

# Neenah News

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## Lead line notices aimed at awareness

### Water Utility reminds residents of hazards

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

About 3,500 households in Neenah received a letter from the Water Utility last month informing them that their water laterals contain lead.

The letters are an annual approach to provide information on lead laterals and suggestions on how residents can miti-

gate health hazards that can be caused by the consumption of lead in water.

Director Tony Mach said the Water Utility received about 200 calls and emails about the letters from residents who were concerned, upset or seeking information on how to replace the lead laterals themselves.

The use of lead pipes was banned by Congress in 1986 after it was found that the lead leaches into drinking water, which causes health problems, particularly for children and pregnant women.

Infants can have decreased IQ and attention span, and lead exposure can cause learning and behavior problems in children. Adults may experience increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and kidney or nervous system problems.

Mach said there's no safe level of lead in water. He noted lead paint rather than lead pipes is predominantly the cause of lead poisoning in children. The Water Utility treats the city's water to coat the

SEE **Lead lines** ON PAGE 8

## INSIDE



### In the courts

Contractor accused of defrauding businesses

Page 3

### Now a Badger

Jung joins Badgers through transfer portal

Page 11



Neenah News

### Farm festivities

A pair of Percherons patiently waited for patrons to pet them in a barn at Cavanaugh Carriages on Fairview Road during an event last Friday which included sleigh rides through the snow, meet and greets with reindeer Thor and Holly, a petting zoo and special visits with Santa.

## Winnebago County businesses will feel NFL Draft's impact

### Area hotels expected to fill up with visitors

By MaryBeth Matzek  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

The NFL Draft set for April 24-26 will be the biggest show Green Bay has ever seen. But with 450,000 unique visitors attending the event, the Fox Cities and Oshkosh also will play a vital role, providing hotel rooms and places to eat for thousands of attendees.

"Green Bay hotels will be filled with

### The app you'll need

The free NFL OnePass app will provide draft attendees with updates including maps, activities, schedules, lists of nearby attractions, parking and transportation.

NFL staff and teams, and does not have enough room to host all the attendees so looking to the Fox Cities and beyond to provide accommodations was a key part of the plan we pitched to the NFL," said Megan Roberson, planning specialist with

the Green Bay Packers and a member of the draft planning team.

Ryan Batley, general manager of Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel & Conference Center in Neenah, said the draft is not only exciting for hospitality businesses such as his, but for the entire state.

"The draft is definitely exciting for us and we expect to be booked, but it's also exciting for the Fox Cities and the entire state of Wisconsin as we'll be featured on a global stage," he said. "Our goal is to create an inviting environment and making sure

people have a great time while here and can get to the draft smoothly."

The draft is expected to have an economic impact of \$94 million across Wisconsin, including \$20 million in Green Bay. Roberson said the Packers looked at the economic impact of the Ryder Cup to come up with the projections.

Roberson said the Packers are being conservative on draft attendance with the prediction of 450,000 unique visitors although last year's draft in Detroit drew

SEE **NFL Draft** ON PAGE 7

## Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



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admin@neenahnewsnow.com  
Phone: 920-486-1616  
Website: www.neenahnewsnow.com

**News tips and story ideas**  
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Advertising deadline is noon Tuesday for the following Friday. The classified line ads deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday for Friday.

### Publisher

Karen Schneider, 920-858-6407  
karen@oshkoshherald.com

### Editor

Dan Roherty, 920-508-0027  
editor@oshkoshherald.com

### 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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## Fox Cities Book Festival ending after 17 years

Neenah News

The Fox Cities Book Festival is ending its 17-year run as its board of directors noted challenges in recruiting new members and a decrease in the availability of grant funds among the reasons for discontinuing the annual regional sessions.

The board made the announcement last week on its foxcitiesbookfestival.org website as it reviewed the success of the festival and obstacles it faced over time.

“The effect of dissipating attendance

has challenged its viability. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the landscape of publishing, author appearances and even how people attend community events has changed dramatically,” the board stated in the announcement, noting that it had recently streamlined activities into one event, chose a more central venue and focused activities on high-profile titles.

Since its formation inspired by former Wisconsin poet laureate Ellen Kort, the festival connected readers with authors

and led book-inspired community conversations about important topics. More than 200 volunteers have connected 10,000 readers from the Fox Valley region with at least 70 local and nationally recognized authors.

The board noted that public libraries, which have been partners of the festival over the years, are well positioned to carry on with the mission of the festival and will continue the annual Fox Cities Reads program that discusses a particular book that culminates with an author visit.

## Manufacturing survey shows strong outlook

Neenah News

The NEW Manufacturing Alliance’s annual regional Vitality Index found the manufacturing sector, which is 23% of the region’s employment base, remained strong over the past year.

A survey administered in October and November by the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh’s Center for Customized Research Services was drawn from 601 manufacturers with \$3 million or more in annual revenue and at least 25 employees.

Forty-seven percent of respondents reported their supply chain was impacted in

2024, significantly lower than 98% of respondents in 2022 and 61% in 2023.

Responses indicated that 2025 should be a strong year for manufacturers, with 66% expecting increased sales. More than half of manufacturers expect to invest in plant modernization and nearly 40% plan on hiring during the last quarter of 2025.

The talent shortage remains a concern for manufacturers but has lessened from the historic 91% reported from the years after the pandemic; 58% of companies are anticipating difficulty locating and acquiring talent.

Companies continue to have difficulty

finding machinists and CNC machinists, which has been among the most difficult positions to fill every year that the study asked this question. Most of the occupations going unfilled require post-secondary education, although most do not require a four-year degree.

Other skills in high demand include communications, work ethic and attendance.

Overall, 2025 is expected to see more hiring and increased sales for northeast Wisconsin manufacturers. There is still a strong investment outlook by companies in their plant modernization plans.

