

# Neenah News

Serving Neenah & Fox Crossing

NOVEMBER 28, 2025 | NEENAHNEWS.COM

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 42

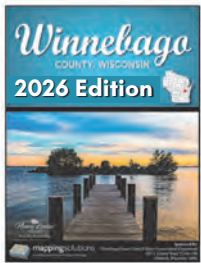
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## Wastewater plant to undergo upgrade

### New regulations require reduced phosphorus

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

Area municipalities are preparing for a major upgrade to their shared wastewater treatment plant, a move driven by new state phosphorus regulations that will limit environmental impacts across the Fox Valley.

“We’re in the planning phase,” said Chad Olsen with McMahon Engineer and Architects. “We should be moving into design next year, construction starting around 2027 and then the project should be completed in 2029 is our timeline.”

The Neenah-Menasha Sewerage Commission regional wastewater treatment plant is located along Garfield Avenue in Menasha and serves the cities of Neenah and Menasha, parts of the villages of Fox Crossing and Harrison, and the Town of

Neenah sanitary district. Sonoco paper mill, which is located near the plant, is also a contract user.

The project stems from regulations imposed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which tightened phosphorus limits in an effort to curb algae blooms in area waterways.

Olsen said that historically, the plant was required to keep phosphorus levels at

SEE **Plant upgrade** ON PAGE 10

## INSIDE



**Senior Standout**  
Klesmit following in brothers' footsteps  
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**Housing plan**  
City weighs options for South Commercial  
Page 4



Photo by David Hall

## Pop-Up Market

Shoppers browsed handcrafted goods and pet supplies Saturday at the Neenah Animal Shelter's annual Pop-Up Market at the Marketplace in downtown Neenah. Funds raised from the event go directly toward the care and welfare of animals at the shelter.

## Fox Valley Concert Band seeks permanent home

### Group hopes for financial, residential stability

By Eric Endres  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Founded in 1985, the Fox Valley Concert Band is celebrating 40 years of delighting and educating audiences with performances of popular favorites and complex classical music pieces.

But along with the milestone came new challenges, as the band now finds itself in an ongoing search for a place to settle down for concerts and rehearsals after the closure of its previous home, the Communication Arts Center (CAC) at the former University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Fox Cities campus.

The future home band members desire: the CAC.

“Beautiful space,” said Dr. Marc Sackman, UW-Oshkosh music professor, flutist and band director. “It functions really well, it was well designed, the acoustics are good. So, it really is a gem.”

The journey of the Fox Valley Concert Band began at what was previously known as the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley in Menasha as part of the music curriculum. First led by music professor David Jordahl, who sought a better learning opportunity for students that could also benefit the community, the group played its inaugural concert on Nov. 10, 1985, at the campus's Fine Arts Theatre.

While the group has performed varying music styles for concert goes over its four decades, one of its goals is to further educate band and audience members and

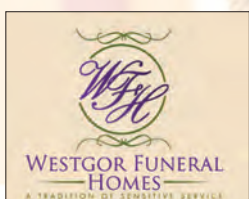


Photo from Fox Valley Concert Band

The Fox Valley Concert Band is seeking a permanent new home after the closure of the former UW-Fox Cities campus.

SEE **Band home** ON PAGE 11

## Happy Thanksgiving



Westgor Funeral Homes  
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# Neenah News

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Website: www.neenahnews.com

**News tips and story ideas**  
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A \$50 annual membership supports receiving the newspaper weekly. Call 920-486-1616 or visit www.neenahnews.com/product/membership/

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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.

### Publisher

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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 News is owned by Oshkosh Herald LLC, 36 Broad St. Suite 300, Oshkosh, WI, 54901. 920-385-4512.

## Peace Lutheran Church planning to hold Timeless Treasures Christmas Bazaar

Neenah News

Peace Lutheran Church will hold its annual Timeless Treasures Christmas Bazaar from 8 a.m. to noon Dec. 6 at 1228 South Park Ave.

Attendees are asked to enter Door 1 and find festive cookies by the pound, handmade crafts, gifts, mittens, holiday and wood decor, gift baskets, candy, homemade preserves, and baked goods.

Also Take 'n' Heat Soups to go will be available.

The Kids Only shopping room is back. No parents will be allowed in the room but assistants will help children with their shopping list.

Credit card payments will be available with a 3% surcharge. A percentage of the proceeds will benefit community programs.



Neenah Historical Society photo

## Stevens family dinner

Members of the John Stevens family gather around their dining table circa 1890. The large Queen Anne style home was located at 507 E. Wisconsin Ave. Stevens invented a steel roller crushing method that revolutionized the milling industry. The family was known for hosting soirees and large parties, but this image shows us a more intimate glimpse of their family dynamic.

**Edward Jones**

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## Calendar of events

### 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.,

Sleigh Rides on the Farm and Cider with Santa, 5 p.m., Cavanaugh Carriages, 3910 Fairview Road

### Saturday, Dec. 6

Timeless Treasures Christmas Bazaar, 8 a.m., Peace Lutheran Church, 1228 South Park Ave.

The Grinch Family Christmas, 9 a.m., Washington Park

Santa at the Ranch, 9 a.m., Beaming Inc., 2692 County Road GG

Breakfast With Santa, 9:30 a.m., Fox Crossing Community Center, 1000 Valley Road

A Very Neenah Christmas Market, 10 a.m., Downtown Neenah

Holiday Open House and Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

Author Katie Jones of "Alligator in the Attic" Book Signing, 10 a.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

St. Nick Sale, 10 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah Gift Gallery

**SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY**

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330 N. Commercial St., Neenah, WI.

# Live nativity tradition returns after 75 years

Neenah News

A tradition from nearly 75 years ago is being brought back for next week's A Very Neenah Christmas event.

A live nativity will be on the front lawn of the Kessler Fahrenkrug Funeral Home, 304 S. Commercial St., during the downtown festivities, which are scheduled for 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 5. The funeral home is working in conjunction with Peace Lutheran Church for the live nativity. Church members will be playing the roles of Mary and Joseph, along with some of the other shepherds.

The funeral home's current owner, Patrick Fahrenkrug, said they are getting animals from Cavanaugh Carriages for this year's display, which will be situated on the northwest corner of the funeral home's lot at the corner of Commercial and Columbian.

Fahrenkrug found a clip from 1951 articles in the News Record describing how the nativity scene was set up back then for the second consecutive year.

It was on display over the holidays that year, featuring pairs of heifers, lambs and goats along with a donkey, which arrived by truck to "add a unique touch to the tra-



Submitted photo

The Kessler Funeral Home featured a live nativity scene in 1951, which included several animals as part of the display.

ditional Christmas picture."

The animals roamed the 120 by 55 foot lot next to the home and were enclosed by a wire fence. A snow fence kept the animals from entering the scene itself, set in the back of the lot. Floodlights illuminated the entire scene at night.

The Kesslers, who had displayed a na-

tivity five years prior without the animals, converted their two-car garage into a barn but encouraged the animals to stay outside by placing oats in the yard. A bob sleigh and cutter to the right of the crib were part of the display. Organists played traditional yuletide music at intervals during afternoons and evenings.

# Horse drawn carriage rides will be part of holiday festivities

Neenah News

Cavanaugh Carriages will be preparing for Santa's arrival with activities on the farm in December.

## Concert features Charlie Brown Christmas songs

Neenah News

The Neenah Public Library invites the community to celebrate the season with a special holiday edition of its First Friday Concert Series.

