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Warehouse to be made into apartments

236-unit complex will add \$43M to tax base

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

A longtime warehouse site near Arrowhead Park is slated for demolition as the city of Neenah moves forward with plans to transform the property into a major apartment development expected to add more than \$40 million to the city's tax base.

The city purchased the 1.8-acre warehouse property at 135 Millview Drive for \$2.2 million in August using Capital Improvement Project funds. The site, located in Tax Incremental District 10, was

bought from JFB RE Holdings 1, an LLC connected to businessman John Bergstrom. Records show JFB RE Holdings 1 had acquired the property earlier that month for the same price.

Community Development Director Kelly Nieforth said the acquisition has long been considered a key step in advancing downtown redevelopment goals. When combined with two adjacent city-owned parcels, the site will total roughly three acres.

"From a city standpoint, it is a lot of money, but it also has the potential to create a lot of increment and value in our community," she said at an earlier meeting.

During Tuesday's special Common

Council meeting, Nieforth announced that the warehouse will be demolished to make way for a 236-unit market-rate apartment complex proposed by T. Wall Enterprises of Middleton. T. Wall Enterprises previously developed Solaris on Main, a market-rate apartment complex at Main Street and Millview Drive overlooking Arrowhead Park and Little Lake Butte des Morts.

The new development will include a mix of efficiencies, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments.

"The city will be tearing down the warehouse building, working with a contractor on that, and T. Wall hopes to start con-

SEE **New apartments** ON PAGE 8

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City votes to retain all school crossing guards
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Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Inspiring night

The 12th annual "Phase 1" Special Olympics Unified basketball game was held Nov. 12 at Neenah High School. The Rockets maintained their perfect record in the event with a 66-52 win over the staff all-star team. The night included halftime performances from the United Rockets and Unified dance teams as well as a barrage of three-point shooting from the Rockets' team.

Neenah to Netflix: 'The Twits' director has local roots

Hometown Easter egg hidden in new movie

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Viewers of Netflix's new animated feature "The Twits" may have spotted a surprising local detail tucked into the film's end credits: a character clutching a tourism guide to Neenah.

The hidden reference comes courtesy of director, writer and Neenah native Phil Johnston, who said the nod was a personal way to pay tribute to his hometown.

"This character is sitting on an airplane, and he has a guide book to Neenah, Wis-

consin, like a tourism guide to Neenah," Johnston said during an interview with Neenah News last week. "So the back story is that this guy is going on a vacation to Neenah from wherever he lives."

The character, Mr. Napkin, is voiced by Johnston, who also produced, directed and co-wrote the movie loosely based on the 1980 book by Roald Dahl. According to Netflix, the movie follows "the meanest, nastiest villains" who pull a trick to take over their town,



Johnston

prompting two children to team up with a family of magical animals to stop them.

Johnston said the movie took about five years to complete, initially starting as a television show before pivoting to a feature film after the show was canceled. It has a unique visual style distinct from his previous work on Disney animated films.

"I wanted it to look very different and create a world that didn't look like any other animated movies, and so the color palette is different," he said. "Everything about it was challenging and sort of an uphill battle."

Johnston, a 1990 graduate of Neenah High School who now works in film from Vancouver, Canada, often embeds trib-

utes to his roots in his projects.

"If not visually, there's always some reference to some person, like a line of dialog that is just taken from someone I went to high school with, or from a teacher or something," he said.

His credits include working on Disney movies "Wreck-It Ralph," "Zootopia," and "Ralph Breaks the Internet," as well as the independent film "Cedar Rapids," where he slipped in a local nod with a character saying "no flex," meaning "no flexibility."

"No flex," that was something one of my high school teachers used to say all the time ... and there are a bunch of oth-

SEE **Twits director** ON PAGE 8

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Advertising deadline is noon Friday for the following Friday. The classified line ads deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday for Friday.

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Corrections

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

About the newspaper

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Neenah schools release scores on State Report Cards

Neenah News

The Neenah Joint School District earned an "exceeds expectations" designation on the latest state report card, which was released Nov. 11 by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Four Neenah schools significantly exceeded expectations and four others exceeded expectations on their 2024-25 school report cards. This marks the fourth straight year the district has achieved the exceeds expectations category and the district's score improved from 72.2 in 2023-24 to 72.8 for 2024-25.

Alliance Elementary, Clayton Elementary, Lakeview Elementary and Tullar Elementary all earned the "significantly exceeds" designation. Coolidge Elementary, Horace Mann Elementary, Spring Road Elementary and Neenah High School all earned the "exceeds expectations" designation.

Rusty water reported near Horace Mann school

Neenah News

Rusty water was reported earlier this week in the City of Neenah near Horace Mann school. The city said water utility technicians were aware of the complaints and staff was flushing hydrants in the area.

The city said if hydrants are being flushed nearby, residents should wait to use water for approximately one-half hour to allow any fine particles to settle down.

nation. Neenah Middle School and Taft Elementary met expectations.

Report cards provide a score between 0 and 100, which is calculated by averaging the following priority areas: student achievement in reading and math, student growth, target group outcomes, and on-track readiness. Report cards use up to three years of data, including achievement data from 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Lakeview Elementary had Neenah's highest score at 96.3, which ranked 21st among the 2,223 schools that were scored statewide. Clayton Elementary had the highest increase over the past year with a score of 89.4, which was an improvement of 5.1 points from the previous year.

Each school's report card may be accessed through the Department of Public Instruction website by clicking here: dpi.wi.gov/accountability/report-cards.

If discoloration is noticed after running the water, residents are advised to wait 15 minutes. Then flush out the discolored water through the outside hose bib or cold laundry sink faucet.

Although the water may temporarily be somewhat discolored, the city said it is safe to drink. The discoloration is the result of rust and mineral deposits being scoured from the inside of the pipes.



Neenah Historical Society photo

City Hall construction

Construction of City Hall in 1888 was good news for many local tradesmen who benefited from steady work and income. Designed by Oshkosh architect William Waters, local contractors like E.F. Weickert supplied the building materials and manpower to construct the three story, stone and brick structure. The large archways accommodated the fire engine, hook and ladder truck and other machinery.

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Neenah News
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November 28 issue:

Display Deadline
Friday, 11/21 Noon

Classified Deadline:
Friday, 11/21 3pm

Obituary Deadline:
Monday, 11/24 Noon

Neenah News
Serving Neenah & Fox Crossing

December 5th issue:

Display Deadline
Wednesday, 11/26 Noon

Classified Deadline:
Tuesday, 12/2 3pm

Obituary Deadline:
Wednesday, 12/3 Noon

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Calendar of events

Saturday, Nov. 22

Neenah Animal Shelter Pop-Up Shop, 8 a.m., The Marketplace, 124 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Taft Elementary PTO Craft Show, 9 a.m., 133 S. Western Ave.