## Gustafson to lead Assembly panel on technology

Neenah News

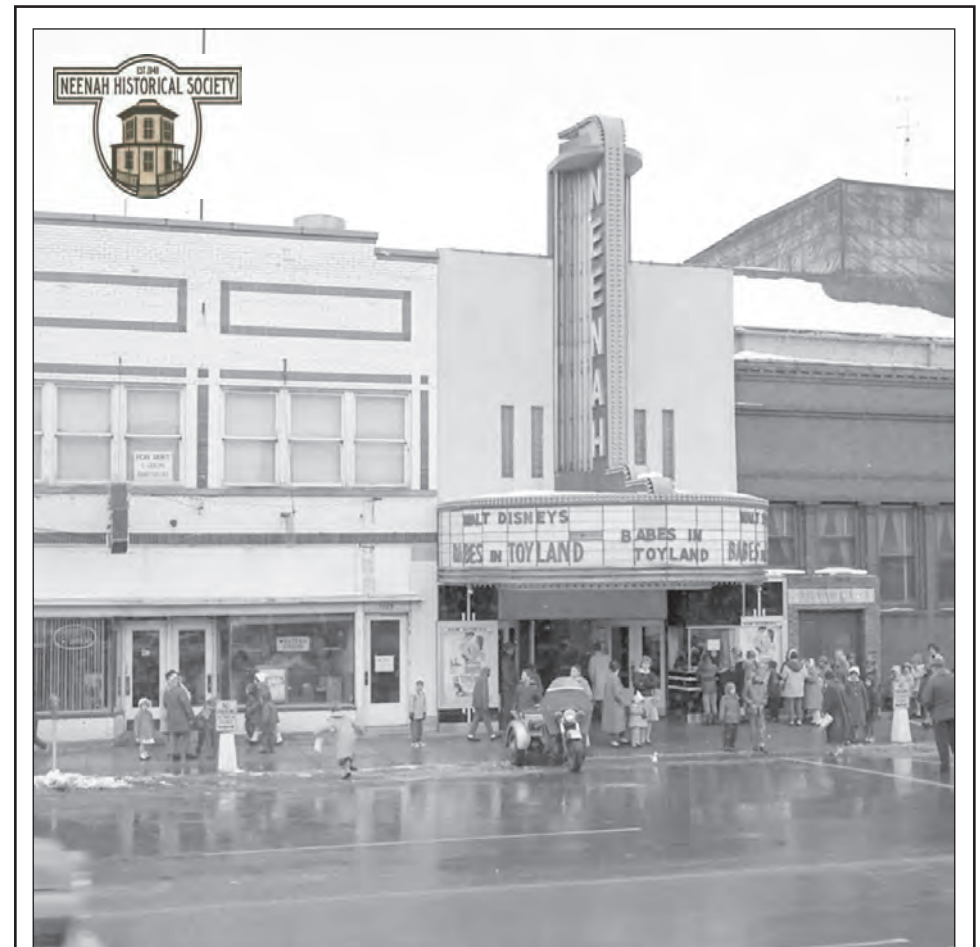
State Assembly Rep. Nate Gustafson (R-Fox Crossing) has been named chair of the Assembly Committee on Science, Technology and AI for the 2025-2026 legislative session.



Gustafson

He also was appointed to serve as vice chair of the Assembly Committee on State and Federal Relations.

“Being able to serve on both of these committees in chair and vice chair capacity will provide a great opportunity to innovate and improve our state going forward,” Gustafson said in a statement.



Neenah Historical Society photo

## Downtown theater

The Neenah Theater featured the Walt Disney hit “Babes in Toyland” in 1961.

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**MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR**

# Contractor accused of theft from area businesses

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A contractor accused of defrauding businesses in Neenah and Oshkosh was in court this week on two felony counts of theft after two business owners reported to police that they paid for services that were never completed or even started.

Christopher Koehler, 45, owner of Elite Construction of Fond du Lac, was hired for renovation and construction projects at two local businesses in 2022. Documents say he took payment for significant work but failed to deliver the services, leaving both businesses with incomplete and unusable spaces.

The investigation began in April when the owners of Satori Imports in Oshkosh and The Tailored Hide in Neenah reported they were defrauded of a combined total of \$38,486.

Kay Bahr, who co-owns Satori Imports with Erica Pyfer Mulloy, reported to police that the business paid Koehler \$5,000 up front for roof repairs with the agreement that the remaining balance of \$3,750 was due at completion of the project.

The business also entered into a second agreement with Koehler to replace windows at an estimated cost of \$27,343, with \$13,672 due up front and the remainder due at completion.

More than two years passed with Koehler failing to complete any work. Last winter, Satori Imports' roof began leaking and the business hired a different contractor to complete the work.

In Neenah, Leeann Wasinger, who owns The Tailored Hide, told police that in the summer of 2022 a driver crashed into the building and front steps and left a side of an enclosed porch damaged. She hired a different contractor to repair the brick, who recommended Koehler to complete window work.



Neenah News

The Tailored Hide in Neenah is shown in July 2022 shortly after a drunken driver crashed into the building, leaving it in need of significant repairs.

Wasinger hired Koehler and paid a 50% down payment of \$12,410 for materials. She later paid an additional \$3,905. Though Koehler took out the broken windows and boarded up the openings with plywood, he never returned to finish the job.

Last year, Wasinger hired a different company to complete the work. She also hired an attorney and got the Neenah police involved, but at that time law enforcement involvement did not result in charges.

Both Bahr and Wasinger told police that they repeatedly contacted Koehler over a two-year period and he continued to come up with last-minute excuses as to why he would not be able to complete the projects.

When the business owners requested a refund, he gave similar answers. He told Bahr that one of his big jobs fell through so he was "piggy backing" the money and using funds from one job to support another.

Wasinger's attorney received an email from Koehler's mother stating the same.

In June, Koehler met with an investigator and advised that he was trying to sort out jobs in Jackson, Neenah and Oshkosh. He said he took money for the jobs in Oshkosh and Neenah and spent the money on a large siding job in Jackson, as that job was his priority. He said he didn't get paid for the Jackson job after completion because they weren't satisfied with the work.

Neither of the businesses in Oshkosh and Neenah have received reimbursement from Koehler and it's unclear whether he continues offering contracting services. There is no Google business or Better Business Bureau profile for Elite Construction and it is not a licensed business with the state.

In an impact statement, Bahr wrote that

Satori Imports saved for years to be able to take on the project of fixing the windows and leaking roof of the historic downtown Oshkosh building and waited two years for Koehler to begin the work before realizing he had no intention of starting the projects. By now, she said the conditions of the building have continued to deteriorate and the cost of new labor and supplies has gone up.

"It truly makes us sick to think Chris Koehler has moved on without any remorse, without any intention of ever doing the work he contracted to do, or without refunding our deposits, despite our numerous patient and persistent requests," she wrote.

Wasinger wrote that The Tailored Hide lost out on 200 square feet of retail space and that losing more than \$16,000 has caused hardships.

"It affected my ability to invest in more product and I had to pay for repairs out of pocket because of his taking our dollars and doing nothing except tell lies," she wrote.