The Mike Malone Trio will bring the spirit of the holidays to life at 2 p.m. Dec. 5 with a live performance of the songs from Vince Guaraldi's soundtrack to "A Charlie Brown Christmas." The piano trio will swing its way through these classic songs in a cozy setting.

The hour-long program will take place on the first floor in the Shattuck Community Room at the Neenah Public Library. All interested individuals are welcome to attend this free event.

For more information, please contact the reference desk by phone: 920-886-6315, e-mail Library@neenahlibrary.org or visit the website www.neenahlibrary.org.

The Friends of the Neenah Public Library and the Neenah Public Library Trust Fund present the Concert Series. Donations are always accepted and appreciated.

## Museum of Glass set to hold holiday open house

Neenah News

The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass will host its annual Holiday Open House.

The event will feature free art activities, treats, live entertainment, a Museum Shop filled with gift ideas and a visit from Ol' Saint Nick himself. Activities start at 10 a.m. Dec. 6.

Participants in the Glass Studio can decorate a Happy Holidays Keepsake using pre-cut glass, stringers, dots and other accessory glass to create something special. Art Activity Day projects are \$20 each.

Registrations can be made online by visiting bmmglass.com/artactivityday.

The second annual Sleigh Rides on the Farm and Cider With Santa Event will feature activities to celebrate the season. Activities include meeting Santa in his workshop, meeting reindeer like a baby named Blitzen, enjoying hot cocoa or cider and a bonfire.

A petting zoo will include animals such as rabbits, kitties, horses, mini donkeys, pygmy goats, turkeys and chickens. Jingle bell horse drawn sleigh rides will be of-

fered.

The event times are 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 5, Dec. 12 and Dec. 19; noon to 3 p.m. Dec. 7, Dec. 14 and Dec. 21 and 1 to 4 p.m. Dec. 20. The cost is \$20 per person. Children three and under are free.

Cavanaugh Farms is located at 3910 Fairview Road. Visitors are encouraged to dress for the weather by wearing winter clothes such as boots, hats and gloves to enjoy the crisp winter air.

## WILLS vs TRUSTS

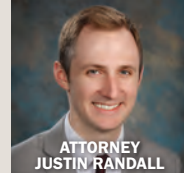
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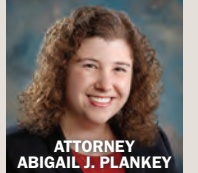
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2:00 pm and 6:00 pm

Participants may attend either session. Please RSVP at 920-486-4519 or AppletonEstatePlanning.com seating is limited.



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## YOU SHOULD ATTEND IF YOU:

- Have a retirement account (IRA, 401k).
- Want to learn how current laws affect your estate plan.
- Are concerned that Nursing Home or long term care costs will deplete your life savings.
- Want to protect the family inheritance you leave behind for your family's use only.
- Wish to learn more about Probate and how to avoid it.
- Have a Will that is more than 3 years old or it was created in another state.

## WE WILL DISCUSS:

- ▶ New retirement account law changes that affect every estate plan.
- ▶ Proposed changes to the Federal Estate and Capital Gains Tax laws.
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- ▶ Why you shouldn't add a child to your bank account and how beneficiary designations might ruin your will.
- ▶ How you can protect your children's inheritances from predators, greedy non-family members, and bad marriages.
- ▶ How veterans or their spouses can receive money to help pay for medical expenses.
- ▶ Why signing your home over to your kids might be a huge mistake.
- ▶ How planning in advance can help you and your spouse afford quality care.



# BLACK FRIDAY

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# City weighs housing plan for South Commercial corridor

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

The city of Neenah is considering a proposed term sheet with a Madison-based developer that plans to build workforce housing and commercial space along South Commercial Street.

Eminent Development Corporation was selected from four developers that submitted proposals for city-owned property on the west side of the 1300 block of South Commercial Street. The location is next to the Krist gas station. The city has been acquiring land in the area since 2018 in an effort to create a developable site for a multi-family housing project.

The proposal calls for 50 workforce housing units and about 3,000 square feet

of commercial space. An initial architectural rendering shows a four-story mixed-use building with 32 units and 27 parking stalls, along with three smaller buildings with four units each. Entrances are planned on South Commercial and West Peckham streets.

The term sheet would allow the company to purchase the roughly 2-acre property from the city for \$1, with a requirement that the residential units are reserved for tenants earning 80% or less of the area median income, as defined by the U.S. Department of



Nieforth

Housing and Urban Development.

Community Development Director Kelly Nieforth said that the submitted site plan does not currently include a nearby parcel with an office building at 118 W. Peckham St., as the city does not own it, but the developer is exploring the possibility of acquiring it for additional housing with the property owner's cooperation.

"If they're able to add more property to the project, or they can add more units, they would like to move forward with that," she said. "It's by no means a deal-breaker for the property."

Eminent plans to apply for Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) Housing Tax Credits to help finance the project. A basic term

sheet is required for the pre-application that is due Dec. 5. If the project advances, a full application would be submitted by March 20, with awards expected in May. If the project secures credits, the city and Eminent would negotiate a formal development agreement for Common Council approval.

Under the proposed terms, Eminent would close on the property by Oct. 31, 2026, begin construction within 12 months of acquiring the site, and substantially complete the project by Oct. 31, 2028.

The Finance and Personnel Committee voted in favor of the plan Monday. The Common Council is expected to vote on the proposal at its meeting Wednesday.



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Photo from City of Neenah

Work on the Doty Park shoreline improvements project has been completed for the season. The project is designed to help strengthen the shoreline.

## Doty Park shoreline restoration project wraps up for season

Neenah News

Neenah Parks & Rec on Saturday celebrated this season's completion of Doty Park's shoreline restoration.

The project has been part of a partnership between design and engineering team Edgewater Resources, Vinton Construction and the City of Neenah. The work was made possible in part by grant from the Wisconsin DNR through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

The new shoreline built with armor stone, native plants and a design that re-

spects both the lake and surrounding landscape. It is built to strengthen the shoreline, support habitat, enhance safety along the water's edge and guide the water naturally — not by resisting it, but by learning from it.

With a new ADA-accessible kayak launch coming next, this space will continue to grow in ways that honor both access and ecology.

Shellattés brought coffee and treats as part of a gathering at the park to mark the project's completion for the season.



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## Residents should check vehicle registration info

Neenah News

With the City of Neenah wheel tax of \$30 per vehicle set to go into effect Jan. 1, officials in surrounding areas are cautioning residents to check their vehicle registrations.

The tax will be collected through the Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles based on vehicle registration at the time of annual registration renewal. Many vehicles that are considered to be “kept in” Neenah may not actually be “kept in” the City of Neenah.

“It is important for vehicle owners to check their vehicle registration with the DMV to ensure their registration accurately reflects where the vehicle is actually kept,” Town of Neenah Clerk Ellen Skerke said. “As a Town of Neenah resident, it’s important to register your vehicle correctly to avoid the city wheel tax.”

The Town of Neenah, a portion of Village of Fox Crossing, portion of Town of Clayton residents and a portion of Town of Vinland residents have a mailing address of Neenah 54956; however, Skerke said they are not subject to the city’s wheel tax.

Skerke said the town is sharing information with residents about how to check their vehicle registrations to avoid unnecessary charges on their annual vehicle registration.

“It is super easy to check and the limited feedback I am getting is that town residents are finding at least one of their vehicles is incorrectly registered as being kept in the City of Neenah,” Skerke said. “Being proactive and checking your registration will help avoid any incorrect charges and save you time and money.”