Craft and Camo Art Fair, 9 a.m., Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 809 South Commercial St.

Author Garrette Kersten of "I'm Still Here..." Book Signing, 1 p.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Tuesday, Nov. 25

Show Choir, Jazz and Touch of Class Opener, 7:30 p.m., Pickard Auditorium

Thursday, Nov. 27

Free Thanksgiving Meal 11 a.m., Peace Lutheran Church, 1228 S. Park St.

Friday, Nov. 28

Finish the Lyrics Live: Holiday Edition, 2 and 7 p.m., Greene's Pour House, Neenah

Saturday, Nov. 29

Author Kelly Nelson of "The Carpenter and The Cat" and "Brownie the War Dog" Book Signing, 10 a.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Neenah-Menasha Firefighters Charitable Foundation Rudolph Run/Walk, 5 p.m., Neenah Public Library to Gateway Plaza

Tuesday, Dec. 2

Skating With Santa, 4 p.m., The Plaza

Wednesday, Dec. 3

St. Nick Sale, 9 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah Gift Gallery

"A New Santa Claus in Town" Barber-shop Bistro Dinner Show presented by the Fox Valleyaires Men's Barbershop Chorus, 5:30 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton

Thursday, Dec. 4

Bake Sale, 7 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah

St. Nick Sale, 9 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah Gift Gallery

Friday, Dec. 5

St. Nick Sale, 9 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah Gift Gallery

First Friday Concert: Mike Malone Trio Plays Vince Guaraldi, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Neenah's Very Merry Christmas, 5 p.m., Downtown Neenah

Christmas at the Octagon House, 5 p.m., Neenah Historical Society, 343 Smith St.

Correction

Oct. 31, Page 3: In the "Community glass mural 'Fused by Numbers' completed" article, the finished piece at the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass is 5x6 feet.

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A Very Neenah Christmas Market added to festivities

Neenah News

Future Neenah is adding new features and expanding a holiday event in Downtown Neenah.

A Very Neenah Christmas Market will be part of the downtown festivities that start Dec. 5 with A Very Neenah Christmas and continue throughout the weekend. Organizers said the market will be “a must-visit destination for holiday fun and shopping.”

Visitors will be able to wander through the Galloway Christmas Village, filled with 15 huts featuring local artisans, makers and food vendors offering unique gifts and treats.

Other family-friendly activities include festive carousel rides, live entertainment, festive photo ops and visits with Santa. Sparkling lights and décor will be spread throughout Downtown Neenah.

“A Very Neenah Christmas has always been a cherished tradition that captures the warmth and joy of our community,” said Michelle Dunning, outreach and development coordinator for Future Neenah. “Future Neenah is all about bringing people together, and this new Christmas Market is another wonderful example of that. From the twinkling lights to the laughter of families and friends, it’s the perfect way to celebrate the season and the connections that make Neenah so special.”

Hours for the Christmas market will be 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 5, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Dec. 6 and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 7.

The festivities from 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 5 for A Very Neenah Christmas feature cheerful carolers and festive surprises that



Photo from Future Neenah

Workers last week started decorating a tree in downtown Neenah in preparation for the upcoming holiday season. A tree lighting ceremony will take place at 5 p.m. Dec. 5 to start festivities for A Very Neenah Christmas and A Very Neenah Christmas Market.

bring the streets of Downtown Neenah to life. Live mannequin windows will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Other activities include

a tree lighting ceremony, Santa and Mrs. Claus, live reindeer, ice sculptures, carolers and street performers.

Octagon House to be decorated for holiday open house

Neenah News

An open house style event will feature the 1856 Octagon House decorated for the holidays.

Christmas at the Octagon House will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 5 and noon to 4 p.m. Dec. 6. The Neenah Historical Society invites attendees to warm up with a beverage and cookie while exploring the Growing Up Neenah Exhibit.

They will have Christmas movies playing and a special photo opportunity featuring Santa Claus and his sleigh (retired from the former Santa Float). A variety of items will be available for purchase.

Brehmer Law LLC. is sponsoring the event, making it free to attend and open to the public.

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Fox Crossing's 2026 budget boosts roads, parks

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The Village of Fox Crossing's proposed 2026 budget will include a modest increase in the municipal tax levy and another reduction in the village tax rate.

Finance Director Jeremy Searl said Fox Crossing is setting its sights on maintenance and essential services in its proposed 2026 budget, with no major staffing increases or operational overhauls.

The total municipal levy is proposed to rise to \$10.46 million in 2026, a 3.66% increase over 2025. That includes a general fund levy of \$8.27 million and a debt service levy of \$2.19 million.

Searl said the increase is mainly driven by debt from previous borrowing. Fox Crossing's debt payments will rise by just over \$200,000 next year, with about \$175,000 of that covered by the tax levy. He said the issue is that the village didn't see much new construction this year. New development usually allows a village to raise its levy, but this year it only created about \$67,000 in additional levy capacity.

"So that really made things kind of tight," he said.

Though the levy will increase, the budget projects another decline in the municipal tax rate due to continued growth in property values. Fox Crossing's total municipal assessed tax rate for Winnebago County parcels is expected to fall to \$3.79 per \$1,000 of assessed value, down from \$3.86 in 2025, a 1.69% drop. That means a property assessed at \$200,000 would owe \$758 in village taxes in 2026, down from \$771 in 2025, and a 27% decrease compared with 2020.

At the same time, many residents may see a higher property tax bill. Searl said that's because the village's equalized property values went up by 6.2%. If a homeowner's property value didn't increase this year, they would actually see about a \$16 decrease in their village taxes, but if their home value rose at the average rate, they will see roughly a \$70 increase instead.

A highlight in next year's budget is a boost in spending from \$40,000 a year to \$150,000 for the crack seal program, a road resurfacing technique designed to extend the life of local roads. Searl said the initiative is funded without raising tax rates, using higher-than-expected interest earnings.

Public safety is also a focus. The Fox

Crossing Police Department will undergo a major transition, with a new chief, captain and three lieutenants next year. Searl noted the transitions will not impact the budget, but said public safety is one of Fox Crossing's largest operational priorities.

