isaiah Castro	Charles Moss	Martin Babbitts-Guevara
Derric Odom	Mia Chapman	Sawyer Newman	Martin Babbitts-Guevara
Kathryn Rasmussen	Sarai Christensen	Ella Nigl	Juda Barajas Perez
Easton Rice	Brendan Dallmann	Kaden O'Brien	Brock Barbieri

Aleeya Barnes	Logan McNamara
Samantha Barnes	Evan Mees
Xavier Bezares	Gabriella Motto
Bailey Blocksom	Cameron Nichols
Elliot Bluemke	Chase Nitz
Levi Boivin	D'Angelo Pena
Jamie Boylan	Owen Pire
Brenton Bruder	Lilly Plungy
James Buchanan	Joseph Polley
Saphira Bunnell	Dane Pues
David Carrillo Trueba	Davison Rhodes
Kamryn Christensen	Lydia Rich
Brylee Clark	Jackson Rindt
I'munIQUE Crawford	Kayla Rodriguez
Levi Davids	Isabella Sack
Alissa Ebel-Anklam	Paityn Schaffer
Arianna Ferguson	Averie Schneider
Madison Ferguson	Payten Schneider
Talon Flurette	Cartyr Simonson
Dylan Foat	Lexus Skenandore
Harrison Gerdin	Jada Somerhalder
Peyton Gorham	Jaden Spang
Jackson Graham	Cecilia Spurrier
Dillon Groelle	William Stadler
Lydia Grosskopf	Brody Staffeld
Alexandra Guden	Reznor Stuckrath
Adler Gutbrod	Tyler Talayumptewa
Ethan Hellingreen	Gavin Trudeau
Chi Ho	Kiley Turner
Jaida James	Elias Valero
August Jelinski	Jaslyne Vang
Jacob Jungwirth	Ernesto Vargas
Owen Kieler	Maggie Wankey
Hailee Kissinger	Tyler Wied
Obadiah Kopesky	Jayden Woodard
Colton Kregger	Spencer Wozniak
Levi Kroes	Kayuri Xiong
Brode LaBarge	Yingva Xiong
Carter Langlais	Layna Yost
Meryk Larson	
Ledger Lewis	
Parker Licht	
Jayden Lo	
Katelyn Lucas	
Grant McNamara	

SENIORS	Honors
Highest honors (GPA 4.0)	Mackenzie Barmash-Turner
Ian Albino-Gonzalez	Nathan Bekkers
Sienna Anderson	Aidan Birling
Nicholas DeBaal	Charles Cedergren
Lauren Fischer	Paige Danen
Gwyneth Rabitoy	Noah Decker
Highest honors	Jonah DeWitt
Elena Altfillisch	Grace Dominowski
Kassadi Calmes	William Frink
Alex Campbell	Harrison Higgins
Addison Dinka	Autumn Kegley
Julia Drobot	William Lawniczak
Daniel DuVernay	Isidro Muniz
Haley Gustafson	Colin Nigl
Evelyn McKenna	Nathaniel Pable
Kate Mislinski	Nevaeh Saringer
Ray Pingel	Hunter Schreiber
Rhiannon Reichenbacher	Johnathon Schultz
Benjamin Schoeni	George Staner
High honors	Garrett Weninger
Arianna Baker	
Grant Bergstrom	
Braeden Brenn	
Alexander Groppel	
Theodore Higgins	
Mackenzie Jaeckels	
Norah Lee	
Olivia Noel	
Audrey Norville	
Isaiah Plutz	
Ashton Post	
Noah Valentine	
Alexander Walsh	

JUNIORS
Highest honors (GPA 4.0)
Giovanni Albino-Gonzalez
Ava Rankin
Emily Vogel
Highest honors
Nicholas Anderson
Claire Benz
Grant Brazzale
Eliana Brenn
Alice Cole
Jakob Duquaine
Amelia Herzog

St. Mary Catholic High School

St. Mary Catholic High School announced its first-semester honor roll. Highest honors were awarded for a grade point average of 3.75-4.0; high honors for a GPA of 3.5-3.74; honors for a GPA of 3.0-3.49.