To check vehicle registration, go to the WisDOT site at wisconsindot.gov. Once there, click on “DMV Services” and select “Online Services.” On the Online Services page, click on “Other Online Services.” Next, in the bullet list of topics, choose “Update where my vehicle is kept.” After completing the information to find vehicle registrations, a list of vehicles will appear. Under “Municipality,” Town of Neenah residents should make sure that “Neenah (T)” is selected.

Information can also be reviewed on a License Plate Renewal Notice. Town of Neenah residents should verify the information is correct if they see “Vehicle kept in COUNTY OF WINNEBAGO, TOWN OF NEENAH.”

Residents who find an error on their renewal notice, or are incorrectly charged the wheel tax, should report it immediately by contacting WisDOT’s customer service at 608-264-7447. They may be able to issue a refund and correct records for future renewals.

Reach out to WisDOT for questions regarding vehicle registration.



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**Friday, December 5 | 5-8pm**

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



FUTURE NEENAH

# A VERY NEENAH CHRISTMAS MARKET

**Friday, December 5 | 5-8pm**

**Saturday, December 6 | 10am-8pm**

**Sunday, December 7 | 10am-3pm**

Discover a charming European-style market located in Gateway Park (at Main & W. Wisconsin) featuring:

- Charming vendor huts in Galloway Christmas Village
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- Carriage rides
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Learn more at [futureneenah.org](http://futureneenah.org)





Photo from Neenah Middle School

### Honors choir

Fifth grade choir students from Neenah Middle School last week participated in Badger State Honors Choir. The 18 Neenah students joined more than 70 singers from across the Fox Valley. The students had the opportunity to meet and greet with 2025 Grammy-winning cellist Eru Matsumoto of Japan.

### Farm Bureau hosting conference to cultivate, connect

Neenah News

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation's Promotion and Education Committee will host a one-day Cultivate & Connect Conference on Feb. 21 at the Best Western Bridgewood Resort in Neenah.

Cultivate & Connect is the Promotion and Education Committee's initiative to inspire, educate and empower Farm Bu-

reau members and agriculture leaders by providing innovative learning experiences, networking opportunities and actionable insights for advancing Wisconsin's agriculture industry.

Registration is \$80 and includes training, refreshments and lunch. An optional pre-conference activity will take place from 5 to 8 p.m. Feb. 20.

The registration deadline is Feb. 6. Attendees who register before Dec. 10 will be entered to win a \$50 Kwik Trip gift card.

For more information about Cultivate & Connect, visit: [wfbf.com/events/cultivate-and-connect](http://wfbf.com/events/cultivate-and-connect).

To register, visit: [bit.ly/CultivateConnect2026](http://bit.ly/CultivateConnect2026).

### Fox Cities Chamber seeks facilitators, hosts for intern program

Neenah News

The Fox Cities Chamber is seeking local professionals to help shape the next generation of talent through a new initiative launching in summer 2026.

Launch: Summer Intern Series is an eight-week program designed to better connect local interns to the Fox Cities while helping them develop essential workplace and life skills. The series will run June 10 to July 29 with sessions held Wednesday mornings from 8 to 9:30 a.m. (July 8 only from 8 to 10 a.m.) at rotating host sites across the region.

The Chamber is currently accepting applications for business and community professionals to volunteer their time as session facilitators and host sites. Facilitators will lead engaging discussions and interactive activities on topics such as Financial Literacy, Workplace Expectations and Soft Skills, Networking Like a Pro, Mock Interviews + Resume Reviews, Adulting 101, and Civic Engagement and Giving Back.

Individuals interested in facilitating a session can apply at [surveymonkey.com/r/8B3NKZC](http://surveymonkey.com/r/8B3NKZC). Organizations interested in hosting should apply at [surveymonkey.com/r/CFT7Y6H](http://surveymonkey.com/r/CFT7Y6H).

Deadline for both is Jan. 5. For more information about Launch: Summer Intern Series, visit <https://foxcitieschamber.com/launch-summer-intern-series/> or email [aherrick@foxcc.net](mailto:aherrick@foxcc.net).

### Poster contest raises conservation awareness

Students will be able to put their creativity to the test by entering a conservation awareness poster contest.

The Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation contest "Soil: Where it all begins" celebrates soil and conservation through art. The contest is open to all K5-12 students with posters due Dec. 19.

Details and entry forms are at [winnebago.countywi.gov/702/Poster-Contest](http://winnebago.countywi.gov/702/Poster-Contest).





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Photo from Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue

Neenah-Menasha firefighters earlier this month started preparing Santa's Float to have ready by Monday to start running routes.

### Firefighters gear Santa's Float to run routes

Neenah News

Santa's helpers – in this case Local 275 firefighters – earlier this month started preparing Santa's Float.

Santa will begin his route through the cities of Neenah and Menasha starting Monday. Route information can be found at [nmfire.org](http://nmfire.org).

The Santa Float is made possible entirely through donations.

Donations can be made online at [go-fundme.com/f/gxkjh5-santa-float](http://go-fundme.com/f/gxkjh5-santa-float) or by mail to the Neenah-Menasha Charitable Foundation, (put Santa Float in the memo line), c/o Santa Float, 125 E. Columbian Ave., Neenah, WI 54956.

## Boys & Girls Clubs receive gift to expand programs

Neenah News

A \$1.4 million donation will help the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley (BG-CFV) expand its STEM and Workforce Readiness (WFR) initiatives.

The anonymous gift reflects a profound belief in the power of education and opportunity. The investment will empower over 4,000 youth annually within three years, providing hands-on, experiential learning and career exploration opportunities across Neenah, Menasha and Appleton.

The initiative will enhance BGCFV's capacity to prepare young people — especially those with unmet needs — for success in the 21st-century workforce and in life.

The expansion will include:

- State-of-the-art Makers Labs at club branch locations, designed to foster creativity, collaboration and innovation.

These labs offer inclusive, project-based learning for youth of all skill levels and backgrounds.

- New and enhanced programming for youth, including immersive VR career simulations (Transfr Trek), robotics (VEX), coding, visits to post-secondary education campuses and the Level All career readiness platform.

- Dedicated STEM opportunities for girls, such as a week-long girls STEM summer camp.

- New staffing infrastructure, including a full-time STEM and WFR program director and site-based coordinators to lead and sustain programming across club locations.

- Measurable outcomes, including increased daily participation, improved STEM interest and efficacy, and stronger post-secondary education and career aspirations.

### Retreat supports families of missing people

Neenah News

A statewide group provided an opportunity last weekend to show support for families whose loved ones are missing.

Wisconsin Missing Persons Advocacy hosted a Retreat for Families at Whiting Boathouse in Neenah. The retreat held space for families connected to Kayla Berg, Victoria Prokopovitz, Jennifer Peterson, Isaiah Cramer, Alex Kruck, Nick Hietpas, Becky Marzo, David Dodge, Aaron Johnson, Eric Boll and Jesse Yanske, ensuring their missing or remembered loved ones were acknowledged and honored throughout the day, said WMPA

President Abigail Miles.

"We began with a grounding session led by a local yoga instructor, followed by an open Q&A with two investigators and ended with a session led by a trauma therapist," Miles said. "Each part of the day was designed to give families support, clarity and community as they continue navigating the uncertainty surrounding their loved ones' cases."

All of the community professionals donated their time and expertise, which Miles said helped to create a space that was calm, honest and supportive.

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# Neenah man killed in head-on crash

Neenah News

A 63-year-old man from Neenah was killed Monday in a crash on Wisconsin Highway 76 in the Town of Clayton.