The Garbage/Recycling Fund budget increases nearly 15% to \$1.77 million in 2026. Searl said a new leaf-collection truck is a significant factor in the increase.

"Residents will see an increase in service, because now we can pick up more leaves at a faster rate, which means we can probably get around a little bit more often," he said. The annual refuse pickup charge is unchanged at \$220 per household.

Several major capital projects are planned for 2026. An emergency generator will be installed at the primary water plant, funded through borrowing approved this year. Valley Road saw water and sewer work completed in anticipation of a larger urbanization project next year, with Menasha and Fox Crossing covering the local share of improvements on the stretch from Highway 47 to Midway Road. The \$10 million project is primarily funded by Winnebago County and the state.

Recreation improvements are also on the horizon. Schildt Park is slated for a full renovation, including an expanded playground, new pickleball and basketball courts, and an added trail.

Searl said he is confident in the village's financial health heading into 2026.

"The village is in very strong fiscal shape," he said.

A public hearing on the budget is set for 5 p.m. Monday with adoption to follow.

Neenah school board to host informational sessions

Neenah News

The Neenah Joint School District Board of Education will hold an informational session for anyone interested in learning more about a potential board candidacy from 6 to 7 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Administration Building.

Current Board members will lead the session and cover such items as the roles of the board, the time commitments for members and the structure and purpose of committees. The session will be in-

son with no virtual option. There is no commitment to run for the board by attending the session.

Three seats with three-year terms will be contested in an election on April 7, 2026. Individuals who reside in the district and are interested in running for the board must file their Declaration of Candidacy by 5 p.m. on Jan. 6. Nomination papers are available at the Administration Building at 410 S. Commercial St. during regular office hours.

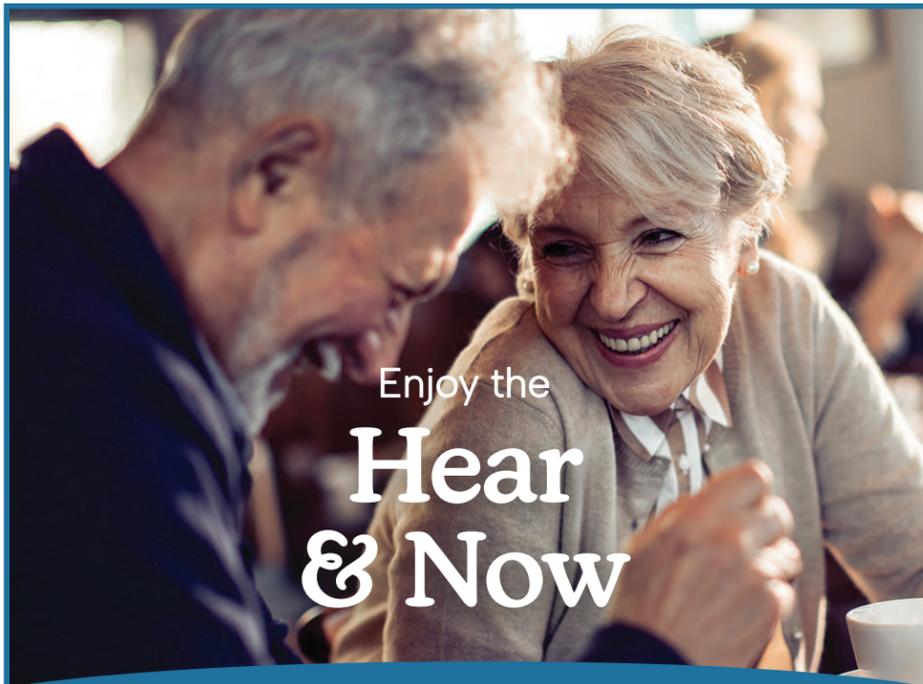
Tickets on sale for Madrigal Dinner

Neenah News

Tickets are available for the Neenah High School Madrigal Dinner on Dec. 6.

The dinner will be in the Neenah High School Atrium. Shows will be held at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. and feature a catered dinner with the show. Tickets are \$30 each and can be purchased at the Main Entrance of NHS (Door 1) through Tuesday.

In addition, the Vintage show choir will be performing a free concert at 7:30 p.m. in Pickard Auditorium. The concert features performances by Intermediate and Advanced Jazz Ensembles, Touch of Class, Act II and Vintage.



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City reverses crossing guard cuts in 2026 budget

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The Neenah Common Council voted Tuesday to retain all 14 of the city's school crossing guard positions, reversing a proposal to cut four crossing guards as part of the 2026 municipal budget.

The decision followed testimony from residents, a crossing guard and city leaders during a budget meeting that also included discussion about a new pedestrian safety beacon.

Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass launches fund drive

Neenah News

Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass has launched its annual fund drive campaign "What we do together is extraordinary" aimed at providing operational funding for the organization.

The museum depends on benefactors to support its operations. The museum this year has offered free admission to 32,748 guests, a 5% increase over the year prior, and participated in more than 30 creative community partnerships, a 15% annual increase.

In addition, 11,100 participants have experienced onsite and offsite programs, 700 Golden Ticket Art Activity Day scholarships were given to underserved populations, 2,464 students have enrolled in 168 glass classes and 284 artworks have been displayed across six exhibitions and 266 gifted artworks have been added to the museum's collections.

"We are truly grateful to be able to present these and other community-centered experiences, made possible only through the generosity shown by so many," museum Executive Director Amy Moorefield said. "These public-funded events are the very embodiment of what we mean when we say 'What we do together is extraordinary.'"

The fundraising campaign will include public awareness efforts via direct mail, broadcast media, social media and local and regional print publications.

To learn more about the Annual Fund Drive Campaign, visit bmmglass.com/donate.

Mayor Jane Lang spoke on the potential reduction in crossing guards at the meeting.

"As is clear from our budgets, we prioritize public safety above all else in this community," she said.

Lang then proposed amending her budget to include the four crossing guards positions, stating that conversations she's had with Neenah Joint School District Superintendent Steve Harrison and Police Chief Aaron Olson "have given me the assurance that we will be able to work more collaboratively in the coming year with the school district to address the staffing concerns that precipitated this proposal."

"Our citizens' concerns regarding this issue are important to me, and I want to make sure that not only do they have accurate information on this topic, but that they also have the opportunity to have conversations with all nine aldermen and all school board members as well," she said.