After operating the business for 38 years, Wasinger, 63, wrote that the financial loss has delayed her retirement.

"I am not the only victim in this case by a long shot and Christopher needs to take responsibility and realize the amount of distress he has caused in my and other people's lives and well-being," she wrote.

Koehler was charged in Winnebago County in October with two felony counts of theft by contractor. He was previously charged in May in a separate Fond du Lac County case with theft by contractor. He's due back in court Jan. 27 in Fond du Lac County and March 6 in Winnebago County for plea and sentencing hearings.

## Toward Harmony with Nature conference set

Neenah News

Wild Ones Fox Valley Area is presenting its annual Toward Harmony with Nature conference Feb. 8 that will feature keynote speaker Heather Holms on creating and managing landscapes for native bees.

The pollinator conservationist and author will explore the nesting habitats, life cycles, pollen collection, brood rearing and general characteristics of native bees in eastern North America while highlighting the pollination of native plants.

Local expert Rob Zimmer will lead an exploration of native wild orchids of Wisconsin that will be illustrated with his photos.

The afternoon will be highlighted by 3 breakout sessions by experts on a variety

of topics, including practical tips for creating a native plant garden, sedges and grasses, shoreline restoration among others. Visit with vendors and exhibitors, pick up helpful resource materials and bid on silent auction items. Enjoy mingling with other native plant enthusiasts.

The conference will run from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Bridgewood Resort Hotel & Conference Center in Neenah. Details can be found at foxvalleyarea.wildones.org.

The Fox Valley Area Chapter of Wild Ones began in 1994 and has held an annual conference since 1997 for members and non-members to learn about different aspects of native landscapes, whether small yards or larger properties.



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### CHRISTMAS EARLY AD DEADLINES

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**December 27th issue:**

**Space Deadline**

Thursday 12/19 Noon

**Classified Deadline:**

Friday, 12/20 Noon

**Obituary Deadline:**

Monday, 12/23 Noon

**Neenah News**  
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**January 3rd issue:**

**Space Deadline**

Thursday, 12/26 Noon

**Classified Deadline:**

Friday, 12/27 Noon

**Obituary Deadline:**

Monday, 12/30 Noon

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# New modular home becomes first in Neenah in 27 years

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

A new house moved and installed at 856 Riverlawn St. last Friday is the first modular home moved into the city of Neenah in 27 years.

A modular home is constructed in sections at a factory and transported to a permanent site for assembly. The one-level home installed on Riverlawn is 1,500 square feet and includes three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a basement with plumbing so that a future homeowner has the option to install a bathroom and bedroom in the basement.

District 3 Alderman Bill Pollnow Jr., who operates an apartment rental business and a home building business called Bailey's Building and Homes Inc., said it's his first home build and he thought a modular home would be more efficient.

"They're easier for me to manage because I don't have to manage as many tradesmen because I'm a general contractor as well," he said.

Pollnow lives across the street from the

site, which he purchased from the previous homeowner in October 2022. He said it was a hoarding situation and he demolished the existing home because it was in such poor condition.

He said he plans to install more modular homes in the city, particularly smaller and more affordable versions, which he said are a good option for vacant infill lots.

"It's getting harder and harder to get contractors so it's a good alternative," he said.

Though the installation of the structure itself was completed Friday, ongoing work on the modular home will include installation and inspection of an electrical meter, new service by We Energies connected to the house, installing a furnace, connecting plumbing and building a garage.

Pollnow hopes to have the house move-in ready by March and plans to work with a real estate agent to sell it.

Chief building and electrical inspector Kyle Pederson said that before the Riverlawn project, the most recent modular home moved into the city was in 1997.



Neenah News

Workers last Friday installed a brand-new modular home on a parcel that will be listed for sale.

# Foster families are desperately being sought in Fox Valley

Neenah News

Children's Wisconsin is putting out the call for foster families who are in high demand around the state to provide treatment-level foster care to children.

With locations in Neenah and Milwaukee, Children's Wisconsin is recognized as one of the leading pediatric health care centers in the United States and is a member of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. Treatment foster care is home-based care for children and adolescents with

moderate to high emotional, behavioral, physical or medical needs.

At any given time, as many as 7,000 young people need temporary foster care in Wisconsin. In the Fox Valley, families licensed in treatment foster care have declined nearly 50 percent in the last three years. There are about 700 youth in Wisconsin requiring treatment level foster care every year.

"We are facing a dire need for treatment-level foster families," said Maria Mc-

Dermott, director of Out of Home Care for Children's Wisconsin.

Licensed families are provided with additional support and training as well as more frequent check-in visits to make sure the needs of the children and families are being met. The goal is to provide a temporary home so that eventually kids can reunify with a biological family member, with about 60% of the children able to return with family members.

Some requirements to become a treat-

ment foster parent are that they are at least 21, can be a renter or homeowner with a minimum of two bedrooms, must be able to financially support oneself with monthly income exceeding monthly expenses and in generally good health with any health conditions controlled with treatment.

For more information, visit [childrenswi.org](http://childrenswi.org). Children's Wisconsin offers Zoom or phone information sessions and members of the foster care team are available for phone inquiries.

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# Read program promotes brain and social development

ThedaCare Communications

Reading to children at an early age enhances childhood brain and social development, and is a long-term contributor to a child's success in school.

Since 2018, all ThedaCare pediatricians and primary care providers have been engaged with the national Reach Out and Read program, the only national pediatric literacy program endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The program begins with parents receiving a book at their baby's first post-birth checkup and continues through age 5. At each well-child visit, the child receives a book that is age, language and culturally appropriate to take home, with the intention that the parents or guardians will regularly read that book with their child. The providers then talk with the parents or guardians about the importance of reading aloud to children as part of the developmental progress.

"According to research, we know that 90% of a toddler's brain development occurs between birth and age 5, so it's a critical stage of development," said Tracey Ratzburg, community health coordinator for ThedaCare. "The initial purpose of the Reach Out and Read program is to get parents reading to their children, and



Photo from ThedaCare

ThedaCare pediatricians and primary care providers are part of the national Reach Out and Read literacy program.

it's far more than a reading program. It also helps build a social connection and trusting relationship between parents and the child, so it's relational and literacy growth combined."

The providers also talk about the connection between cuddling and reading that helps children feel safe and how reading at home helps children learn that books provide positive experiences.