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office responded at approximately 7:54 a.m. to a report of a head-on crash involving a semi tractor and another vehicle on Highway 76 near Lind Lane.

First responders arriving on the scene determined the crash involved three vehicles. One of the drivers was unresponsive and determined to be deceased. The sheriff's office did not release the identity of the man. The other involved drivers sustained minor injuries, according to the

sheriff's office.

A portion of Highway 76 was closed for several hours for the investigation and scene documentation by the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office Crash Team.

Agencies assisting at the scene included the Town of Clayton First Responders and Fire Department, the Wisconsin State Patrol, the Fox Crossing Police Department, the Outagamie County Sheriff's Office, Gold Cross Ambulance Service, Expert Towing and the Winnebago County Highway Department.

This incident remains under investigation.

No further information was released.

# Fund provides over \$2M to nonprofit organizations

Neenah News

The David L. and Rita E. Nelson Family Fund within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region (Nelson Family Fund) awarded grants totaling \$2,058,650, providing nonprofits and local municipalities with a much-needed financial boost.

The Nelsons, who lived in De Pere, made provisions during their lifetimes for a planned gift to benefit the region.

Rita was a teacher, and David was the chief financial officer for the Post-Crescent in Appleton and the Green Bay Press-Gazette. He also invested in radio stations and other businesses.

After they passed away, the Nelsons left

more than \$100 million from their estate to create the David L. and Rita E. Nelson Family Fund. The gift was by far the largest ever received by the Community Foundation and one of the largest charitable gifts in Wisconsin's history.

This year's support included awards to projects in the Neenah area, including \$250,000 for Apricity's capital campaign, \$200,000 to Boys & Girls Club of the Fox Valley for their new Neenah location and \$50,000 to support the City of Neenah's Kimberly Point Lighthouse preservation and ADA improvement project.

The fund has provided over \$29 million in grants since it was created eight years ago.



Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Jim Strick was joined at the awards presentation by Chief Financial Officer Jon Joch and Superintendent Dr. Steve Harrison.

# Neenah's Strick receives statewide award

Neenah News

Neenah Joint School District Communications Director Jim Strick has been named the recipient of the Wisconsin School Communicator of the Year award.

Strick was presented the award last week at the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association conference in Elkhart Lake.

Strick is in his 13th year in the position and oversees communications efforts

among the district's 11 schools. He also serves as an announcer for many Neenah events and several WIAA state championship events. Additionally, Strick is the communications director for the Fox Valley Association.

The award is in its third year, and Strick is Wisconsin's nominee for the National School Communicator of the Year award that will be announced in July.

# Chamber tabs Lifetime Achievement Award recipients

Neenah News

The Fox Cities Chamber has announced the recipients of its 2025 Lifetime Achievement Awards.

These annual awards recognize individuals who embrace principled leadership, strategic thinking, balanced workplace values and an unrelenting pursuit of excellence.

The recipients are:

- Gus A. Zuehlke Distinguished Service Award: Kim Underhill - Group President North America - retired/senior advisor/executive coach, Kimberly Clark/Boston Consulting Group/The Next Chapter
- Joyce Bytof Exceptional Mentor Award: Sharon Hulce - president/CEO, Employment Resource Group
- ATHENA Leadership Award: Dawn

Ruchala - senior manager, community engagement, U.S. Venture.

- Business Leader Hall of Fame: Rich Batley - president/owner, RB Hospitality.
- Legacy Award: John Bergstrom - executive chairman, Bergstrom Automotive.

These individuals will be honored for their achievements at Celebrate on Jan. 20. This is an event where attendees will enjoy dinner, music and an auction, as the 2025 Chamber Lifetime Achievement Award winners are honored.

General admission is \$200 for Chamber members and \$250 for non-members, with tables of 10 also available. Proceeds from this event go toward Chamber programming and events, designed to benefit members, educators, young professionals and businesses alike.

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# County housing loan plan put on hold

By Bethanie Gengler  
NEENAH NEWS

Plans for Winnebago County to implement a new revolving loan fund to accelerate housing development are on hold after the County Board voted to send the proposal back to committee over concerns about whether interest from the Spirit Fund can be used for that purpose.

The Spirit Fund is a special account created under former County Executive Jon Doemel to hold federal ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) pandemic relief dollars. The county reclassified the ARPA money as "lost revenue" from the pandemic and moved it into the Spirit Fund to be spent on local projects that reflect the original intent of ARPA.

As of late August, about \$11.7 million in Spirit Funds remained, including about \$3.5 million in accrued interest. The funds are held in a money market account earning 4.1% interest monthly.

County Executive Gordon Hintz, who

was elected in April, brought forward plans started under the previous administration to use the Spirit Fund interest to invest in a new revolving loan fund that would offer low-interest, gap financing to help developers cover early costs such as land acquisition and pre-development work. He said the goal is to reduce barriers that slow housing projects and support construction of the 10,000 new units the county is projected to need over the next decade.

The Winnebago County Industrial Development Board (IDB) committed \$1 million to the program in June, and the county planned to contribute the remaining \$3.5 million. A nonprofit administrator would be selected to manage the fund, review applications and work with an advisory board of county staff, IDB members and housing experts.

Last week's County Board meeting included extensive discussion about how the Spirit Funds were previously allocated. Under the previous executive, the

money was divided into two categories: "county government projects," proposed by the county executive and department heads, and "government-identified projects," meant to be partnerships between county departments and the community.

District 26 Supervisor Conley Hansen argued that because the Spirit Fund interest was placed in the county government projects category, the proposed revolving housing loan program does not qualify since it would be run in partnership with a nonprofit and the broader community.

Corporation Counsel Mary Anne Mueller and Finance Director Paul Kaiser disagreed, saying that they believe the Spirit Fund interest can be used for this purpose.

Hansen initially moved to postpone the proposal indefinitely, which would have delayed it until the next County Board is elected and convenes in April. He later amended the motion to send it back to committee instead. The board approved that motion.

# County approves \$28M borrowing for capital projects

Neenah News

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors last week approved borrowing \$28 million through the sale of promissory notes.

The funds will be used to cover 2025 and 2026 capital improvement projects, including upgrading roads, buildings, the

airport and parks. The county has already approved 20 projects totaling \$19.7 million for 2025, with an estimated \$16.7 million in projects planned for 2026.

The move represents a change in the county's borrowing approach, as funds are now being secured before the board has formally approved each project.

Finance Director Paul Kaiser said at

an earlier meeting that the proactive borrowing allows the county to fund projects while investing unassigned general fund money at favorable interest rates. The notes will be repaid over a 10-year term, with a call option in 2032.

Justin Fischer, managing director of financial advising firm Baird, said the final interest rate on the \$28 million in promissory notes is 3.15%, down from the initially projected rate of 3.75%.

The lower interest rate equates to about \$815,000 in less debt service costs, he said.

# County Board delays shoreland zoning change

Neenah News

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors voted last week to delay implementation of its revised shoreland zoning ordinance until April 1, giving municipalities time to update their zoning maps and ordinances before the changes take effect.

The ordinance was approved in October and removes all references to general land-use zoning from the county's shoreland code and shifts that authority to local municipalities. It's based on a 2023 Department of Natural Resources model that excludes general zoning from shoreland regulations.

The change was originally scheduled to take effect on Nov. 21. County Executive

Gordon Hintz urged the board to push back the start date, citing concerns that several towns do not yet have their own general zoning ordinances in place.

"It's an important correction so that all of the towns impacted are able to implement it on a proper timeline," he said.