Olson had initially recommended reducing the number of crossing guards from 14 to 10 after a review conducted with the Safe Routes to School program. Under the proposal, crossing guards would no longer patrol Allcott Drive and Commercial Street, where the traffic signal now includes audible pedestrian directions; Cecil Street and Green Bay Road, where about four students typically cross and the city plans to install a flashing pedestrian sign; and Tullar Road and Apple Blossom Drive, where students can walk one block north to cross at Tullar Road and Byrd Avenue.

Olson told council members the proposal was based on staffing needs, low

student use at certain intersections and newly installed safety features such as audible pedestrian signals.

"It's not like social media says – that I hate kids. It's not true," he said. "I have kids in the school district as well. We are always assessing the needs of our staff at the police department, including the crossing guards, just like we assessed every program and every position in our police department throughout the year. I've had many staffing cuts in other parts of our department. It's never easy, but that's part of my job."

Residents opposed the cuts during the public hearing. Katie McCowen urged the council to prioritize safety over savings.

"Crossing guards are not just nice to have," she said. "They are one of the few proven frontline safety measures we provide to children during the most vulnerable part of their day, getting to and from school."

Crossing guard Vicki Hanson described frequent "near misses" involving children in crosswalks.

"Now I'm just a crossing guard, but I love those kids, and I don't want to see any more accidents like we saw last year," she said

The amendment to increase the budget by \$19,160 to fund the four crossing guard positions passed 8-1, with Alderman Mark Ellis voting against.

In addition to restoring the crossing guard funding, the council approved setting aside \$25,000 for a pedestrian beacon at Tullar Road and Gay Drive. The beacon was proposed by Alderman Bill Pollnow Jr. in response to ongoing safety concerns near local schools.



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5:00 - 8:00pm

Downtown Neenah will transform into a holiday wonderland filled with:

- Tree lighting (5pm)
- Live mannequin windows (6-8pm)
- Santa & Mrs. Claus
- Live reindeer
- Ice sculptures
- Marshmallow roasting
- Live Nativity (Kessler-Fahrenkrug Funeral Home)
- Ice skating
- Kick off to A Very Neenah Christmas Market!



Presented by
Galloway Company
Friday, Dec 5 | 5-8pm
Saturday, Dec 6 | 10am-8pm
Sunday, Dec 7 | 10am-3pm

Located in Gateway Park
(between Plexus and Ascension)

Debuting for the first time, this festive open-air market captures the timeless charm of a traditional European Christmas experience. Stroll through twinkling lights, savor seasonal delights, and discover unique holiday treasures.

- Holiday magic awaits:
- Charming vendor huts in Galloway Christmas Village
 - Festive carousel
 - Carriage rides
 - European Santa
 - Heated tent filled with food vendors and entertainment
 - Limited edition 2025 Market mug to fill with Gluhwein or eggnog
 - Reindeer
 - Crafts
 - Shopping and fun throughout Downtown Neenah!

Follow Future Neenah on Facebook or check website for all event details.

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UWO plans celebration for Harmon at The Grand

By George Halas
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

John Harmon's 90th Birthday Celebration with the UWO Jazz Ensemble will be held at 7 p.m. Saturday at The Grand Oshkosh.

Harmon, referred to by many as "the Godfather of Jazz in Wisconsin," turned 90 in October. He is a gifted pianist, composer, arranger and artistic director of the Fox Jazz Festival. The celebratory concert will feature his original compositions exclusively.

The UWO Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Professor of Music, Dr. Marty Robinson, a Neenah High School and Lawrence University graduate who was recently inducted into the Neenah High School Hall of Fame, is a "traditional 18-piece big band" and features "some of the best instrumental musicians at the university," according to Robinson.

"The Jazz Ensemble is open to everyone. Currently, about half of the members are music majors," Robinson said. "It attracts student musicians from all over the state."

He said 40 to 50 musicians audition ev-

ery year and those who make the cut tend to "play for the duration of their college experience," which includes five or six live campus performances during a typical school year.

Harmon will join the band for the Grand concert, playing a grand piano furnished by one of the events sponsors, Heid Music.

The Grand itself will be one of the stars of the occasion.

"We knew it was John's 90th birthday and we pitched the (celebration concert) idea to John and the Grand," Robinson said. "There is no better place to do it than the Grand. It is so important for jazz to have good acoustics."

Involved in the support of Fox Cities' music for 60-plus years and a sponsor of the Fox Jazz Festival, one of Harmon's lifelong passions, Heid Music's involvement was a "perfect fit," Robinson said.

"The Grand Opera House stage is not big enough to house its own grand piano," Robinson said. "If John Harmon is going to play, you've got to have a great grand piano and the outreach to Heid Music was a nat-



Submitted photo

UWO Jazz Ensemble director Marty Robinson said the opportunity for students "to perform alongside a legend like John Harmon — and to do it on one of the most elegant and acoustically beautiful stages in the region — is a truly special experience."

ural one."

The Jazz Ensemble will begin each half of the concert playing Harmon compositions, "some written for big bands and others arranged for big band by John and myself," Robinson said. "We wanted a mix of different styles and different tempos to help create a good program."

Following the Jazz Ensemble in each set will be Harmon joined by guest artists Janet Planet, Tom Washatka, John Gibson and Zach Harmon, John's son. They will play Harmon compositions as a small group.

The Jazz Ensemble and the guest artists will combine for the concert's finale, "El Tigre," a piece Harmon wrote for the highly-regarded jazz fusion band, Matrix, of which he was a co-founder. Planet will

handle the lead vocal and "a there may be a few original members of Matrix who will join us," Robinson hinted.

For Harmon, the night promises to be both a celebration and a homecoming — a full-circle moment shared with the next generation of jazz musicians who carry his influence forward.

After the concert, the festivities will continue in the upstairs lounge at the Grand with music provided by the Afterglow Jazz Quartet featuring Robinson, guitarist Phil Nelson, bassist Andy Mertens and drummer Ryan Thomas.

"We're hoping it turns into a bit of a jam session and a jazz party," Robinson said.

More details and tickets information are available online at thegrandoskosh.org.

Fox Cares Foundation donates to local food pantries

Neenah News

In response to the growing challenges of food access, Fox Cares Foundation last week announced a special donation of \$25,000 each to three of the region's food pantries, including Oshkosh Area Community Pantry, St. Joseph Food Program in Menasha and Paul's Pantry in Green Bay.

"This is a moment where we felt compelled to go above and beyond," said Amanda Brown, executive director of the Fox Cares Foundation. "Our Board of Directors took a close look at our financial

position and agreed that now is the time to act. This is only possible because of the incredible support from our sponsors and participants in events like our golf outing, clay shoot and Bike to the Beat, as well as the generosity of Fox Communities Credit Union member donors. Their commitment makes this gift happen — and we are deeply grateful."