In 2023, 25 ThedaCare Clinics handed out 23,088 books, with 184 ThedaCare providers participating in the program.

Reach Out and Read Wisconsin notes that families are 2.5 times more likely to read to their children when provided books by a pediatrician or primary care provider. Studies show that reading to children from infancy on accelerates language development by three to six months, increases receptive and expressive language ability and contributes to academic success.

"The first three years of a child's life are the most crucial in a child's cognitive, emotional and social development," said

Kristin Lundine, APNP, at ThedaCare Physicians Pediatrics-Appleton. "When parents read to their children, they can enhance their child's overall development. It goes beyond the reading; the experience of the child feeling safe, connected and supported does a great deal for their social and emotional development as well."

The program also gives providers and care teams an opportunity to connect during visits.

"I'll often squat down to the child's level and offer him or her their new book," said Lundine. "Usually the child is still on the other side of the room, which allows me the opportunity to observe their in-

terest level in the book and whether they are comfortable engaging with me. How they walk toward me or reach out and react to the book helps me assess their gross and fine motor skills."

Lundine also noted the interactions allow her to learn more about the family dynamics at home as well. She has seen great examples of the benefits from the program.

"I recently had the experience of working with a family whose baby didn't especially like tummy time," she explained. "When I flipped her over onto to her stomach on the exam table, I placed the book she was receiving in front of her and she began looking at it and offered less resistance to being on her tummy. It was amazing to see the parents make the connection that maybe she doesn't really dislike tummy time; rather she just needs something to look at."

Lundine noted that the earliest books provided are high contrast in black and white to accommodate an infant's limited vision.

"Parents may not realize that it is never too soon to read together," she said. "This baby's experience proved that. Beyond that, the physical connection between baby and parent while being read to is equally important. And, the importance of the baby hearing their parents' voices shouldn't be understated either. It's all part of the communication learning process."

Nearly 140,000 books have been shared with families since ThedaCare first joined the Reach Out and Read program in 2013.

**Have a story idea?**  
**Promotions or expansion at your business?**  
**Community or school program to highlight?**

**Neenah News**  
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Email [submit@neenahnewsnow.com](mailto:submit@neenahnewsnow.com) to connect with our editorial team



Photo by David Hall

## Skating into holidays

Downtown Neenah ice skaters enjoy The Plaza at Gateway Park with the rink hours starting at 4 p.m. most evenings through the holidays. Check the Plaza & Globe Coffee Facebook page for more information.

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# Travelers urged to update driver license for ID

Neenah News

Airline travelers will face new identification requirements to board their flights when enforcement of the REAL ID Act begins May 7.

A regular Wisconsin driver license or ID will no longer be accepted for domestic air travel or to enter a federal building or military base. Travelers will need a REAL ID-compliant driver license or state ID

card or another acceptable form of identification such as a passport.

Wisconsin's driver licenses and ID cards have been REAL ID compliant since 2013. With renewals required every eight years, all residents have had the option to convert to a REAL ID.

To date, 62% of Wisconsin's driver license or ID cards currently display the REAL ID star indicating they are federally

compliant. In 2005, the federal REAL ID Act was passed by Congress to standardize state-issued driver licenses and ID cards to enhance security and prevent identity fraud.

Those with a driver license or ID may obtain a REAL ID-compliant card for \$14, or \$16 for an ID card. There is no additional fee if the upgrade takes place at the time of renewal.

## NFL Draft

FROM PAGE 1

700,000. "We don't want to get ahead of ourselves," she said.

Hotels in the Fox Cities and Oshkosh are ready to welcome guests from the draft.

"We've been involved from the get-go with the draft since our hotels were needed to show the area had the capacity to host. We're here to make sure visitors have a place to stay and can get to the draft," said Pam Seidl, executive director of the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. "These people are here to attend the draft. We plan to promote our attractions as things to do while they are here in between their time at the draft. Hotels will really see the lift. Right now, hotels still have room, but we expect to see them fill up as the draft gets closer."

Oshkosh will have a new hotel in time for the draft. The 42,663-square-foot Tru by Hilton is opening by the end of January, making its 90 rooms available for those attending the draft.

"Being 40 minutes away, Oshkosh will be a perfect spot for draft goers to stay," said Amy Albright, executive director of Discover Oshkosh. "A large drive market is expected — we do expect our businesses to benefit as well — from gas stations to restaurants, grocery stores and more should all feel the impact of the draft."

Neenah's Bridgewood also plans to finish its expansion project in early March, making an additional 39 rooms available for travelers coming to the draft, bringing the hotel to 133 rooms. The Bridgewood North Tower includes the new guest rooms, a fitness room and a meeting room, Batley said.

The changes do not end there. The hotel's lobby is also being remodeled to create more seating, a second elevator is being added and the pool mezzanine area is being expanded.

Batley said the hotel's restaurant also added a new seating area called The Endzone with room for 24 more guests.

"It's a low table sitting area and is ideal for those who don't want to sit at the bar or at high tables," he said.

Both Seidl and Albright said hotels and other businesses can expect the draft to be like another event that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to area each year — the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) AirVenture, which happens each



Neenah News

Neenah's Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel plans to finish its expansion project in early March, making an additional 39 rooms available for travelers coming to the NFL Draft.

July in Oshkosh.

"Our local businesses are used to large events, so they will be ready," Albright said.

As for restaurants, given the time of the draft — starting at noon April 24-25 and 9 a.m. April 26 — Seidl predicts restaurants offering breakfasts and brunches — along with late night snacks will see a large increase in business.

"People will want to eat before they go and may be looking for a little something once they are back in town," she said. "My advice to restaurants is to focus on those areas. Bars can look at creating a draft-theme related drink."

Batley said he's preparing for busier breakfast times and late dinners in the restaurant. He's also looking to host a draft watch party in the restaurant for residents who want to watch the draft together.

The FCCVB is working to schedule shuttles to and from Green Bay. The bureau has already reserved eight shuttle buses they plan to run to help ease the traffic congestion. More information will

come out as the event gets closer.

Airlines that operate out of Appleton International Airport (ATW) will be adding more routes and expanding their existing ones before and after the draft, according to airport officials who expect to see their flights and customers double during that time. Some of the new terminals being built at ATW as part of a major expansion project are expected to be in operation in time for the NFL event.

American Airlines will add flights from Phoenix, Dallas-Ft. Worth and Charlotte, N.C.; Allegiant will add service to Pittsburgh, Providence, R.I., and Canton/Akron, Ohio; and Delta is adding a flight to Atlanta.