Corporation counsel Mary Anne Mueller also warned at an earlier meeting that an immediate transition could expose the county to legal challenges, given the complicated interaction between state statutes and case law.

The county will continue to oversee shoreland permitting, while municipalities will take on general land-use zoning once the change becomes effective in April.

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# Plant upgrade

FROM PAGE 1

one milligram per liter, but the new permit lowers that limit to 0.8 milligrams. Future regulations will be even stricter, requiring the plant to reduce phosphorus to about 0.17 milligrams per liter, which will require substantial upgrades.

The planned upgrades include installing new filters, chemical and polymer feed systems, as well as possibly switching to ultraviolet (UV) disinfection.

“We need to add some chemical and some polymer, and then make a flock, and then we’d install filters to remove that flock which has phosphorus in it,” Olsen said. The phosphorus-laden flock “would go back to solids processing.”

“It ends up in the biosolids that are eventually stored and land applied,” he said. “So that phosphorus would be recycled back to agriculture as a nutrient.”

The existing system uses chlorine for disinfection, followed by dechlorination before water leaves the facility. The proposed upgrade would add a UV disinfection system. UV light can kill bacteria

and viruses in wastewater without leaving chemical byproducts, making it safer and more environmentally friendly.

The cost of the project is estimated to be as high as \$35 million, which will be divided among communities according to their usage of the facility. Funding has yet to be finalized, but residents could see potential sewer rate increases. Olsen said the commission is exploring funding options to limit the financial impact on residents.

Neenah-Menasha Sewerage Commission General Manager Paul Much, Water Utility Director Tony Mach and Olsen were on site for a tour of the facility last week. Overseen by a staff of 12, the multi-story plant processes millions of gallons of wastewater daily, using a complex system of tunnels, pumps and clarifiers.

“Microorganisms feed off the raw wastewater that comes in,” Much said. “They’re the ones doing all the work, breaking down waste and cleaning the water.”

The wastewater treatment process begins at the headworks, where incoming water is lifted by powerful screw pumps and screened for debris. From there, it travels through tanks that remove grit and



Neenah News

Above: In one stage of the wastewater treatment process, oxygen is added to help microorganisms break down the waste.

At right: General Manager Paul Much stands inside the Neenah-Menasha Sewerage Commission regional wastewater treatment plant, which is in need of upgrades to meet stricter phosphorus limits.



sand, before proceeding to primary clarifiers and aeration basins, the “heart of the plant,” where biological treatment occurs. After final clarification, the water is disinfected with chlorine, then dechlorinated before being released into Little Lake Butte des Morts.

Byproducts produced during the process include biosolids used as farm fertilizer and screenings sent to the landfill. At an onsite laboratory, staff perform daily testing to comply with environmental permits and optimize operations.

“That’s a lot for just 12 employees, but the plant keeps running, even during storms, thanks to backup generators,” Much said.

The facility faces ongoing challenges. Seasonal snow and rain often overload the system with clean stormwater, meaning it does not contain the waste that the plant is meant to process, but it still must be treated once it enters the system. Much said this can increase flow up to 70 million gallons per day, compared to a dry weather average of about 13 million gallons. The surges force the plant to use more pumps and electricity and reduce treatment efficiency.

Mach said that municipalities have worked to reduce the inflow of clean stormwater by updating aging pipes and enforcing proper connections for sump pumps and drain tiles.

“Communities have done a very good

job of addressing inflow and infiltration, repairing leaks to keep flows down,” he said.

The facility faces physical constraints as well. Land limitations mean future expansion at the plant may require vertical construction, which could be costly.

Mach said the upcoming project to upgrade the wastewater treatment process will impact more than just Neenah residents.

“All of the municipalities benefit from having this shared regional plant,” he said. “The cost of building a plant for each community would be extremely high, so all of the municipalities benefit.”

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# Band home

FROM PAGE 1

open a window into more academic compositions.

Currently, the band plays four concerts per year and is comprised of mostly post-college adults — many of whom are music teachers themselves — as well as college and high school students.

“It’s a good band,” said Jim Morgenstern, band president and euphonium and trombone player. “It’s highly capable of playing (a) difficult repertoire, and because of that we can all enjoy it.”

When the CAC opened at UW-Fox Valley in 2009, the band moved its rehearsals and concerts there, remaining affiliated with the university. In 2018, the school became part of UW-Oshkosh and was renamed UW-Oshkosh Fox Cities.

Six years later in 2024, UW-Oshkosh announced the closure of the campus, citing a decline in enrollment. The CAC wrapped up its operations at the end of June this year.

With the closure, band members had to improvise fast. The band reorganized itself into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to continue performing. Since the group lost its connection with the university and its online resources, volunteers from the band developed a website and a new logo, plus new social media pages.

Winnebago County took over the campus on July 1. County Executive Gordon Hintz said goals for the property include preserving the community assets — such as the planetarium, CAC and field house — for community use and having value-added projects on the campus that maintain its legacy and set it up for the future.

“What we didn’t want to find ourselves in was a position where the county was trying to operate something that we didn’t have the capacity to do and losing more money than we would if we did nothing,” Hintz said. “And that’s part of the challenge.”

Talks are underway with third-party groups to manage the CAC. Various entities, including the Fox Valley Concert Band, are making their cases for the opportunity to set up shop in the facility.

For their part, band members have shown up to meetings and pitched proposals to return to the CAC.

“We just love to play, we love to make music and we love to benefit the community that way,” said Catherine Neiswender, secretary, board member and flute player for the band. “And we want to get back to the Communication Arts Center. We would like to come back home to that place, if it’s possible.”

Morgenstern said the band expects to pay rent and hopes to generate revenue if the group returns. And while the process of trying to regain the band’s place in the CAC has had its challenges, Neiswender indicated that the band is trying to stay at the proverbial table with the county as options are weighed.

“We’re trying to be respectful of the work that they have to do ... But yet also



Photo from Fox Valley Concert Band

*Fox Valley Concert Band conductor Dr. Marc Sackman addresses the audience during the group’s fall concert.*

recognizing that the longer it sits empty, the harder it’s going to be to sustain the entire building,” Neiswender explained, later saying, “We want to be a support and a party to the conversations because I think we’d be helpful.”

Although he’d like a resolution sooner rather than later, Hintz said his main priority is the long-term sustainability of the campus and the CAC overall.

“The county is interested in exactly what the advocates that want to get back in there want,” Hintz said, later adding, “We’re more focused on, how do we get this place so that it’s there for the next 20 years?”

As discussions continue, the band remains in a limbo-like state, hopping from one location to another while fundraising to pay rent, among other expenses. A common sentiment band members hold is the desire to find steady ground with financial sustainability and a permanent place to practice and perform.

In the meantime, Fox Cities residents have a chance to see the Fox Valley Concert Band at its latest venue, Neenah High School, for the holiday show at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 12. Entrance is free, and donations are accepted but not required.

Sackman said audiences can expect a little bit of everything at this performance, including holiday music, classical compositions such as “The Barber of Seville” and even a piece in which Christmas carols have been transformed into minor keys.

Even with an uncertain future, band members remain passionate about what they do and are hopeful that the band will carry on.

“We want to institutionalize the Fox Valley Concert Band so that we’re going on beyond all of us being able to perform with them,” Morgenstern said. “That requires a home — the CAC if not somewhere else — and that requires ongoing financial support from ourselves, from the community, from generous donors. But our intent is to keep making beautiful music.”