These donations will help the pantries continue their work of feeding thousands of individuals and families across the region, especially during the holiday season.

Bowling event benefits Big Brothers Big Sisters

Neenah News

Local credit unions contributed \$4,609 to Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin that was raised through a recent bowling event.

The Credit Union Bowl for Kids' Sake event was held on Nov. 8 at Rolling Thunder Lanes in Neenah.

This year's Credit Union Bowl for Kids' Sake brought together local credit unions and community members for an afternoon of bowling, camaraderie and fundraising, all aimed at supporting the mentorship programs provided by Big

Brothers Big Sisters. Participating groups included Fox Communities Credit Union, CoVantage Credit Union, Verve, a Credit Union, Evergreen Credit Union, Prospera Credit Union — Wisconsin and Winnebago Community Credit Union.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin is dedicated to helping youth reach their full potential through one-on-one mentoring relationships. The organization relies on generous support from the community to sustain their programs and facilitate meaningful connections between mentors and mentees.

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Morton Drug Company alerts customers of data breach

Neenah News

Morton Drug Company is notifying individuals whose personal information may have been involved in a recent network security incident.

On or about Aug. 20, MDC discovered a network security incident that impacted its IT systems. Immediately upon identifying the incident, MDC engaged third-party cybersecurity experts to assess, contain and remediate the incident. Law enforcement was also notified.

The investigation into patient information exposure, which concluded on or around Oct. 21, identified instances of name, address, prescription information, and in some cases social security number, for certain patients as a result of this incident.

While the investigation has not iden-

tified any instances of fraud or identity theft that have occurred as a result of this incident, out of an abundance of caution, MDC is notifying individuals whose personal information may have been involved and providing resources they can use to help protect their information.

MDC takes its responsibility to safeguard personal information seriously and regrets any concern this incident may have caused.

As part of MDC's ongoing commitment to information security, the organization has taken steps to help reduce the likelihood of a similar event in the future.

Individuals with questions may contact the dedicated call center at 1-833-594-0797 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Woman dies after jumping from highway overpass

Neenah News

A woman was killed Tuesday after jumping from the U.S. Highway 10 overpass onto Interstate 41.

According to the Fox Crossing Police Department, an officer responded at approximately 11:20 a.m. to the area of Highway 10 and Interstate 41 for a report of a woman who was standing next to a vehicle and possibly needing assistance. When the officer arrived, he saw the woman jump from the Highway 10 overpass, falling onto one of the northbound lanes of the interstate.

Police said a motorist immediately stopped to provide aid and remove the

woman from the lane of traffic, and emergency personnel also arrived within minutes to render aid. Assisting jurisdictions promptly closed on-ramp access to Interstate 41 to help minimize traffic flow.

The patient was transported from the scene by Gold Cross; however, she was later pronounced deceased as a result of her injuries.

Assisting agencies included the Neenah Police Department, Wisconsin State Patrol, Winnebago County Sheriff's Department, Gold Cross Ambulance and the Fox Crossing Fire Department.

The incident remains under investigation. No further information was released.

Police department receives donation from marathon

Neenah News

The Neenah Police Department said earlier this week the Community First Fox Cities Marathon made a \$3,000 donation to the department.

"We are grateful for their support and happy to host the main event finish line at Riverside Park," the police said.

During the Fox Cities Marathon week-

end, thousands of participants, volunteers, spectators, local businesses and community partners come together at eight events including a marathon, half marathon, relay marathon, 10K, 5K, kids events and an expo.

Over their 34-year history, the event has returned more than \$1.1 million to the community.



Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Land restoration

A group of about 50 people, consisting of students, teachers, neighbors, families and others cleared buckthorn and other invasive plants on Saturday as part of a Neenah High School land restoration project. The group, led by teachers Ryan Walter and Nathaniel Blood, has been working with Merjent, Inc. and Pheasants Forever to restore the lands on high school property adjacent to the outdoor classroom to its native state. The project has provided learning opportunities for students in the school's Environmental Issues class and other science courses.

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Twits director

FROM PAGE 1

er examples of lines of dialog that friends said, or teachers, or people I grew up with that I steal and just plop in there," he said.

Johnston said his interest in movies started at a young age, when he would frequent the local Neenah Theatre, which was owned by Marcus, with free passes from a family friend.

"I think that was sort of where my first love of movies came from," he said. "And then in high school, I was involved in theater and drama at Neenah High, and so I think a love of acting and performing and the arts happened there."

He went on to study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and credits small-town life and unique Wisconsin traditions for inspiring his distinctive storytelling style.

"I don't think people appreciate how weird Wisconsin is, like in the best sense," he said.

Before breaking into filmmaking, Johnston worked as a journalist across the Midwest. He entered the film industry in his early 30s after attending film school in New York.

When asked what advice he'd give aspiring writers and filmmakers from Neenah, Johnston said not to be afraid to take risks.

"If you're going to do it, you have to really be ready to jump into the deep end and fail repeatedly and not be afraid of failing, because it's part of the journey, and that's one thing," he said. "So develop a thick skin, and if you're going to go for it, just commit and do it."

Looking ahead, Johnston is set to write Sony Pictures upcoming "View-Master" movie, based on the childhood toy made by Mattel.

"View-Masters are almost like early VR (virtual reality) or something, where you could really just immerse yourself in a place and just imagine yourself being in those worlds," he said.

While he couldn't reveal much about the project, Johnston hinted it would be "a big family film for lots of people."

Johnston's parents, William and Beverly, still reside in Neenah and he returns to visit a few times a year. As for being considered a local celebrity, Johnston is modest.

"I'm kind of still a 16-year-old in Neenah in my mind," he said. "None of this has really changed how I see the world."