Elijah Kutney	Kieran Barrientos	Mia Pable	Bethany Ruppert
John Osland	Harrison Bergstrom	Breeilyn Pauly	Margo Scanlan
Alex Rice	Jeremiah Berken	Highest honors	Kaylee Sommerfeld
Ana Sophia Roub	Jack Clark	Zachary Beyer	Audrey Weber
Katharine Schoeni	Gracie Decker	Madeleine Breen	David Young
Zachary Trudeau	Preston Fields	Anna DeWitt	Honors
Stella Virlee	Gabriel Groom	Isaiah Hennessy	Alex Berzowski
Brityn Voss	Maria Marti	Ava Hoger	Wyatt Birling
Audrey Wanless	Rylee McClone	Maria Johnson	Sean Brennan
High honors	Geneva Miller	McKenna Lau	Bowen Cheng
Wesley Auth	Myles Norville	Adel Schneider	Andrew Ferguson
Gabrielle Callan	Lauren Ripley	Samantha Weiss	Jacob Hall
Carson Emenecker	Jack Vosters	Madeline Weninger	Wyatt Kletschka
Samuel Finch		High honors	Jesus Leon-Vera
Daniel Harness		Norah Boehm	Garrett Londre
Sara Labanicova		Samantha Danen	Kaden Mielke
Emily Vogel		Maddox Dwyer	Redvers Muggleton
Highest honors		Ethan Auer	Carter Nicholson
Nicholas Anderson		Erin Blaney	Mia O'Toole
Kate Nackers		Isabella Dupont	John Pirillo
Sean Ortscheid		Isabella Dupont	Elliot Reichenbacher
Dawson Radosevich		Ana Emenecker	Brennan Rollo
Nathaniel Seiske		Ethan Gustafson	Thomas Siems
Aneta Sucha		Vivian Koski	Brady Detterman
Honors		Mary McCurdy	
Jaylyn Akey		Olivia Nagel	

Mason Uhlenbrauck	Jacob Ernsting
Mason Wagner	Halle Janssen
Anne Walsh	Ainslie Liddy
	Grace Londre
FRESHMEN	Dominic Meyer
Highest honors (GPA 4.0)	Molly Murphy
Brandon DeBaal	Esther Pingel
Claire Higgins	Gavin Post
Alexander Klinkhammer	Jacob Post
Cadence Kohel	Moorea Steckling
Piper Neubauer	Miles Treep
Aiden Tines	Carlos Verhoff
Highest honors	Honors
Nadia Alexander	Aaron Bekkers
Kieran Bergstrom	Jacob Brigham
Nicholas Campbell	Thomas Couchene
Autumn Crowe	Blayke Daczyk
Cora Epping	Brayan De Arriba Hidalgo
Luke Fairweather	Rebekah Decker
Mina Jackson	Johnpaul Foord
Elizabeth Mccauley	Abigail Fuhrmann
Abigail McClone	Zachary Gaab
Luci Nackers	Marissa Hahn
Dominic Osgood	Caruso Hasz
Alec Peirick	London Kleinschmit
Ellie Pickering	Max Kubicki
Taleeya Smith	Mariana Lopez Lopez
Dominic Todd	Marieliz Medina-Reyes
Tarver Trinkner	Lucy Norville
Kiersten Wautlet	Gibson Rause
High honors	Elizabeth Seichter
Isabelle Callan	Amelia Virlee
Henry Cedergren	Maxwell Vosters
Emily De Young	
Brady Detterman	

A Strong Community Starts in the Classroom

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation and Neenah Joint School District recognize and celebrate the students who made the Fall 2023 Honor Roll.

Congratulations on this achievement!

Learn how your generosity can impact our future leaders!




OshkoshAreaCF.org | Neenah.k12.wi.us

Beginning a journey into craft beer? Here's a guide

Unsure what four basic ingredients are needed to make beer? Don't know the difference between a lager and an ale? Intimidated by the huge beer selection in grocery store aisles?

Don't get stressed. You can easily begin to enjoy the beverage that "made Milwaukee famous" (used for years as an advertising tagline by Schlitz).

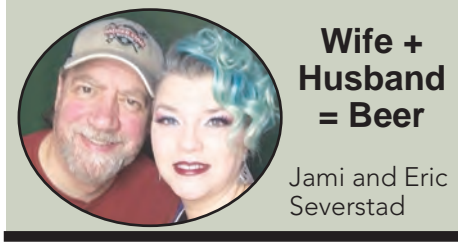
Yes, milk may be Wisconsin's official state beverage, but we all know about the rich brewing history of our state. Even if you have rarely sipped suds during dinner, at a tailgate, or within a classic Wisconsin tavern, we'll get you started on your craft beer journey today.

First thing to know: Beer drinkers are friendly folks, and they love to share stories and insights (the new release at Lion's Tail, the tap list at Broken Tree Pizza, the latest sale at Cellars Wine and Spirits). People you'll meet at these places, both working there and spending there, are knowledgeable and can help select something right for you, so just ask!

Second, it's okay to feel overwhelmed by the incredible number of beers available. The past two decades were an explosion in the brewing industry, and many breweries package their beers, which end up on retail shelves. Only in the past year or two has there been a readjustment in the marketplace with other alcoholic drinks surpassing beer in sales and some breweries closing (RIP Barrel 41 Brewing, Neenahites still miss you).

In other countries, especially throughout Europe, beer is respected and revered more than it is in America. Go to Belgium or Germany, for instance, and experience not just artisan brewing but witness how simply serving beer is an art form.

For over a century, large U.S. breweries marketed beer as cheap swill to be consumed in mass by young males at parties. The craft beer movement has begun to swing that perception back — quality over quantity, pairing beer with fine food,



men AND women appreciating beer together — but overcoming stereotypes takes time.