# Public library calendar

- Dec. 1**  
Stitching Group 1 p.m.  
Adult Afternoon Program: Henry Stolze Jr. and the National Tinsel Company 2 p.m.
- Dec. 2**  
Powered by Yarn 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 3**  
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 4**  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.  
Family Activity Night: Cards, Tags and Bags 6 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
- Dec. 5**  
Fitness Friday: Boot Camp 9:15 a.m.  
Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.  
First Friday Concert: Mike Malone Trio Plays Vince Guaraldi 2 p.m.
- Dec. 8**  
Monday Matinee: The Naked Gun (2025) 1 p.m.  
Short Story Night 7 p.m.
- Dec. 9**  
Storytime for Everyone (all ages) 10 a.m.  
Legal Assistance Clinic 4:30 p.m.
- Dec. 10**  
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 11**  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
- Dec. 12**  
Memory Cafe - Holiday Party 1:30 p.m.
- Dec. 15**  
Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 16**  
Cookbook Book Club 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 17**  
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 18**  
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.  
Family Activity Night: LEGO Challenge - Make it move! 6 p.m.  
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
- Dec. 19**  
Fitness Friday: Balance and Strength 9:15 a.m.  
Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.
- Dec. 20**  
Volunteers, Ages 11-19, 10:30 a.m.
- Dec. 22**  
Monday Morning Book Klatch 10 a.m.
- Dec. 23**  
Open Chess (Special Date) 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 24**  
Library Closed All Day
- Dec. 25**  
Library Closed All Day
- Dec. 26**  
Library After Dark Dance Party 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 29**  
Retro Video Game Extravaganza 1 p.m.
- Dec. 30**  
Set Your Intentions for 2026 3 p.m.  
Open Chess (Special Date) 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 31**  
Library Closed All Day

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# Depth will be strength of Neenah boys wrestling squad

Neenah News

A pair of returning state placewinners is a good place for any wrestling team to start building a season around.

The Neenah boys wrestling team has that in senior Declan Koch and junior Landen Sheppard.

## Boys Wrestling PREVIEW

But with a deep and experienced roster ready to take the mats for the Rockets this season, that talented duo will have plenty of help to shape a pathway to success.

“The depth on our team is stronger than it’s ever been in my time here,” commented head boys coach Kyle Kleuskens, who enters his 11<sup>th</sup> season leading the Neenah program. “We are two and three deep at a lot of weight classes and that helps a ton. It makes the (practice) room so much more competitive.”

Headlining the roster will be Koch and Shappard, who each earned a spot on the state podium at the Kohl Center last February.

Koch, a three-time state placewinner who won a state title as a sophomore, finished 51-1 last season and took second in the Division 1 157-pound bracket. He has already committed to the University of Northern Iowa and will be looking to wrap up his career adding another state

crown to his resume.

However, Kleuskens believes there is more on Koch’s agenda than just a state title.

“Although winning a WIAA Individual State Championship is a goal for the season, I do not think it is the only thing he has his eyes set on this year,” commented Kleuskens. “Declan has grown into a fantastic leader for our team and his ability to lead by example, connect with his teammates and showcase his passion for wrestling on a daily basis is what sets him apart. If he continues to commit to the bigger picture of preparing for the next phase of his career at the NCAA level, the state title run will be there for him at the end of the year.”

Sheppard, who finished 40-14 a year ago, had a breakout season last year that culminated in him earning the state medal by placing sixth at 144 pounds.

The experience of earning a spot on the stadium podium should be a confidence boost for him entering the season and the combination of he and Koch in the middle of the Rockets’ lineup will be a formidable 1-2 punch.

But it won’t be Neenah’s only haymaker.

Senior Kaden Roth finished with 38 wins a year ago and is a handful of other returning sectional qualifiers for the Rockets. Roth will help anchor the upper

weights along with senior Brayden Millbrodt, who finished 19-19 last year as the Rockets’ heavyweight and earned a sectional berth.

Koch, Roth, Millbrodt and senior Jaxon Ennis will serve as captains for the Neenah squad this season. Ennis posted 24 wins a year ago at 120 pounds and will move up to either 132 or 138 pounds this season.

Junior Jackson Lichty placed fourth at sectionals at 150 pounds last year and joins the strong crew of middle weight wrestlers.

Other returning sectional qualifiers for the Rockets are seniors Garrett Nedens and Dane Granditzke along with junior Cashtin Tiedt – all of whom wrestled between 126 and 138 pounds a year ago.

In addition to the nine returning sectional qualifiers, Kleuskens also welcomes back letterwinners in senior Connor Simons, juniors Alex Zuehlsdorf, Joaquin Quinonez and Ledger Lewis and sophomores Steven Czechanski, Declan Epley, Carson Finch and Marcus Peterson.

That’s a lot of varsity experience crammed into one practice room.

“Our objective last year was to learn and grow with a lot of these guys because we knew our better years were still ahead of us,” Kleuskens commented. “That’s what all great teams have – championship caliber depth.”

Some of that group helped Neenah finish second at the junior varsity state tournament last year and will create some hard-fought battles for the positions in this year’s lineup.

However, Neenah is also welcoming in 23 freshmen to the squad and there are a handful that Kleuskens believes can make an impact this season.

Broden Butzke, Chase Thomson, Landon Tennessen and Henley Pruchnowski will all compete for spots in the lower weights, while Cylas Parker will be in the running at 215 pounds.

“The ceiling for this team? It’s going to come down to taking it one day at a time,” Kleuskens commented.

One thing Kleuskens is certain about is that his squad will be battle tested this season.

Neenah has the top six ranked teams in Division 1 on the schedule in the first two weeks of the season. That will provide a good measuring stick for where the Rockets are as a team.

“We are excited to challenge ourselves and we do not shy away from top-tier competition,” Kleuskens commented. “The strength of the sectional we are in is the reason why the schedule looks the way it does. It will help is become more battle tested come February.”

# Senior-laden squad looks to continue to grow program

Neenah News

It seems that a powerhouse may be forming inside the wrestling practice room at Neenah High School.

Coming off a team sectional title last season and with three wrestlers who competed at the WIAA individual state meet last year returning, the Rockets are going to be able to put together a formidable lineup.

With that talent and veteran presence Neenah continues to take steps forward as one of the top girls teams in the state.

“Our experienced wrestlers are able to push each other and show our new wrestlers what a successful practice looks like,” commented head coach Madison Ruckdassel. “Iron sharpens iron.”

Topping the list of talented returning wrestlers for the Rockets will be senior

## Girls Wrestling PREVIEW

Kylee Kurszewski.

Kurszewski is a three-time state qualifier who finished second at 114 pounds in last year’s state meet. She finished the year with a 47-5 record.

Senior Ava Armatti and junior Amari Richard joined Kurszewski at state last season and will be back to bolster the Rockets’ lineup. Richard, a two-time state qualifier, finished the season with a 42-9 record and posted a pair of wins at the state tournament, while Armatti posted 33 wins en route to earning her first trip to the state meet.

The Rockets also boast plenty of sectional-level experience as Neenah had only two seniors among the 11 wrestlers competed at last season’s sectional meet.

Seniors Janet Sorto, who finished fourth

at sectionals a year ago, and Rayleigh Pearson each finished with more than 20 wins a year ago. Senior Lluvia Carrillo, junior Maya Ives and sophomore Jenson Kurszewski also earned sectional trips last season and could be a part of this year’s squad.

All 11 wrestlers who competed at sectionals last season posted double-digit wins.

Ruckdassel is also expecting freshman Greenlee Ennis to compete for a spot in the varsity lineup.

The Neenah program continues to grow in numbers and Ruckdassel is looking forward to having her experienced nucleus set the tone for the new faces.