"We are planning to launch a marketing campaign to encourage people to extend their stay in the Fox Cities either before or after the draft," Seidl said. "The goal is to provide a great experience, so travelers come back and visit."

Batley said he is also working with Future Neenah on ways the hotel can promote Neenah businesses during the draft.

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# Lead lines

FROM PAGE 1

pipes, but he noted the best solution is to replace lead laterals.

When Neenah was being built, all pipes used were lead and nearly all homes built before 1960 have lead pipes. There is a public side and private side of the lateral. The private side is the responsibility of the homeowner and the utility is responsible for the side that connects with the system.

Mach said there are about 2,021 utility-owned lead lines in the city and 2,961 privately owned lines. The city does not currently have a large-scale plan to replace the public laterals but will continue replacing lines that leak, are damaged and in conjunction with street reconstruction projects, which helps reduce the cost to property owners.

Under city ordinance, homeowners are required to replace private water service lines containing lead or galvanized pipe during water main or service line reconstruction, at the homeowner's expense. Mach estimated the cost to be between \$4,000 and \$5,000. The homeowner can either pay the full cost up front or as a tax assessment over five years with a 5% interest rate.

In 2025, the Water Utility plans to replace lead laterals on Elm and Reed streets from Division to Cecil; Hickory

Lane from Cecil to Baldwin; Caroline Street from Lake to Terminus; Douglas Street from Henry to S. Commercial; and Elm Street from Division to Wisconsin.

The Water Utility has created a new geographic information system (GIS) that allows residents to look up their address and will tell them whether they have lead service lines.

"We're going to be updating that as time goes on so that we can keep the most accurate data set for that purpose, and it'll help people make decisions," he said. "For example: They're looking at purchasing a house and they have concerns about it, they can call us and ask questions."

Mach noted the system is not foolproof and said homeowners whose property is on the lead lateral list may call or email the Water Utility.

"We always encourage people to help us to identify any changes," he said. "We do run into situations where people have their services replaced and we don't know about it."

Mach said the Water Utility hopes to have all lead lines in Neenah replaced within the next 10-15 years. He noted that the process is slow because the utility doesn't want to cause financial hardship for residents.

Residents concerned about lead lines are encouraged to replace them themselves and the Water Utility will replace the connecting public owned laterals at

the same time. The Water Utility has a list of private lead service line plumbers and contractors that it will provide to interested residents. Homeowners planning on replacing their service line are asked to call 920-886-6180 or email water@neenahwi.gov.

The letters sent out last month were for informational purposes and do not require the homeowner to take any immediate action, though Mach encouraged residents to take steps to limit their lead exposure.

That includes using a filter certified to remove lead, cleaning your faucet screen (aerator), using cold water, flushing the lines by running water through the sink for five minutes each morning, and having your water tested by a certified laboratory.

Mach said the Water Utility takes the replacement of lead pipes seriously.

"I live in the city, too, so it impacts my family," he said. "I want to make sure that everyone that drinks the water is safe. That's our ultimate goal, to protect public health."

## Public library calendar

- Jan. 1**  
Library closed
- Jan. 2**  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 5**  
LEGOs in the Library 1 p.m.
- Jan. 7**  
Adaptive Storytime (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Toddle Time Storytime (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.  
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Legal Assistance Clinic 4:30 p.m.  
Powered by Yarn 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 8**  
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.  
Musical Movers Storytime (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 9**  
Fox Tales Storytime in Fox Crossing (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Wee Read Storytime 10 a.m.  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.  
Mocktails 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 10**  
Fitness Friday: Boot Camp 9:15 a.m.  
Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 13**  
Monday Matinee: "It Ends With Us," 1 p.m.  
Short Story Night 7 p.m.
- Jan. 14**  
Adaptive Storytime (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Toddle Time Storytime (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.  
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Tech Talk Tuesday: All About Podcasts 1:30 p.m.  
Legal Assistance Clinic 4:30 p.m.
- Jan. 15**  
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.  
Musical Movers Storytime (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meetup 5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 16**  
Fox Tales Storytime in Fox Crossing (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Wee Read Storytime 10 a.m.  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.  
History Program-Neenah Neighborhoods 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 18**  
Special Event: Stuffed Animal Clinic 10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 19**  
LEGOs in the Library 1 p.m.
- Jan. 20**  
Memory Cafe 1:30pm  
Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 21**  
Adaptive Storytime (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Toddle Time Storytime (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.  
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Cookbook Book Club 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 22**  
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.  
Musical Movers Storytime (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Identity Theft Protection 2 p.m.  
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 23**  
Fox Tales Storytime in Fox Crossing (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Wee Read Storytime 10 a.m.  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
- Jan. 24**  
Fitness Friday: Balance and Strength 9:15 a.m.  
Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 25**  
Native Plant Winter Sow (registration required) 10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 27**  
Monday Morning Book Klatch 10 a.m.  
Climate Reality 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 28**  
Adaptive Storytime (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Toddle Time Storytime (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.  
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA (all ages) 10 a.m.
- Jan. 29**  
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.  
Musical Movers Storytime (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 30**  
Fox Tales Storytime in Fox Crossing (all ages) 9:15 a.m.  
Wee Read Storytime 10 a.m.  
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# UWO midyear graduate relishes complex math

By Grace Lim  
UW OSHKOSH TODAY

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh graduating senior Fatima Muniz is not afraid to ask lots of questions, especially when it comes to higher math problems, and to work hard to find the answers.

After graduating from UWO in the Mid-year Commencement Dec. 14, Muniz, a math major, plans to apply to graduate school with the ultimate goal to earn a doctorate in mathematics and, eventually, teach at a university or do research in industry.

Her questioning math mind kicked in an AP calculus course at St. Mary Catholic High School in Neenah. She wanted to know the “why and how” of the math she was learning and spent her high school years asking her teacher detailed questions.

“I wanted to know how we know that this works? Why is this working? How about in this little special case? What if this happens and this doesn’t happen?” Muniz said with a laugh. “I had a lot of questions.”

At UWO, she quickly distinguished herself as a promising math student. Math professor David Penniston had Muniz in his Introduction to Linear Algebra, Vector Calculus and Complex Analysis and Advanced Linear Algebra courses. He said Muniz’s questions always led to thoughtful mathematical discussions.

“The questions Fatima asks are almost invariably aimed at fully grasping concepts and making connections between them, and she seems to have always known that if one understands mathematics on a high level, the minor details tend to fall into line,” Penniston said.