That brings us to beer-centric events, mostly festivals and tastings. For "beer geeks," these are heavenly because of the variety available and how breweries often save special releases just for these events. As cooperative as breweries are (more on collaboration in a minute), they still want to show off their best in front of their industry peers. Many fests include awards for various styles, too, so the atmosphere can feel quite competitive.

Beware, however. Some beer fests are cleverly marketed promotions for select distributors. That is, many beers are being poured, but organizers don't showcase actual breweries (and invite the brewers themselves to attend). These are often called "distributor fests," and they may be worth the admission price for some, but experienced beer drinkers typically want more for their time and money.

Also, if you're new to fests, please pace yourself. Some events offer unlimited sampling with the entry price, which can easily lead to unintended overconsumption. You're a kid in a candy store, and you want to try everything. We get it, but be selective and don't drink every sample. Make sure to eat a hearty meal before going, and drink plenty of water during.

Back to breweries collaborating and brewing beer together. You'll no doubt see beer labels with two brewery logos/names on them. These "collabs" are ways for small breweries to not only cross-market to people who don't know them, but it's just simply fun for most professionals.

They learn about techniques, ingredients, and processes from each other.

You'll also regularly see local breweries inviting other brewers into their locations for an evening tasting and perhaps a Q&A with patrons. It's wonderful to see multiple taps switched over to another brewery, if even for a few hours. Overall, craft beer isn't a cut-throat competitive landscape; it's a cooperative community.

Speaking of trying multiple beer styles, one way to do that is with "flights," which are smaller pours (usually about 5 ounces) of multiple beers. This allows you to taste many beers without feeling the staggering effects of multiple pints. This can quickly help you determine how much you like hops (India pale ales, or IPAs, can be bitter), or malty beers (brown ales and porters are somewhat sweet), or sours (such as wild ales, gooses and lambics that can be lip-puckering).

This is the right time to talk about beer styles. While traditional beers have flavor profiles all their own, some mimic other beverages. Do you like a classic Wisconsin old fashioned? Some breweries produce beer based on those flavors. Central Waters Brewing brews a red ale, adds cherries and some bitters, and then ages it in brandy, bourbon and orange Curaçao barrels to make "Call Me Old Fashioned." Many mixed drinks have beer companions, from margaritas to negronis to Moscow mules to White Russians.

Aging beer in barrels that once held spirits is hugely popular in craft beer, especially bourbon, gin, tequila and rum barrels. This also applies to wine barrels; some beers can taste a lot like wine when brewers age beer in previously used wine casks.

If wine or spirits isn't your thing, what about coffee? A brewer carefully adding coffee to a beer instantly changes its taste and complexity, which can result in a wonderful mix of flavors. How about pumpkin? There are beers (usually released in September/October) that taste like liquid pumpkin pie, if that's your jam.

Are you getting the feeling that innovation is common among craft brewers? It's an ongoing obsession for some.

Take the style of a hazy IPA. This fruity, smooth, and slightly hoppy brew (also called a New England IPA) didn't even exist until this century when The Alchemist Brewery in Vermont released "Heady Topper" in 2003. Today, "hazies" are everywhere, accounting for 7% of total craft beer sales by volume (just 1.5% in 2018), according to the Brewers Association.



Fox Valley Beer Enthusiasts

Connecting with local beer drinkers on social media helps spread news about craft beer events, beer releases, brewery happenings and gatherings.

While this style might be a good jumping-on point for new beer drinkers, where should you buy your beer? Your answer may depend on how much you want to learn as you decide on your purchase. Visiting a local brewery can be a perfect casual stop, and asking questions about beer and brewing is expected. Plus, supporting a local small business just feels right.

Some retailers specialize in craft beer, and most are happy to guide you, while larger retailers (grocery stores) usually don't have available and knowledgeable staff ready to assist. Restaurants and taverns employ folks dedicated to selecting what's on tap, so they may be chatty when it comes to your beer journey, or they could even offer a free taste or two to get you started.

Nothing beats these face-to-face discussions, but some online resources can be great places to explore beer. There are beer review sites (RateBeer), apps that track your consumption and ratings (Untappd), communities that focus on beer's social aspect (Brewvver), and local social media options (Fox Valley Beer Enthusiasts on Facebook, for instance). Of course, websites can feature industry insights (Craft Beer & Brewing) and get quite geeky (The Beer Connoisseur).

The bottom line: Beer drinking should be fun, and most of the time it is! It doesn't have to be an expensive new hobby, either, although it could add up quickly. Set a budget, plan to hit some local options, and enjoy the journey.

Oh, those four ingredients required to make beer? Barley malt, yeast, hops and water. The difference between a lager and an ale? That'll take more space than we have today!