“We have our first-ever four-year seniors leading the team this year,” Ruckdassel commented. “We are excited for our veteran leaders to be able to guide our new wrestlers to success and (leave) a lasting legacy and championship culture that will guide our wrestlers after they are gone.”

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# Rockets, Zephyrs to bring deep, talented squads to court

Neenah News

Neenah's boys basketball team may have lost its top two scorers from last season but what head coach Lee Rabas is bringing back this season likely has the coach pretty excited.

Anchored by three-year varsity starter Nick Schultz, the Rockets look to be a deep and talented offensive team that will look to challenge for a finish near the top of the talent-rich Fox Valley Association.

"Our depth (will be a strength). We have a lot of guys who can play," Rabas commented.

Schultz, who is committed to playing NCAA Division III Bethel University next season, is the top returning scorer for the Rockets having averaged 10.3 points last season, while he led the team with 38 3-pointers a year ago.

The guard also led the team in assists per game (3.4) and steals (34) and was an honorable mention all-FVA selection last season.

Rabas likes the way Schultz has opened the season.

"He is playing with great pace and under control," Rabas commented. "Through the first few days of practice, you can see the difference in his level of maturity."

Another returning starter for the Rockets will be senior Roan Koeper – Neenah's tallest player at 6-foot-9.

Koeper blossomed in his first full season in the Rockets' rotation, averaging 6.2 points and nearly five rebounds per game. He finished the season strong posting an 11-point, 10-rebound in a WIAA tourna-



Neenah News

Neenah's Nick Schultz enters his third season as a starter for the Rockets and will lead a deep group this season.

ment-opening win over Hortonville and then scored a season-high 17 points the next night against Kaukauna.

Rabas is also excited about getting two players back from injury from last year in senior Cal Juckem and junior Xavier Bezars. Juckem played only eight games last season before suffering an injury while Bezars was knocked out of the lineup in late January.

Both players averaged about five points per game and will likely be counted on to shoulder more offensive responsibilities this season.

"We missed (Juckem's) presence after his injury. The 24-25 season might have finished much differently if he stays healthy," Rabas commented. "(Xavier) is very skilled and physically mature. Looking for him to be a consistent scoring threat for us."

Rabas also expects seniors Trey White, Carter Burns, Nyok Ryak and James Weiland to contribute after playing limited minutes at the varsity level last season.

Joining that group will be a large contingent of juniors that could battle for playing time this season.

Jacob Jungwirth at 6-7 and Henry Farrell at 6-4 will bring some added size along with Koeper.

The rest of the group includes Matthias Charles, Chase Nitz, Jackson Rindt, Kolton Fleege, Ashton Van Beek, Tyler Clark and Gavin Keepers.

Rabas believes this year's collection will be able to put some points on the board.

The Rockets topped the 70-point mark only five times last year – highlighted by 88-point and 83-point efforts in wins over Appleton West – and that number has the potential to climb this year.

However, it's at the other end of the court that could be a concern.

"Whether we are going to be able to stop anyone from scoring is a question," Rabas commented. "We have not been a good defensive team this offseason and I worry about our willingness and ability to play defense and rebound."

Neenah will look to carry over the momentum of a strong finish from last season, too.

The Rockets won four of the final five games of the regular season and finished

with a 16-10 overall record. Neenah finished in a three-way tie for fourth place in the FVA.

In a conference that graduated 10 of the 14 players on the first and second all-FVA teams combined, the race for the top of the conference could be wide open and Rabas hopes his squad will be able to compete.

"Can our young guys grow up and mature fast enough will be a key," Rabas said. "Will we be physically tough enough to compete with the top teams in the FVA?"

## St. Mary Catholic

With four starters returning from last season, the Zephyrs could certainly be a team on the rise in the Big East North this year.

Leading the veteran group will be senior Mason Uhlenbrauck, who enters his fourth season on varsity. Uhlenbrauck was the Zephyrs leading scorer at nearly 15 points per game, while also hitting a team-high 76 3-pointers while shooting nearly 43 percent from behind the arc.


St. Mary Catholic also returns a trio of perimeter players that will join Uhlenbrauck.

Senior Mason Wagner along with juniors Luke Fairweather and Tarver Trinkner were all starters last season and each averaged around nine points per game.

Trinkner finished behind only Uhlenbrauck with 58 3-pointers, while Fairweather ranked second on the team in assists and Wagner is the team's top returning rebounder.

"Depth and talent on the perimeter is definitely a strength for us," head coach Paul Bradshaw commented. "I'm very ex-


SEE **Boys basketball** ON PAGE 15



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# Boys Varsity Basketball

## Winter 2025-2026 Schedule



ST. MARY CATHOLIC			NEENAH HIGH SCHOOL		
11/25	@ Wautoma	7:00 PM	11/26	Brookfield East	6:00 PM
12/2	@ Bonduel	7:00 PM	12/2	Notre Dame Academy	7:30 PM
12/5	Menasha	7:15 PM	12/5	Hortonville	7:45 PM
12/9	Manitowoc Lutheran	7:15 PM	12/12	@ Appleton West	7:15 PM
12/12	@ Howards Grove	7:15 PM	12/16	@ Oshkosh North	4:50 PM
12/16	Mishicot	7:15 PM	12/19	Oshkosh West	7:15 PM
12/18	Omro	7:15 PM	12/23	@ Appleton East	4:40 PM
12/30	@ West Bend West	3:00 PM	1/3	@ Marshfield	4:00 PM
1/2	@ Wittenberg-Birnamwood	7:00 PM	1/6	Kaukauna	7:15 PM
1/5	@ Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah	7:15 PM	1/9	@ Fond du Lac	4:15 PM
1/13	Iola-Scandinavia	7:15 PM	1/13	Kimberly	7:15 PM
1/15	Reedsville	7:15 PM	1/16	@ Appleton North	7:15 PM
1/19	@ Hilbert	7:15 PM	1/20	Stevens Point Area Senior	7:15 PM
1/29	Howards Grove	7:15 PM	1/23	@ Hortonville	6:00 PM
1/31	MAS	3:00 PM	1/27	Appleton West	7:15 PM
2/3	@ Manitowoc Lutheran	7:15 PM	1/30	Oshkosh North	7:15 PM
2/6	@ Mishicot	7:15 PM	2/3	@ Oshkosh West	7:15 PM
2/10	Hilbert	7:15 PM	2/6	Appleton East	7:15 PM
2/13	Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah	7:15 PM	2/13	@ Kaukauna	7:15 PM
2/20	@ Reedsville	7:15 PM	2/14	@ Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln	6:00 PM
2/21	The Prairie School	2:30 PM	2/17	Fond du Lac	7:15 PM
			2/20	@ Kimberly	7:15 PM
			2/26	Appleton North	7:15 PM

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Home games played at Neenah High School 211 Competition Gym

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# Klesmit's passion for hoops anchored in family ties

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

There is a list of things that Rowan Klesmit wants to accomplish in her senior season with the Neenah High School girls basketball team.

Many of those goals revolve around the success of the team, leaving a legacy for future Rockets to follow and doing whatever is necessary to have Neenah finish its season at the Resch Center.

But there is another item that is residing on the outskirts of her goal sheet. Something just for her.

With two older brothers who were standout players at Neenah, finishing her career as the highest scoring Klesmit in the family would certainly be the best tasting icing for her basketball cake.

Rowan entered the season with 1,209 points and picked up 29 points in her first two games this season.

She has already surpassed the middle child, Cal, who missed an entire season because of injury and finished with 794 points.