Raised in a family of hard workers, Muniz is the first in her family to attend college. Muniz’s parents, both originally from Guanajuato, Mexico, instilled in her a strong work ethic and a commitment to making the most of every opportunity. Her father, who grew up in a rural farming community, had to leave school to help support his family after his father passed away when he was 7 years old.

With limited education, he worked hard, finding odd jobs. In the U.S. he worked in construction, eventually founding his own company, Muniz Concrete in Neenah. Her mother, also with limited formal schooling, worked at a cheese factory before transitioning to cleaning houses, to support the family.

Growing up in a household where both parents were deeply invested in providing for the family, Fatima knew early on that education was her key to unlocking a different future.

“My dad always said, ‘I want my kids to leave the nest, go out there and get the opportunities I couldn’t have,’” she said.

Despite the financial struggles, her parents prioritized her education, always encouraging her to go further than they did.

Fatima’s natural academic talent became evident early on. She was an exceptional student in high school, graduating as the class valedictorian in 2021. But even then, Fatima still grappled with imposter syndrome. She

remembers feeling a little inadequate in her AP calculus class in high school, surrounded by male students who seemed to have all the answers.

“They would raise their hands and give these complicated answers with a lot of high vocabulary,” she said, adding, “and I felt a little bit inadequate.”

One day, after a particularly challenging class, Muniz went to her teacher.

“I told her I basically felt dumb and didn’t know if I was succeeding,” she said. “My teacher said, ‘Fatima, you have the highest grade in the class. Sometimes people just talk to talk, but you’re doing much better than the people that talk the most in class.’”

That moment was a turning point for Muniz. It gave her the confidence to embrace her love for math and helped her realize that she had a unique gift for understanding and explaining complex concepts. She also took to heart her father’s words growing up.

“He would encourage me when I would stand up for myself and would get into arguments with my brothers,” Muniz said. “He would say, ‘Do not let them silence your voice because you are standing up for yourself. I have taken this advice to heart and live by it.’”

Muniz enrolled in the UWO Honors College and is a McNair Scholar. In the summer of 2024, Fatima took part in a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program in Washington State University, where she worked on a challenging mathematics project involving unilateral equitransitive tilings (UET). At first glance, tiling—a mathematical concept involving the arrangement of shapes like tiles to cover a surface—might sound abstract. But in pure mathematics, these kinds of patterns hold deep significance.

Muniz and her research team, including students from New Jersey and California, sought to create an algorithm in Python, a computer programming language, that would identify and filter UETs involving four different-sized squares. Previous research had identified a handful of valid tiling patterns, but Fatima’s team went a step further. By creating an algorithm to filter out redundant or invalid tiling configurations, they reduced the number of possibilities from 400 to just 99 valid ones. Their work not only corrected previous findings, but also introduced new insights into tiling theory that had been overlooked in earlier research.

“Research can feel like you’re building a puzzle,” Muniz said. “You have these rules, and you need to figure out how to make things fit. That’s the beauty of math. You’re constantly asking, ‘Why does this work? How do we know this is true?’”

While the immediate application of their research may seem distant from everyday life, Muniz said she’s OK with the idea of doing research that could later be used to help solve problems in fields like computer science, physics and even art.

“No research is futile,” she said. “No research is not useful.”



UW Oshkosh photo

Graduating senior Fatima Muniz was a member of the Honors College and a McNair Scholar as a mathematics undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.



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# Prep sports roundup

## GIRLS BASKETBALL

### Klesmit sparks Rockets to OT victory

Rowan Klesmit scored the first seven points of the overtime period and tallied 11 of her 22 points in the extra period as Neenah pulled away from Appleton East for a 75-65 win in a Fox Valley Association game last Friday.

Neenah's Rae Schoultz scored on a drive to the basket with 42 seconds left in regulation to tie the game at 62 before both teams had a shot at a game-winner. The Patriots missed their shot with less than 10 seconds to go with Neenah getting a 3-point heave from the right corner by Ellie Buss at the buzzer that just missed to send the game to overtime.

That's when Klesmit took over.

The junior opened the extra period with a 3-pointer on the Rockets' first possession and followed it up with a shot from the block for a 67-62 lead. Her two free throws with 1:05 remaining extended the lead further before two free throws from

Buss gave Neenah a 71-62 lead.

Klesmit, who was 6-of-6 from the foul line in overtime, made two more free throws with 30 seconds left before the Patriots scored their first points of overtime.

Alissa Ebel finished with 15 points for the Rockets, while Celia Gentile chipped in 11 points – all in the first half – and a team-high seven rebounds. Buss, who had a pair of key 3-pointers in the second half for the Rockets, scored 10 points.

### Vogel's big night boosts Zephyrs to win

Emily Vogel knocked down 7-of-12 from 3-point range and finished with a season-high 35 points as St. Mary Catholic toppled Sheboygan Lutheran 79-58.

Vogel also racked up 14 rebounds, five assists and four steals in the win as the Zephyrs – ranked fourth in Division 4 – posted their fifth straight win and improved to 8-1 on the season.

Nolie Anderson added 17 points and 17 rebounds for the Zephyrs, while Lucy Norville finished with eight.

## BOYS BASKETBALL

### Rockets' defense shines in pair of victories

Neenah allowed just 72 points in two games combined as the Rockets posted a pair of wins in as many nights last week.

The Rockets improved to 3-1 in Fox Valley Association play with a convincing 53-29 win over Appleton East last Friday before collecting an 80-43 nonconference win over Kenosha Indian Trail on Saturday night.

### Zephyrs put four in double figures in loss

A quartet of players reached double figures in points but Sheboygan Lutheran was able to pull away in the second half to hand St. Mary Catholic an 81-60 loss last Friday night.

The Zephyrs trailed by just seven points at halftime but were outscored 48-34 in the second half.

Tarver Trinkner and Mason Uhlenbrauck each scored 17 points and combined for seven of the Zephyrs 10 3-pointers in the game.

Preston Fields and Mason Wagner added 11 points apiece for the Zephyrs.

## HOCKEY

### Rockets stymie Bay Port to collect victory

The defense for the Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team kept Bay Port in check last Friday night, limiting the Pirates to just 18 shots in a 3-1 win on the road.

Owen Debbert stopped 17 of the 18 shots he faced to earn the win in goal. The only goal he surrendered was in the first period as Bay Port was able to tie the game at 1, but blanked the Pirates over the final two periods.