Special beer release: In honor of Menasha's 150th-anniversary celebration on March 5, Bare Bones Brewery is releasing Gold Label Beer, which was originally brewed 1908-1920 by Walter Bros. Brewing Co. Look for this American lager on tap in select Menasha bars and in cans at retail locations. Cheers!

What beer-related topic should we cover in W+H=B? Email us: wife.husband.beer@gmail.com.

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Hoover school

FROM PAGE 1

the south and AppleBlossom Drive to the west will be included in the Tullar school boundary. In the previous recommendation, students in the neighborhood were to be shifted to Coolidge.

The neighborhood bordered by Commercial Street to the west, Peckham Avenue to the north/northeast and Crescent Avenue to the south will be included in the Coolidge school boundary. Previously, students in the neighborhood were to be shifted to Horace Mann.

The plan is expected to reduce Lakeview enrollment, increase enrollment at Horace Mann to a four-section school, meaning four classes for each grade level, and increase enrollment at Coolidge.

Clayton, Spring Road and Taft elementary school boundaries will not be changed.

Assistant district administrator for leadership and engagement Chad Buboltz noted in a memo that the district intends to remain in possession of the Hoover building. Possible uses include space for all-day 4K or a half-day 3K program, or additional programming for special education or behavioral support as needs arise.

“Given the history of school closures and reopenings, it may be necessary at a later date to operate Hoover Elementary School once again as enrollment shifts or programming needs arise,” Buboltz wrote.

Closing Hoover and redrawing elementary boundaries is the first phase of a larger long-term facilities plan that has been in the works since 2021.

New fire chief

FROM PAGE 1

one unit or two units and waiting longer for more resources to get there,” he said.

While most people are aware that firefighters put out fires and rescue occupants of burning buildings, they may not be aware that when a resident dials 911 due to a medical emergency, there’s a good chance firefighters will get there before an ambulance.

“We respond, we carry medical equipment on our engines, some of our people are trained in EMT basic level and some are first responder level, and they’ll usually show up before the ambulance and provide care until the ambulance can get there and transport them to the hospital,” Teesch said.

Firefighters are responsible for conducting a fire safety inspection of every business annually or biannually. Another big part of the job is public education.

“We do inspections, we do education, when calls do come in (we’re) working to handle them where they happen, when they happen, any time of day,” Teesch said.

Looking forward, he hopes to increase staffing during the day and find a way for more collaboration among employees, who are divided into three groups working a rotating 24-hour schedule for constant coverage.

“There’s always stuff to improve and different things you can do but my focus right now is more or less learning and taking a 10,000-foot view,” he said. “It’s a pretty well-oiled machine.”

Teesch said he feels lucky to have taken over leadership of such a capable and respected organization.

“I’m just really happy to be here and working with this great team of people,” he said. “This whole Fox Valley region has a lot of opportunities to be on the cutting edge of collaboration, cooperation and how we deliver service.”

Broadband mapping tool unveiled

A new interactive mapping tool – the New North Broadband Overview Map – has been made available to the public as a means for planning through the use of localized data. The map can be accessed at tinyurl.com/NEWBroadbandHub.

The plotting mechanism was developed with multiple community partners, including East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC), the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC), Door County, Marquette County and Neverman Consulting.

The tool was funded through a Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Local Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission.

Each county in the state had the option to receive individual funding for broadband planning or could apply for it collectively under its regional development organization.

The New North Broadband Alliance identified the need for similar expectations for each county.

A determination was made that it would be most efficient and cost effective to fund a regional map that considered shared boundaries.

Internet service providers in the region have been provided with access to the mapping tool and plan to actively utilize it. It contains data filters that are important determinants to the cost and viability of

broadband internet expansion in any particular area, such as environmental factors and railroad crossings.

The tool also offers mapping of multiple other factors that go into economic development. Most prominent are data on population, housing units, economic levels, business and industrial parks, and available services.

Creation of the regional mapping tool was led by Mike Zuege, GIS manager for ECWRPC, and Nicole Barbiaux, GIS coordinator for BLRPC.

They developed a comprehensive map in lieu of 15 individual county maps that would have to be pieced together with border boundary inconsistencies.

Free app deals with caregiver concerns

Wisconsin Public Radio

A health care company in northeastern Wisconsin is helping launch a new program to combat loneliness in the state’s caregivers.

Lakeland Care provides managed care for older adults and adults with disabilities in the state’s Medicaid program in 22 counties, including Winnebago.

Jen Harrison, Lakeland’s chief program officer, said the company originally contracted with Pyx Health to provide the app to their members after seeing an increase in the number of people experiencing depression in recent years. The program provides a mix of activities and resources to address loneliness within the app, as well as offering users the opportunity to talk with a real person.