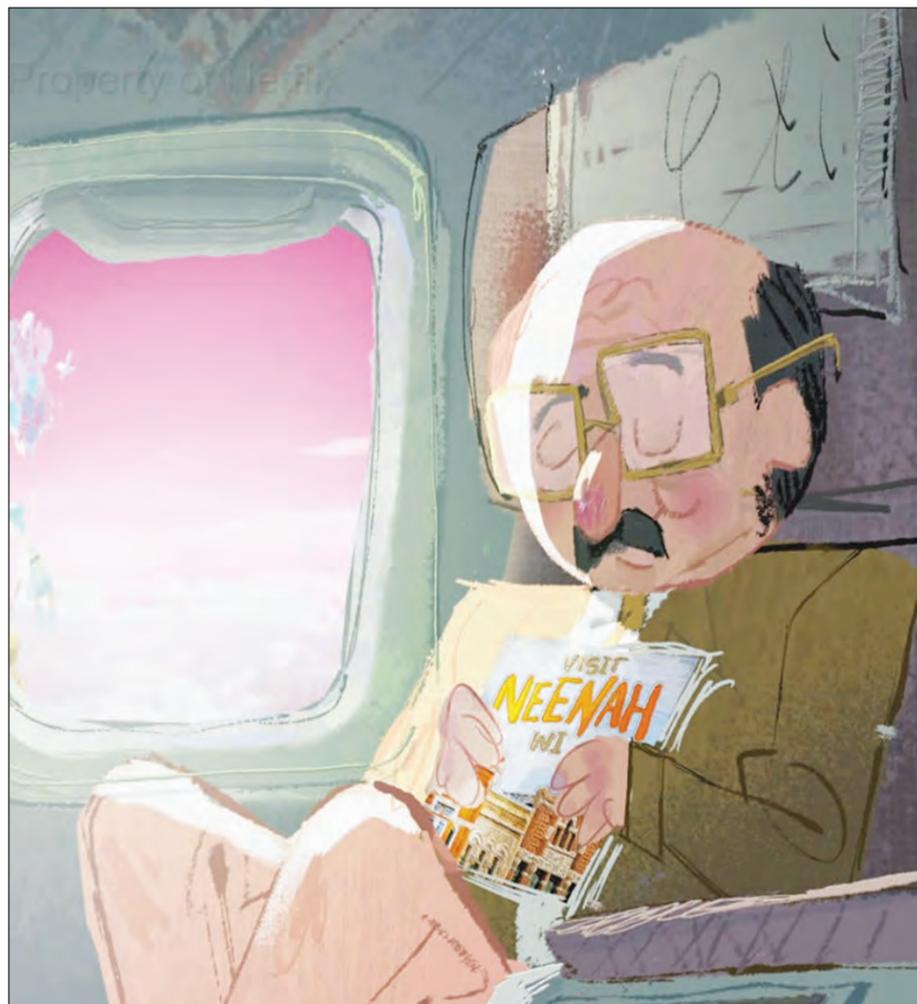


Photo from Netflix

In the end credits of "The Twits," released on Netflix last month, the character Mr. Napkin holds a tourist guide to Neenah.

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New apartments

FROM PAGE 1

struction by the end of 2026," Nieforth said.

She added that the city is evaluating a combination of local funding sources and

potential grants to cover demolition costs. The city also plans to salvage usable building materials during the teardown.

"Right now, the property is valued at \$1.68 million," Nieforth said. "The estimated assessed value would be over \$43 million once fully constructed within the two phases."

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Neenah showcases craftsmanship, creativity in skills competition

Neenah News

A team from Neenah High School earned first place showcasing their craftsmanship and creativity at the recent sixth annual Heat Up Your Future skills competition.

Neenah competed against high school teams from across northeastern Wisconsin in the event hosted by Plumbers and Steamfitters UA Local 400 and the Mechanical Contractors Association (MCA) of North Central Wisconsin.

The Heat Up Your Future high school skills competition was designed to introduce students to rewarding careers in the pipe trades which provide excellent pay, job stability and long-term advancement opportunities. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, the pipe trades rank among the state's "Top 50 Hot Jobs" projected through 2032.

From Oct. 15 to Nov. 10, teams built custom pipe stoves to exact specifications with provided materials in their home schools before bringing their finished projects to the UA Local 400 Training Center in Kaukauna for judging on Nov.

11. Two instructors from the UA Local 400 staff, Bill Bishop and Jason Zeeveld, evaluated each project on weld quality, dimensional accuracy and overall creativity.

During the judging period, students toured the training center, met field professionals and explored career pathways in the fabrication, plumbing, steamfitting and HVACR trades.

"We're proud to have welcomed a record number of 19 schools this year," said Nick Johnsen, UA Local 400 recruiting coordinator. "The quality of work these students produced was nothing short of amazing. Their projects reflect the same problem-solving, precision, and pride we value in our trade, and it's exciting to see that level of skill and curiosity at the high school level."

Guest speakers Cameron Hudziak and Isaiah Hohnburger, both fourth year fabrication apprentices, delivered remarks emphasizing the value of skilled trades education and the opportunities available through apprenticeships. They emphasized the importance of math in the pipe trades and encouraged students to take their math classes seriously.



Photo by Emily Jensen, Gresham High School

Alec Ludemann of Neenah High School and Norm Hippert of Luxemburg-Casco High School trade notes at UA Local 400's Heat Up Your Future high school skills competition.



Photo by David Hall

Crafting community

From ornament making and mulling spice simmer pots to upcycled faux stained glass succulents, the Neenah Public Library offers hands-on creativity through DIY workshops and take-home craft kits. Youth and adult "Take & Create" and "Experience Kits" invite patrons to explore new hobbies, while groups like Powered by Yarn provide a welcoming space for knitters and crocheters to share their work.

Local college graduates

Just over 1,500 students received doctoral, bachelor's, master's and professional degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in August.

The graduates from Neenah include:

Viola Ademi, College of Letters and Science, bachelor of arts, political science

Theodore Kotchen, School of Business, bachelor of business administration, business: finance, investment and banking

Cooper Moss, College of Letters and Science, bachelor of arts, history

Autumn Schultz, College of Engineering, bachelor of science-environmental engineering

The students from Neenah who earned degrees in August at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse include:

Colin Jensen, bachelor of science, marketing

Lauren Palau, bachelor of science, recreational therapy

Kaeleigh Rice of Neenah graduated this summer from Marquette University in Milwaukee with a master of science degree in nursing.



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All-conference roundup

FOOTBALL

Van Beek garners top offensive honors in FVA

Junior quarterback Ashton Van Beek was selected as the Offensive Player of the Year in the Fox Valley Association to lead a host of Rockets who received all-conference recognition.

Van Beek was a unanimous choice as quarterback on the first-team offense as well as being named Offensive Back of the Year following his breakout junior season. Van Beek was an honorable mention all-FVA selection last season at wide receiver.

Despite missing the regular-season finale because of injury, Van Beek finished the season with 1,416 rushing yards and 18 touchdowns, while averaging 7.4 yards per carry this season. He also threw for 828 yards and nine touchdowns in helping lead the Rockets to a share of the FVA crown.