Mark Sutton scored on the power play late in the second period to break the tie and Preston Liedke added an insurance

goal midway through the third period to help seal the win. Sutton also scored the Rockets first goal.

Ty Laabs, Cooper Zinda and Zach Verhagen all tallied assists in the win.

## BOYS WRESTLING

### Koch, Herm collect titles at Rex Whitlatch Invite

Declan Koch and Jacob Herm each collected individual titles to lead Neenah at the Rex Whitlatch Invitational hosted by Hillsdale Central (Ill.) High School last weekend.

Koch won the 157-pound title finishing 4-0 at the two-day tournament. He won his first two matches by technical fall posting a combined score of 43-8 and then earned a pin in the semifinals. In the title match, he scored a 6-5 victory over Dominic Serio of West Aurora.

Herm also finished 4-0 to claim the 165-pound title, pinning his first three opponents all in the first period. He then rolled to a 19-3 technical fall win over Gurnee's Royce Lopez in the championship match.

Koch and Herm combined for 64 of the Rockets' 119 team points as Neenah finished 12<sup>th</sup> among the 24 teams in the tournament.

Landen Sheppard went 3-2 to finish fifth at 150 pounds, while Kaden Roth also took fifth at 190 pounds, posting a 4-2 mark with one pin. Jaxon Ennis added a seventh place at 126 pounds, while Connor Simons was eighth at 215 pounds.

## GIRLS WRESTLING

### Kurszewski leads Neenah at Badger State Invite

Kylee Kurszewski went 4-0 and claimed the 126-pound title at the Badger State Girls Invitational held last Saturday at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison.

The junior went 4-0 after receiving a

SEE Prep roundup ON PAGE 11

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# Former Neenah standout announces transfer to Badgers

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

On his drive home from Bethel University for the holiday break, Matt Jung had to take a little detour.

It wasn't any type of construction that forced Jung off his normal route home to Neenah, but a phone call with an offer to join the college football program he grew up dreaming of playing for.

"I was on my way home from college when I got the call receiving the offer from them and they wanted to get me on campus as soon as possible," Jung said in a phone interview last week. "I actually drove to Madison (that) night and had dinner with the coaches and then did my official visit the next day."

The net result of his rerouted trip is that Jung is now a Wisconsin Badger.

"It's still surreal to think about," Jung said. "It's unbelievable that I'm going to be playing in Camp Randall, the stadium that I was going to as a kid and dreaming of playing there."

Jung, who was a two-way standout for the Rockets in high school, played his last two seasons at Bethel University where he was a standout safety for the Royals. After helping Bethel reach the quarterfinals of

the NCAA Division III playoffs this season and pocketing a wealth of individual accolades along the way, Jung decided to enter the transfer portal to see if there was interest in him at the next level.



Jung

There was.

Among the schools that Jung received almost immediate offers from included Iowa State, Washington State, Buffalo and Central Michigan.

But none could measure up to when Wisconsin came through with its interest.

"Entering the portal, I didn't know what to expect. I didn't expect to get Power 4 interest – but that was the ultimate hope," Jung said. "When the Badgers called, that was obviously more intriguing than any other team because I grew up a Badger fan."

What the Badgers will be getting in Jung is a player who had a prolific two years at Bethel.

In his freshman season, Jung led the Royals in tackles, while also finishing the season with seven interceptions.

"I had a good season I didn't think I was ready to play at the next level – I knew I could get a lot better football knowledge-wise, physically and athletically," Jung said. "I think the second year at Bethel I made a major jump. So after this year, I was just ready to explore other opportunities and see what came up."

Jung is coming off a season where he led the nation with nine interceptions, four of which he returned for touchdowns – that tied an NCAA Division III record. He also ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation with 109 tackles, including 10 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks.

Jung was named the Associated Press Division III Defensive Player of the Year as well as being named a semifinalist for the Gagliardi Award – annually given to the top player in NCAA Division III football. He also earned multiple all-American honors as well as a wealth of all-region and all-conference accolades.

He also helped a Bethel program to just its sixth quarterfinal round appearance in the NCAA Division III playoffs, while the Royals hosted their first postseason game since 2018.

"I wouldn't say by any means it was a perfect season from a team standpoint or a personal standpoint," Jung said. "There were mistakes I made in every game and ways I can get better. But when you make the Elite 8, you can't really be upset."

With all of the success Jung had in a Royals uniform, he admits that it is tough to leave the program.

"It's really hard to leave Bethel. What they did for me and what they made me into and

what I am right now, a lot of it comes from Bethel and what Coach (Mike McElroy) poured into me," Jung said. "Coach Mac is an unbelievable human being and I look up to that dude at all times. When I entered the portal, I had a long conversation with Coach Mac and it was emotional. It's not an easy place to leave."

Jung, who is enrolled at Wisconsin for the spring semester and will start practicing with the Badgers when workouts begin, will join another former Neenah standout in Madison.

Grant Dean has also committed to the Badgers and will be joining the team this spring. Dean was a freshman when Jung was a senior at Neenah.

"Grant texted me after the coaches started calling me and it's going to be surreal that we are going to be wearing the same jerseys again," Jung said. "It's cool we'll be sitting in the same position room for sure."

Jung will hit Madison with an opportunity to grab a starting spot next fall with the departure of stalwart safety Hunter Wohlers.

Yet, he knows that if he is going to take the field at Camp Randall Stadium next fall, it's something he is going to have to earn.

"There is a safety spot open and there is going to be a competition. Nothing is going to be given," Jung said. "There are a lot of good players. When you go to any Big 10 school you can't go in there and expect to start. There's going to be a lot of competition and I'm excited to go in there and compete."

## Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 10

first-round bye to win the title, improving to 14-1 on the season. She pinned her first two opponents – the first win coming in just 46 seconds – and then won a 7-4 decision over Waunakee's Kit Alsaker in the semifinals. In the title match, Kurszewski scored a 10-2 major decision over Jessie

Demarasse of Milton.

Neenah had a trio of wrestlers finish fourth at their respective weights in Jollee Reay (114), Ashlynn Schiedermaier (120) and Ava Armatti (138), while Amari Richard (132) placed fifth. Emma Verbrick added a sixth-place finish at 215 pounds.

The Rockets finished third in the final team standings, finishing behind only team champion Milton and Badger.