Federal health officials have warned of

an epidemic of loneliness in the general population across the country. A U.S. Surgeon General advisory earlier this year warned a lack of social connection can increase the risk for premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

Family and other unpaid caregivers are looked to as individuals who can help prevent loneliness. But Cindy Jordan, founder and CEO of Pyx Health, said they also have unique pressures that can make them feel isolated from others. She said caregivers may be physically separated from friends and social connections, having to stay home with someone who needs physical or medical help. And they can feel like others don’t understand their experience, which is a different kind of mental or emotional isolation.

This is the loneliness Jordan experi-

enced herself after the death of her stepdaughter, a loss that led her to become a caregiver to her partner and family in a new way.

She said her family’s experience is part of what inspired the creation of Pyx Health. The company has created a new version of their app specifically for caregivers and Lakeland Care is the first to launch the new program.

With an estimated 580,000 family caregivers in Wisconsin, Harrison said Lakeland Care decided to not only extend the new resource to caregivers of their members but for anyone in the state.

The Pyx app is free for all caregivers in Wisconsin with no affiliation to Lakeland Care required. Download the app on a phone or tablet to get started. Signup is also available at PyxHealth.com/store-download or call 855-499-4777.



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Future Neenah photo

Warm thoughts

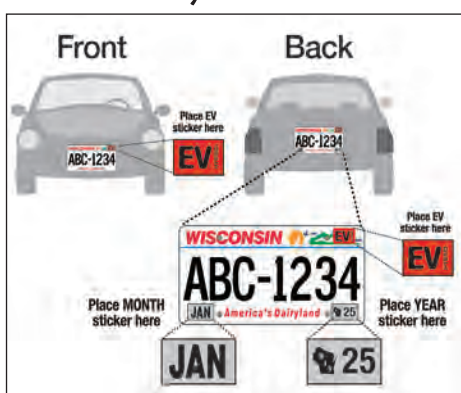
Part of Future Neenah and downtown Neenah's annual Warm Your Heart event is filling the front office windows with "I Love Neenah Because..." valentine hearts – love letters to the community. For the past 10 years students from elementary school to confirmation candidates complete that statement. Their replies range from the expected – the YMCA, Archies DQ Popcorn, Neenah Pool, Great Harvest Bread, Rocket Park, Neenah Public Library, The Plaza, The Brigade – to the unexpected – people don't litter, cheese, gas stations, kind people.

Required EV hybrid stickers ready for vehicles

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will begin sending new electric vehicle hybrid stickers to current owners of electric and hybrid vehicles, as required by recent legislation.

The new law requires that the orange and black "EV Hybrid" stickers be attached to each license plate issued for an electric or hybrid vehicle. Wisconsin had nearly 146,000 electric and hybrid vehicles on the road in 2023.

This Wisconsin law was passed in 2023 for the safety of first responders when dealing with electric powered vehicles in emergency situations. Current owners of electric or hybrid vehicles with valid reg-



istration will be sent EV Hybrid stickers by June. Starting this summer, those who apply for title and registration for a new electric or hybrid vehicle will be provided stickers with their new plates.

Primary election

FROM PAGE 1

and Sandvick received 267 votes, eliminating Brian Roeh, who received 251 votes, according to unofficial results.

Jeffrey Linski and William Pollnow Jr. will be on the ballot for a District 3 seat after Todd Stevenson, who has held the position since 1989, filed noncandidacy paperwork. Incumbent Brian Borhardt will run for the District 2 seat unopposed.

There are three seats open on the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education. Incumbent Brian Epley will join candidates Susan Garcia Franz, Chari Long, Jeb Pfeifle, Roxanne Schwandt-Knutson and Alex Corrigan in vying for the seats. Incumbent Kristian Sahr and previous member Tom Hanby were eliminated in Tuesday's primary.

The race for filling the Winnebago County Circuit Court Branch 1 seat being vacated by Judge Teresa Basiliere was narrowed to LaKeisha Haase and Michael Rust after Eric Heywood was eliminated in the primary voting. Unofficial results put Haase as the front-runner with 5,780 votes followed by Rust with 3,526 and Heywood with 3,197.

Haase is a private practice attorney, Oshkosh Common Council member and former Branch 4 judge making her third attempt for the position. She was appointed in 2020 and lost a re-election bid, then

was defeated last year for the Branch 2 seat by Scott Woldt who secured a fourth term on the bench.

Rust is a family court commissioner in Winnebago County making his first run for judge.

Two Town of Neenah supervisor positions are up for re-election, with incumbents David Bluma and James Weiss running unopposed.

In Fox Crossing, trustee 1, 3 and 5 positions are up for election for two-year terms on the Village Board. Incumbents Michael Van Dyke and Deb Swiertz are running unopposed, while Trustee 3 incumbent Gregory Ziegler will be challenged by Nicholas Gebert.

All 36 county supervisor seats are up for election, with Neenah News reporting on seats that represent our readers in districts 5 through 10 and 27 through 29. Supervisors in districts 8, 9, 27 and 28 are incumbents running unopposed.