It is the second straight year Neenah has boasted the Offensive Player of the Year in the FVA as Van Beek follows Grant Dean in earning the honor.

Neenah had only one other selection on the first-team offense as sophomore Cooper Landrath was a unanimous choice on the offensive line.

The Rockets had three players selected to the first team defense in senior defensive lineman Nate Kramp, junior linebacker Connor Stuckel and sophomore cornerback Owen Fox.

Kramp earned first-team honors for the second straight season after finishing with 44 tackles, a pair of sacks and three fumble recoveries. Stuckel was the Rockets' leading tackler this season with 68 stops, including eight tackles for loss, and two interceptions while Fox also had a pair of interceptions and racked up 43 tackles.

Junior Cooper Sieck also garnered first-team honors as the return specialist on special teams.

Earning second-team honors for the Rockets were senior tight end/fullback Cole Schaefer, senior defensive lineman Brayden Millbrodt and senior punter Hunter Weinke.

Rounding out the all-conference selections for the Rockets were senior offensive lineman Bryce Leneau, sophomore offensive lineman Max Mueller, senior tight end/fullback Jameson Oldenburg, junior receiver Matthias Charles and sophomore safety Joey Herrin who all earned honorable mention recognition.

Steve Jung was named co-Head Coach of the Year honors.

Zephyrs' Wagner earns first-team EWC honors

Senior defensive back Mason Wagner was the lone first-team selection on the all-Eastern Wisconsin Conference lists.

Wagner finished the season with six interceptions and a team-high seven passes defensed, while also totaling 31 tackles on the season. Wagner helped anchor a defense that held four opponents to less than 10 points this season.

The Zephyrs had a host of second-team honorees, including four on offense and three on defense.

Earning second-team honors on offense were juniors Brady Detterman and Alex Klinkhammer on the offensive line, Luke Fairweather at receiver and Alexei Quinonez at kicker, while the defensive selections were senior lineman Isaiah Hennessy, junior linebacker Dominic Osgood and sophomore linebacker George Voss.

Senior Elliot Reichenbacher received honorable mention recognition at both linebacker and running back, while junior quarterback Tarver Trinkner and junior offensive lineman Max Vosters were also named on the honorable mention list.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Rockets land three on all-FVA first team

A trio of Neenah players garnered spots on the eight-member first team in the Fox Valley Association.

Senior Ella Lindgren and juniors Paige Hoelzel and Lilly Romjue were all-tabbed for the first team as Neenah was the only FVA program to have three first-team se-

lections.

Lindgren earned all-conference recognition for the third time after being named to the second team last year while earning honorable mention as a sophomore. She led the Rockets in digs with 510 – more than double of any other player on Neenah's roster – while ranking second on the team in aces.

Hoelzel repeated as a first-team selection after leading the Rockets with 97 blocks on the season, while also finishing with 130 kills as a middle blocker.

Romjue led the Rockets in kills this season with 257 while ranking second on the team in digs with 233. Romjue earned honorable mention all-conference recognition last season.

Senior Ella Nigl was all recognized by the conference earning second-team honors. The Rockets did not have any honorable mention selections.

Four Zephyrs honored by Big East Red

A quartet of St. Mary Catholic volleyball players garnered all-league recognition from the Big East North.

Senior setter Sammi Weiss and junior hitter Autumn Crowe highlighted four players named to the first team of the Big East Red all-conference lists.

Weiss led the team in assists with 472, despite splitting time at the position. She also ranked third on the team in aces with 43 and was fourth in digs with 207.

Crowe racked up 317 kills to lead the Zephyrs this season, while ranking second in both aces (46) and digs (332).

Junior Elizabeth McCauley earned second-team honors for the Zephyrs, while sophomore Adele Brennan was named on the honorable mention list.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Trio of Rockets garner FVA honors

Three Neenah players were tabbed for all-conference recognition this season.

Leading the way for the Rockets was junior setter Cam Diekfuss who earned a

spot on the second team. Diekfuss was an honorable mention selection last season.

Senior outside hitter Eli Yoder and sophomore libero Levi Steckling were each named to the honorable mention list.

SOCCER

Neenah lands foursome on all-FVA first team

Three attacking players highlighted the Rockets first-team selections on the all-Fox Valley Association list.

Senior midfielder Trey White headlined the first-team honorees by being one of three players who were unanimous selections on the squad. White led the team with 15 goals and 34 points on the season.

Junior Kolton Fleege, who finished second on the team with 10 goals but tied for the team lead with six assists, was one of four forwards named to the 15-player first team. Sophomore forward Ian Baetke, who scored five goals while playing in just eight games because of injury, also landed a spot on the first team after earning second-team honors a year ago.

Rounding out the first-team selections was senior defender Brady Lawatsch, who helped anchor the Rockets' staunch defense and picked up one assist on the season.

Senior Mason Peitersen – who was the Player of the Year in conference last season, but played in only seven games before suffering a season-ending injury – was named to the all-FVA second team along with fellow senior forward Liam Sieck.

Earning honorable mention recognition for Neenah was senior goalkeeper Pierce Hanson.

Hall, Daczyk honored by Big East/EWC

Senior Jacob Hall and junior Blake Daczyk each received all-conference recognition for St. Mary Catholic.

Hall was the team's leading goal scorer and was named to the second team, while Daczyk was a defender for the Zephyrs

SEE **All-conference** ON PAGE 11

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All-conference

FROM PAGE 10

and earned a spot on the honorable mention list.

TENNIS

Neenah dominates all-FVA first-team

Conference champion and state runner-up Neenah had six of its seven flights earn first-team honors in the Fox Valley Association.

All four singles players who represented the Rockets at state landed on the first team. Junior Celia Gentile at No. 1 singles, junior Ella Motto at No. 2 singles, freshman Rachel Thomas at No. 3 singles and senior Lauren McDonald at No. 4 singles were all honored after claiming conference titles.

Junior Rebecca Thomas and sophomore Sydney Michalkiewicz, who finished fifth at the WIAA individual state tournament, picked up first-team honors at No. 1 doubles, while the No. 3 pairing of seniors Ava Motto and Cecelia Alexander also landed on first team.

Senior Josie Kohlbeck and junior Evelyn Buss earned honorable mention at No. 2 doubles.

State champs headline Zephyr honorees

Two-time state champions Adel Schneider and Vivie Auth led the St. Mary Catholic honorees on the all-Eastern Wisconsin Conference tennis teams.

Schneider, a senior, and Auth, a sophomore, who did not lose a match in two seasons as a doubles pairing and were crowned back-to-back state champions in October, were named to the all-conference first team.