But she is chasing her oldest brother, Max – who played the last three seasons at Wisconsin – who racked up 1,636 points in his career, playing three full seasons on the varsity level.

So, in order to finish ahead of Max, Rowan would have to average 15.9 points per game if Neenah played the same 27 games as it did last year. Her career scoring average is 15.5 points per game and averaged 22.7 points per game last season.

"It's doable," said a smiling Klesmit, who wasn't originally aware of where she stood on the family scoring list. "That would be awesome. I would definitely have bragging rights at home."

The bragging rights would be nice after growing up taking her lumps against her brothers in driveway games of 1-on-1 or in the games in the kitchen on the family's mini-hoop – including the one contest



Rowan Klesmit is a four-year varsity performer at Neenah who recently committed to Wright State University.

that resulted in a broken light.

But all of those battles with Max and Cal are a big part of why Klesmit has accomplished what she has. And being able to see her brothers excel only stoked the competitive fire in her to reach the level that she has.

"They pushed me a lot. I wouldn't be the

player I am without them," Klesmit said. "A lot of 1-on-1s in the driveway and in the gym where it got super competitive. That's where I found my love for the game but also it built my competitiveness.

"Just going to their games, watching their games, learning from them, it grew my game so much."

## Senior Standout



As much as basketball is Klesmit's passion now, it wasn't always the case.

She played club soccer growing up and didn't start competing on the AAU basketball circuit until she was in seventh grade – not late by most standards, but a later start than some.

"I was definitely dialed in with soccer and I did like it at one point more than basketball," Klesmit said. "Then when I got to the high school level I just loved (basketball)."

Klesmit made the jump to the varsity level as a freshman, admitting that it was a bit scary being out on the court playing against girls who were two and three years older than she was.

She came off the bench and averaged 7 points per game that first season, but it laid the foundation for what was to come.

"I had really good upper classmen teammates that helped me build my confidence (my freshman season)," Klesmit said. "Then through the years my confidence has definitely grown."

Klesmit played a key role as a starter on the state runner-up team her sophomore year, averaging 17 points per game in the postseason, while hitting 18 3-pointers in the six tournament games.

Then, last season, Klesmit took over as the leading scorer and the driving force on both ends of the court. She finished among the team leaders in most statistical categories but also took a step forward in an area that can't be charted by numbers.

"Taking on a leadership role, especial-

SEE **Senior Standout** ON PAGE 15

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# Boys basketball

FROM PAGE 13

cited about this group because everyone can shoot/score, we have significantly more depth and this is a very unselfish group.”

Isaiah Hennessy also returns after coming off the bench, while the Zephyrs’ roster took a hit with the loss of Maddux Dwyer due to injury.

In addition to the strong nucleus of returning players, St. Mary Catholic will get a boost from last year’s junior varsity squad that racked up a 21-1 record.

Juniors Alex Klinkhammer and Max Vosters averaged 16 and 10 points per game on junior varsity last year, while seeing limited action with the varsity team.

Sophomores Dylan Brenn and Gavin Beck also scored in double figures on junior varsity last season, while fellow sophomore George Voss chipped in 9.7 points per game.

Although Bradshaw likes his collection

of perimeter players, the coach is concerned about how the Zephyrs will match up on the frontcourt.

Brenn and Vosters are both listed at 6-foot-4, while Hennessy is at 6-3 but how the Zephyrs compete in the paint and on the glass will be a key to the team’s success.

“We will need to rebound beyond our size,” Bradshaw commented. “We expect to overcome our lack of size with speed/quickness on the boards.”

St. Mary Catholic got off to a tough start last season but used a pair of three-game winning streaks and finished 13-13 overall a year ago, including a 6-6 mark in the Big East-North.

Bradshaw believes that the Zephyrs can improve on that this season and contend with defending champion Howards Grove and powerhouse Reedsville for a top finish in the league.

“I believe we will be a difficult matchup for our opponents,” Bradshaw commented. “We have to use our speed and quickness to defend better and use our scoring ability to win in the Big East North.”

# Prep roundup

## GIRLS BASKETBALL

### Crowe’s big night carries Zephyrs to win

Autumn Crowe poured in a career-high 30 points and totaled 23 rebounds as St. Mary Catholic rolled to a 65-46 win over Wrightstown in a nonconference road game on Monday night.

Crowe finished 12-of-20 from the floor in the game and went 6-of-9 from the free-throw line in the game. She also chipped in eight steals and two assists in the win.

Gabby Guerrero also reached double figures with 11 points, while Luci Nackers finished with eight points and Bitsy McCauley chipped in seven.

The Zephyrs led 38-22 at halftime.

St. Mary Catholic was coming off a 48-37 win over Bonduel in the season-opener as the Zephyrs outscored the Bears, 26-17, in the second half to pull away for the win.

Nackers led the team with 13 points, while McCauley and Crowe each added 11 points in the win. Crowe also chipped in eight rebounds and six steals.

### Cold-shooting night sinks Rockets

Neenah slogged through a rough shooting night as the Rockets dropped an 85-55 decision to state-ranked Wauwatosa East last Saturday.

The Rockets made just 18-of-80 field goal attempts in the game, including a 6-of-35 performance from behind the arc as they suffered their first loss of the season.

Celia Gentile led the Rockets with 19 points, while Rowan Klesmit finished with 10 points and five assists. Sydney Michalkiewicz and Carli Baltus chipped in eight and seven points, respectively, while Baltus grabbed a team-high six rebounds.

# Senior Standout

FROM PAGE 14

ly last year and this year as well,” Klesmit said. “We knew that was kind of going to be my role last year and so just kind of embracing that was the key.”

Klesmit is capable of scoring in a multitude of ways, whether she is driving to the basket or stepping out behind the 3-point line. She’s also a very unselfish player who can just as easily find an open teammate as take the shot herself.

Knowing what to do and when is something that she has learned through all of her basketball experiences and it is that ingrained knowledge that she feels is her biggest strength on the court.

“It’s just my basketball IQ that helps me,” Klesmit said. “Kind of reading what the defense gives me.”

Klesmit’s high-level of understanding of the game, meshed with her unique talents earned her the opportunity to play basketball at the next level.

Klesmit recently signed to continue her career at Wright State University, a member of the Horizon League along with the likes of UW-Green Bay and UW-Milwaukee.

“The decision was pretty easy. When

I made my visit, it felt like home. The coaches and the players were super welcoming,” Klesmit said. “It’s a plus being in the Horizon League. I’ve watched that my whole life. Growing up I always wanted to play in that league so to be able to do that is awesome.

“Getting (the college decision) out of the way senior year was my goal. Just getting that off my shoulders and not have to worry about it for my senior season.”

So instead of wondering where she will play next year, Klesmit can focus solely on getting the Rockets back to the state tournament and finish her career at the Resch Center.

She believes the current crop of Rockets is capable of getting there and with Klesmit leading the way, Neenah certainly has a good chance.

“This group is really special. We have some younger girls who haven’t had as much varsity experience but their talent is unbelievable. The special part of this group is how deep we are and we can use that to our advantage,” Klesmit said. “That feeling of going to the Resch Center was unbelievable and we all want to do that again. We just use it as motivation. We know we can get there because we have done it once so let’s go do it again.”



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To place an obituary submit through Your Funeral Director Or [obits@oshkoshherald.com](mailto:obits@oshkoshherald.com), [obits@neenahnews.com](mailto:obits@neenahnews.com) or [customerservice@winneconnenews.com](mailto:customerservice@winneconnenews.com) or call 920-385-4512



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