In District 5, incumbent Kay Horan will face challenger Stefanie Holt. In District 6, Jason Kraayvanger and Lucas Reinke will vie for the seat vacated by Brian Defferding, who is not seeking re-election. District 7 incumbent Betsy Ellenberger will be challenged by Kate Hancock-Cooke.

Incumbent Bryan Stafford in District 10 will face challenger Timothy Jacobson, while District 29 incumbent George Bureau squares off against Benjamin Frank.

Election information and primary results are available at co.winnebago.wi.us under the County Clerk page.

Wisconsin Tech Summit coming to Lambeau Field

Emerging companies may apply through Monday to meet with major firms and explore potential business relationships around technology needs, supply chain needs and innovation as part of the 11th annual Wisconsin Tech Summit,

which will take place in-person at Green Bay's Lambeau Field.

The daylong event will be held in-person March 18. More information, including the online application form, can be found at wistechsummit.com.

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Wisconsin Paper Group photo

Shipping cooperative at 90

Wisconsin Paper Group, also known as the WPG Shippers Association, of Neenah, is shown making a shipment in 1953 on the S.S. Badger ferry's maiden voyage in Manitowoc. The organization, celebrating its 90th anniversary this week, was the first not-for-profit shipping cooperative in the nation and remains the only shipper's association of its kind, representing more than 100 Wisconsin and Upper Michigan companies as an extension of their logistics teams. WPG uses linehaul carriers and regional distributors to deliver freight throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico.



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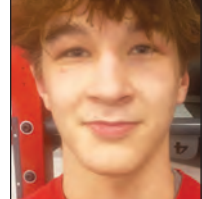
Neenah wrestlers gear up for state tournament

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

It's a common theme for all four of Neenah's qualifiers for the state wrestling tournament.

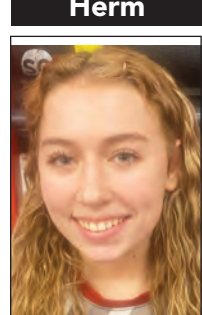
Each member of the quartet has sights on wrestling deep into the tournament. But to a person, each of the wrestlers know that the only way to wrestle Saturday night at the Kohl Center is focus only on each opponent that steps in their way.

"Take it one match at a time. You can't overlook people. Crazy things happen, upsets happen so the best way is just take it one match at a time," said sophomore Kylee Kurszewski.



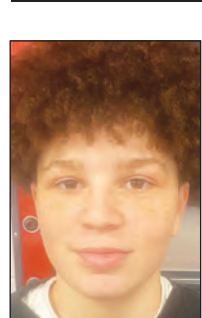
Herm

Added junior Jacob Herm: "I have to take it one match at a time. Not worry about the matches ahead of me just the one right in front of me."



Kurszewski

Herm will be joined by sophomore Declan Koch in the boys tournament field, while Kurszewski and freshman Amari Richard will represent Neenah on the girls side.



Richard

All four won sectional titles at Kimberly last Saturday and Herm, Koch and Kurszewski all picked up state medals at last year's tournament.

Herm finished second for the second straight season and that has served as motivation for him this season.

"It feels amazing to be going back. I have some hard feelings from last year," Herm said. "It's more so excitement than anything. You can't take anything for granted so I'm always excited for every moment I have."

Herm didn't wrestle the duration of a full match in winning the 144-pound sectional title last Saturday to improve to 46-0 this season.

He beat De Pere's Connor Schenian in 1:57 in the first round and then needed



Submitted photo

Neenah's Declan Koch earned the top seed at 138 pounds for the WIAA Division 1 state wrestling tournament, which began Thursday at the Kohl Center in Madison.

just 42 seconds to stop Kaukauna's Ramases Aquirre in the semifinals. In the title match, he pinned Bay Port's Trevor Finger in 3:04.

Herm earned the top seed in his 16-wrestler bracket which for the first time at state won't include another Fox Valley Association wrestler. Still Herm credits the competition he faced during FVA events for helping him get to this point.

"It prepares me a lot," Herm said. "Our conference is the toughest in Wisconsin and those tough matches before state really prepare me."

Koch also will be the top-seeded wrestler in his bracket and will be looking to conquer the 138-pound field.

Koch finished third at 113 pounds last season and brought a 42-2 record into this year's state tournament.

The sophomore earned his sectional title last Saturday by wrestling all 18 minutes in three matches. Koch won each bout by a major decision - outscoring his opponents by a 43-7 margin - and will take the same type of approach in Madison.

"I just have to keep scoring points and having fun out there. Keep doing what I have been doing," Koch said. "I'm really excited to go down there again and really excited to reach my goal."

Like Herm, Koch has wrestled at numerous national events during the off-season, but admits there is something special about walking out on the floor of the Kohl Center.

"It's awesome. There's no other arena that can replicate that," Koch said. "I've been to a lot of places and that is still the

best one I've ever wrestled in."

Neenah boys head coach Kyle Kleuskens said that he was going to spend the days leading up to Thursday's first-round matches focusing on getting through each day and preparing both Herm and Koch to reach their goals.