The Zephyrs, who qualified for the Division 2 team state tournament for the first time since 2004 this season, also had three flights named to the second team. Senior Erin Blaney at No. 1 singles and sophomore Ella Chier at No. 2 singles along with the No. 2 doubles pairing of junior Nadia Alexander and sophomore Lorelai Miller all earned second-team nods.

Junior Halle Janssen was named to the third team at No. 3 singles.

GOLF

Nagel earns first-team honors for Zephyrs

St. Mary Catholic senior Olivia Nagel earned first-team all-conference honors after finishing third in the Bay Conference tournament.

Nagel was the only golfer to earn all-conference recognition for the Zephyrs.

Rockets land trio of players on all-FVA list

Three members of the Neenah squad earned spots on the all-Fox Valley Association honorable mention list following the season.

Junior Lilly Quella led the threesome and finished just a half-point short of earning a spot on the second team.

Fellow junior Adrienne Oitzinger and senior Jordyn Brockman also grabbed a spot on the all-FVA honorable mention list.

GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

Zilm leads Rocket group on all-FVA teams

Freshman Sam Zilm earned the Runner of the Year honors in the Fox Valley Association

after winning the individual title at the FVA meet earlier this fall.

Zilm, who is the second straight Runner of the Year from Neenah following Mazie Olkowski, led five Neenah runners on the first team.

Senior Elsa Gruber, junior Natalie Schultz and sophomores Izzy Mallow and Elsa Weiland also earned first-team honors for the Rockets, who earned their third straight FVA girls title.

Junior Maddie Schoonover and senior Natalie Willes earned spots on the second team as all seven varsity runners earned all-FVA recognition.

Neenah head coach Mike Heidke was named Coach of the Year.

Zephyr duo runs to Big East honors

Freshman Audra Post and junior Claire Higgins each earned honorable mention recognition based on their finishes at the Big East Conference meet.

Post placed 21st and Higgins was 27th to garner the honors.

BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

Verhagen leads Rocket runners on all-FVA lists

Senior Zach Verhagen earned Runner of the Year honors in the Fox Valley Association for the second straight season and led the Neenah selections on the all-conference lists.

Verhagen earned a spot on the 10-member first team after winning the title at the conference meet in October.

Verhagen was the lone first-team honoree but was one of four Rockets honored overall.

Senior Oliver Steiner and freshman Elliott Drake earned spots on the second team, while senior Gideon Benner grabbed a spot on the honorable mention list.

Staner leads Zephyrs' all-conference selections

Freshman Fritz Staner raced to a first-team all-conference finish at the Big East Conference meet.

Staner finished 10th in the race to fill the final spot on the all-conference first team.

Senior Ethan Auer landed on the second team, while sophomore Brady DeLeeuw was on the honorable mention list. Auer and DeLeeuw finished back-to-back in 20th and 21st place, respectively.

SWIMMING

Mulroy, Hansman lead all-FVA swimmers

Senior Anna Mulroy and junior Sydney Hansman each grabbed spots on the all-Fox Valley Association first team.

Mulroy was tabbed in the 100-yard backstroke, while Hansman earned her spot in diving. Both Rockets won the state title in those events.

Hansman was named the Diver of the Year in the conference.

The Rockets had a pair of relays earn second-team honors as Mulroy, junior Breleigh Maurer, sophomore Bridget Bloomhuff and freshman Elisabeth Hang were a part of the 200-yard medley relay team that was recognized, with Mulroy and Maurer joining juniors Anna Ben-thein and Sophie Wypiszynski on the 200-yard freestyle relay team.

Earning honorable mention honors for the Rockets were Mulroy in the 50-yard freestyle and Bloomhuff in the 100-yard freestyle.

Mulroy places eighth in two events at state meet

Neenah News

Anna Mulroy earned all-state in a pair of individual events and Sydney Hansman advanced to the final round of diving in representing Neenah at the WIAA Division 1 State Swimming and Diving Championships at the Waukesha South Natatorium on Saturday.



Mulroy



Hansman

Mulroy, swimming in her final high school event, placed eighth in both the 100-yard butterfly and 100-yard backstroke at the state meet to earn her honors.

In the 100-yard butterfly, Mulroy posted a time of 56.95 seconds and was less than a second away from making the awards podium with a top six finish.

Last year, Mulroy finished 23rd in the event with a time of 59.02.

Caroline Wanezek of Brookfield East won the state title in the event with a time of 54.77.

Mulroy improved nearly seven-tenths of a second off her sectional time in the 100-yard backstroke to place eighth with a time of 56.96. She was just over two-

tenths of a second away from making the podium and less than a second away from a top-five finish in the race.

Mulroy finished 22nd in the event at last year's state meet with a time of 1:00.30.

Olivia Sina of Oregon won the state title with a time of 54.01.

Mulroy, who also swam on Neenah's 400-yard freestyle relay team, was participating in her fourth state meet.

Hansman finished 12th overall among the 24 divers at the state meet after falling short of making the finals last season. She finished with a total of 379.75 points and fell about 14 points short of making the top 10.

Hanna Jodlowski of Middleton won the state title with a score of 490.75.

The Rockets' 400-yard freestyle relay team of Breleigh Maurer, Bridget Bloomhuff, Elisabeth Hang and Mulroy finished 21st overall with a time of 3:41.13. The foursome was seeded 23rd entering the state meet and shaved more than two seconds off their sectional time to earn the finish.

Neenah finished 20th overall in the final team standings at the meet, edging Fox Valley Association rival Oshkosh West by one point for the spot. Appleton North was the top FVA team, placing seventh.

Middleton won its third straight Division 1 state title, totaling 363.5 points in the meet to easily outdistance Arrowhead which had 216 points.

Neenah rolls to win in season opener

Neenah News

Neenah held Wisconsin Rapids to just 10 first-half points and finished with three players in double figures as they opened the season with a convincing 72-23 win over Wisconsin Rapids on Tuesday night.

The Rockets racked up 13 steals and forced 24 turnovers in the game, while holding the Red Raiders to just nine field goals in the game.

Rowan Klesmit picked up where she left

off last season as the senior paced the Neenah offense with 19 points. Ellie Buss added 13 points as the duo combined for six of the team's eight 3-pointers in the game.

Freshman Farrah Danforth also reached double figures in her first varsity game, finishing with 10 points, while Sydney Michalkiewicz chipped in seven.

McKenna Freier led the team with six rebounds.

Neenah led 45-10 at halftime.

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