# Obituaries

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# Calendar of events

**Friday, Dec. 27**  
Murphy Brothers, 7 p.m., Xe 54, 1350 West American Drive, Fox Crossing

**Saturday, Dec. 28**  
Miles Nielsen, 9 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

**Monday, Dec. 30**  
Glow in the Dark Party, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Big Band Reunion, 7:30 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

**Saturday, Jan. 4**  
Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

**Monday, Jan. 6**  
Big Band Reunion, 7:30 p.m., Cranky Pat's, 905 S. Commercial St.

**Saturday, Jan. 11**  
Washington Park Winter Festival, 11 a.m., 631 W. Winneconne Ave.

**Monday, Jan. 13**  
Monday Matinee: "It Ends With Us," 1 p.m., Neenah Public Library

# Classifieds

Call 920.486.1616 to place your ad

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# Kid Scoop

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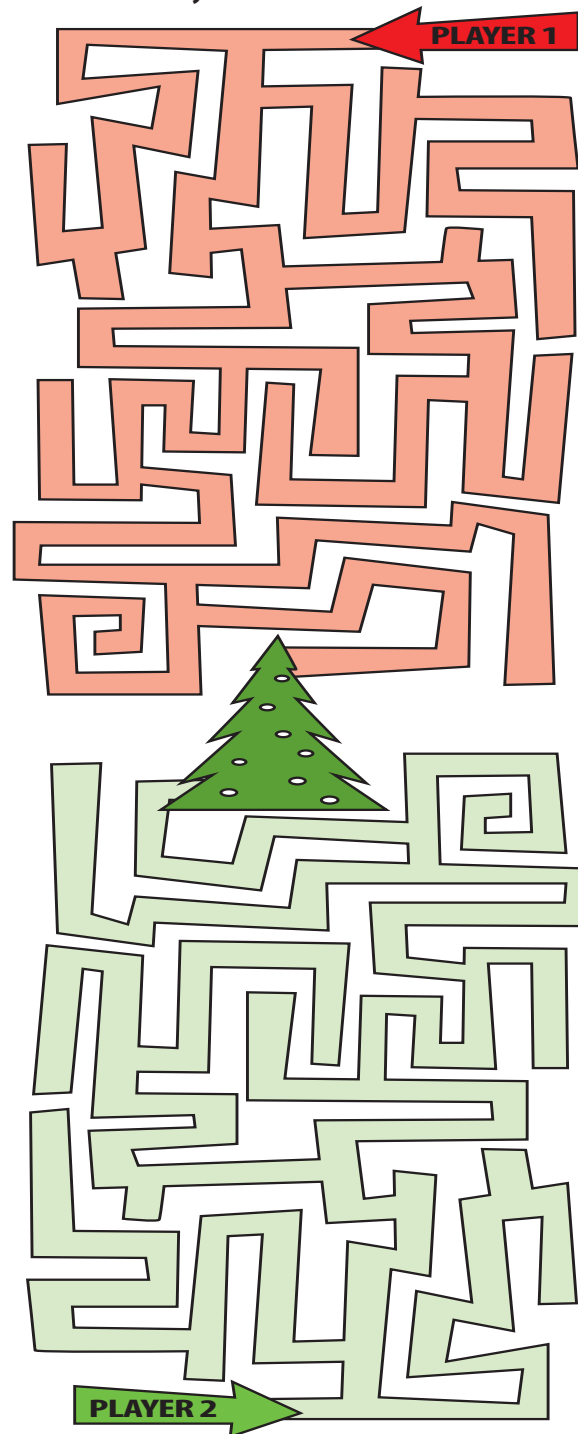
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## Kid Scoop Together Christmas Trees

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition over four centuries ago. Christians in Germany brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce.

Race a family member to the Christmas tree!



# Christmas Around the World

Nearly everyone celebrates some sort of holiday in the winter. For many people, it's **Christmas**. Let's take a trip to celebrate with kids around the globe!

## Frohe Weihnachten

### Merry Christmas from Germany

The advent calendar is long part of the German tradition to help children count down the days until Christmas Eve. The calendar has 24 doors with little surprises inside and starts December 1. Each day, children open a calendar door until Christmas Eve arrives.



Color one space on the advent calendar below every day through Christmas Eve!

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24

## Joyeux Noël

### Merry Christmas from France

In France, some families find a large log to burn. They call it the **Yule Log** and light it on Christmas Eve using a piece of unburned log from the year before. Some save the ashes from the Yule Log, believing these ashes can ward off sickness and other misfortunes.

Today, instead of burning a Yule Log, many French people make and eat a beautiful chocolate cake in the shape of a log.

Can you find your way through the Yule Log maze?



## Feliz Navidad

### Merry Christmas from Mexico

On Christmas Eve, children celebrate with a **piñata**. The children are blindfolded and take turns trying to break it with a stick. When it breaks open, there are lots of goodies for everyone!



Can you find the piñata that's different than the others?

## God Jul

### Merry Christmas from Sweden

On December 13th, the eldest daughter plays the role of St. Lucia and serves coffee and sweet rolls to the family. She wears a lighted holly wreath on her head and sings carols.



Extra! Extra!

## Gifts from the Heart

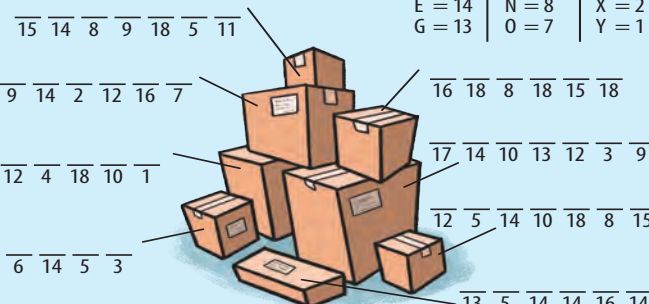
Can you find examples in your local newspaper of gifts people can give that don't cost money?

Standards Link: Use the newspaper to locate information.

## Kid Scoop Puzzler

Where in the world are these packages being shipped? Use the code to find out!

A = 18	I = 12	P = 6
B = 17	K = 11	R = 5
C = 16	L = 10	T = 4
D = 15	M = 9	U = 3
E = 14	N = 8	X = 2
G = 13	O = 7	Y = 1



Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

## Double Double Word Search

CAKE  
CALENDAR  
DOOR  
EVE  
FAMILY  
HOLLY  
LOG  
PINATA  
ROLE  
SAVE  
STICK  
SWEDEN  
SWEET  
TRIP  
YULE

Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards, sideways and diagonally.

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

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

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