He knows that both wrestlers have the potential to come home with state titles after Saturday but only if they wrestle like they are capable of.

"These guys have the skills to get all of the way to the championship match and win it but we aren't focused on the outcome, we are focused on the process," Kleuskens said. "There is going to be some adversity and they are going to have to respond to it and they are both capable of doing that. So many different things can happen in this sport. I don't care how great you are, nothing is given and everything is earned. They are prepared and they need

to go down and earn it."

The 2024 girls state tournament marks just the second time that the event will be held at the Kohl Center but Rockets' girls head coach Madison Ruckdashel will be making her inaugural trip to the event.

Ruckdashel is excited that the sport of girls wrestling gets to be a part of the three-day wrestling showcase and can't wait to see what her two qualifiers can accomplish.

"I'm excited for the girls to have this opportunity. I'm more excited to see girls wrestling grow and put on better showings as girls get better and better," Ruckdashel said. "I think it will be good for Amari to have someone with her with a little experience to take her under her wing."

Kurszewski finished sixth at 114 pounds at the state meet last season, with one of

SEE **State wrestling** ON PAGE 15

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Rockets' postseason run ends in sectional loss to Tritons

By Dustin Riese
HERALD CONTRIBUTOR

A familiar postseason foe proved to be too much for the Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team Tuesday night.

Green Bay Notre Dame closed out the game with four goals in the third period to bring an end to the Rockets season in a 7-1 loss in a WIAA Division 1 sectional semifinal contest in Green Bay.

"We ran into a very good Notre Dame team," coach Jeff Lindemann said. "We knew we would need to play our best game of the season in order to come out

on top. Unfortunately, we didn't do that." Neenah netminder Owen Debbert stood strong at the start of the game. Debbert blanked the Tritons for the first six minutes of the game and stopped 14 shots in the period, but the Rockets still trailed 3-0 heading into the second period.

Mark Sutton gave the Rockets some momentum early in the second when he scored off an assist from Ty Laabs less than five minutes into the period.

But before Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha could draw any closer, Notre Dame rattled off two goals eight seconds apart

about two minutes later to take a 5-1 lead. That all but sealed the win for the Tritons, who added one more goal in the second period before tacking on a last goal in the third for the final margin.

Notre Dame outshot Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha, 31-14.

"The young guys got a chance to see what it takes to win as the tournament narrows down," Lindemann said. "When that happens, the games get tougher. It was big-boy hockey out there tonight and Notre Dame proved they were the better team out there."

Despite the loss, it was another great season by the Rockets who finished the year 15-8-1 overall, including 8-6-1 in Badgerland play to secure a second-place finish.

Senior Ben Carey led the Rockets in scoring this season as he picked up a team-high 38 points and tied Sutton with 20 goals to lead the team. John Horneck led the way with a .940 save percentage while Debbert settled in with .920.

"It's always tough seeing a season come to an end," Lindemann said. "I'm proud of our seniors as they finish up great high school hockey careers."

Gaerthofner earns state swimming medal

Neenah News

Neenah High School junior Drew Gaerthofner earned a medal for the second straight year and inched closer to posting a top finish in the 100-yard breaststroke at the WIAA Division 1 State Swimming & Diving Championships held Saturday at Waukesha South High School.

Gaerthofner finished third in the race Saturday, moving up from a fifth-place finish a year ago. He posted a time of 55.78 seconds, which was three-tenths of a second out of second place and about two seconds behind state champion and state record holder in the event, Abram Mueller of Madison West.

The 100-yard breaststroke was a strong event for the Rockets as Neenah had two

swimmers finish in the top 10 at state.

Sophomore Tanner Trustem joined Gaerthofner with a 10th-place finish in the race. He posted a time of 57.63 seconds, which was only about six-tenths of a second out of seventh place. Trustem finished 21st in the same event last season.

Both Gaerthofner and Trustem also competed in another individual race at the state meet.

Gaerthofner finished 10th in the 50-yard free with a time of 21.36 seconds, while Trustem was 18th in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 48.65 seconds.

Gaerthofner and Trustem also competed in two of the three relays that Neenah took to the state meet.

The duo was joined by Braden Loudon

and Julian Kuehn on the 200-yard medley relay which finished eighth overall. The foursome's time of 1:35.84 was only a second out of a top-five finish.

Kuehn, Gaerthofner, Trustem and Joshua Youngwerth made up the Rockets' 200-yard freestyle relay team that finished 12th, while the quartet of Loudon, Kuehn, Youngwerth and Liam Sieck finished 21st in the 400-yard freestyle relay.

The remaining individual to compete at the state meet was senior Kyle Joneson who finished 19th overall in diving but did not advance to the final round.

Neenah finished 14th overall with 62 points in the final team standings and was the highest-placing team from the Fox Valley Association.

Prep roundup

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Champion Zephyrs take down Flying Dutchmen

Emily Vogel poured in a career-high 38 points as St. Mary Catholic knocked off Oostburg 72-69 in a matchup of the Big East division champions.

The Zephyrs won the North Division title with a perfect 12-0 record.

Audrey Norville added 10 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in the win, while Lauren Ripley and Nolie Anderson each chipped in eight points.

The Zephyrs led 37-31 at halftime.

SEE Prep roundup ON PAGE 15

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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 14

St. Mary Catholic, which earned the top seed in its Division 4 sectional, will host Manawa in a regional semifinal Friday.

Rough finish to regular season for Rockets

Neenah was held to a season-low scoring output and dropped the final game of the regular season to Oshkosh West, 42-37, last week.

The 37 points was the lowest total for a Neenah team since the 2019-20 season.

The Rockets outscored the Wildcats 25-22 in the second half, but couldn't overcome scoring just 12 points in the first half and trailing by eight points at the break.

Rowan Klesmit scored 14 points as only three players scored in the game for the Rockets. Allie Ziebell finished with 13 points and Ellie Buss added 10.

Neenah, which is the No. 3 seed in the sectional, will host Wisconsin Rapids at 7 p.m. in a WIAA Division 1 regional semifinal Friday.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Rockets top Wildcats to extend winning streak

Brady Corso turned in another big night as Neenah topped Oshkosh West 65-52 last week for its eighth straight win and 12th win in the last 13 games.

The senior guard hit four 3-pointers and went 7-of-8 from the free-throw line to finish the night with 31 points. It is the fourth time this season he has topped the 30-point mark in a game.

Charlie Wunderlich added 10 points in



Photo by Jim Koepnick

Neenah's Brady Corso scored 31 points in the Rockets win over Oshkosh West last week.

the win for the Rockets, who led just 28-26 at halftime before pulling away in the second half.

Zephyrs tripped up by Manitowoc Lutheran

Mason Uhlenbrauck and Braeden Brenn each reached double figures but St. Mary Catholic fell at home, 84-66, to Manitowoc Lutheran last Friday.

Uhlenbrauck led the way with 27 points, while Brenn chipped in 25, but no other Zephyr player reached double figures.

State wrestling

FROM PAGE 13

her wins coming in a 25-second pin.

She earned her return trip to the state meet by claiming the 126-pound sectional title, beating both of her opponents by pins last Saturday. Kurszewski is seeded sixth in her state bracket sporting a 24-3 record entering the state tournament.

One edge she may have over last year's performance is that she has experienced the state meet before and that certainly has had an affect as she prepared for this year's trip.

"It will definitely calm the nerves more. I'm definitely a lot less nervous than I was last year," Kurszewski said. "I have to stay in good position. I'm a pretty basic wrestler. If I stay in good position and work my shots, I think I will do pretty good."

Kurszewski hopes to make it 2-for-2 in earning state medals.

"My goal is place top three but a title would be great," Kurszewski said. "(The state tournament) is definitely a step up from two years ago (at La Crosse). Just being there with the guys shows great representation of what the girls can do."

Richard is the only wrestler for Neenah that doesn't have WIAA tournament experience but has enjoyed plenty of success in her freshman season.

Richard brought a 35-6 record into the state meet after winning three matches – two by first-period pin – at the sectional tournament last Saturday. She capped the run to the 120-pound title with a 9-2 win over Shawano's Onna Hermann.

"It's crazy that freshman year I'm going to state," said Richard, who was seeded ninth in the state bracket. "I'm pretty excited. I just want to take in the atmosphere

and have fun. It's not promised every year so I'm not taking it for granted and going to give it my all. I think anything can happen. Just go out there and let it fly."

Richard said that heading into sectionals she believed she could advance to the state tournament and one of the things that has helped her this year was her Neenah wrestling teammates.

Being able to compete against other talented wrestlers in the practice room allowed her to develop as a freshman.

"It's nice to have different practice partners and be able to get a feel for everyone," Richard said. "It helps you in different matches because everybody wrestles different so just being able to wrestle different people all year was beneficial."

Ruckdashel also believes that the Rockets' team played a role in the success of their two state qualifiers.

"Just being able to mix up partners that are girls was very beneficial," Ruckdashel said. "They got an idea of wrestling against different skill sets. We could out them with different people to get those different feels, just like on a boys team, we had that opportunity with our girls."

Kurszewski and Richard nearly had quite a bit of company at the state meet, too.

Joelle Reay (114), Lillian Granditzke (132) and Ava Armatti (138) each finished second at the sectional meet, falling one spot short of earning a state trip.

Maya Ives (107) added a third place, while Janet Soto (152), Lluvia Carrilo (165) and Emma Verbrick (235) were each fourth.

The boys also had three wrestlers place at the sectional tournament but did not advance to state.

Nate Cleveland (285) finished third, while Eli Armatti (120) and Landen Shepard (132) each took fourth place.

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