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Neenah proposes \$31.8 million budget

City's tax rate will rise by 4.15% for 2026

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The city of Neenah's proposed 2026 operating and capital improvements budget calls for a 4.15% increase in the property tax rate. Under the plan, the city's tax rate would

rise from \$7.02 to \$7.31 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, an increase of 29 cents. For a home valued at \$275,000, that would mean about \$80 more in city property taxes next year. The total property tax levy is projected at \$22.97 million, a 6.6% increase over 2025.

The proposed spending plan includes \$31.8 million in the general operating budget and \$21.9 million in capital improve-

ment projects. It also includes \$15 million in debt service.

Public safety remains the city's largest expense. The Police Department's operating budget is set at about \$8.5 million, down 2% from 2025 after a \$15,000 reduction requested by the mayor to help balance overall spending. Neenah is responsible for about

SEE **City budget** ON PAGE 5

INSIDE



Twice as nice
Neenah girls claim
2nd straight state title
Page 9



Neenah News

Helping hands

The 17th annual Helping Hands Art and Craft Fair was held Saturday in the Ron Einerson Fieldhouse at Neenah Middle School. The event featured over 125 vendors of handmade items as well as food, a raffle and a used book sale. Music was provided by the Neenah High School Touch of Class orchestra. All funds go directly to Neenah Joint School District families in need as well as a yearly scholarship.

New ramp lets local woman enjoy the fall colors

Lions Club rolls out 1,500th mobility ramp

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The Larsen-Winchester Lions Club recently marked a major milestone with the installation of its 1,500th wheelchair ramp, this one at the Neenah home of Dennis and Karen Heimer.

Dennis said last week that the first thing he will do with the new ramp is help his wife out of the house to enjoy the fall leaves. He said the ramp makes "a tremendous difference" in getting Karen to appointments and "just for her to be able to get in and out of the house."

"At my age, I can't maneuver her down

steps in a transporter at all," he said. "It wouldn't be safe. Safety comes first, and you know, that solves the problem. I can just open it up and go down and into the car or whatever."

Karen said the ramp will help with her independence.

"Settled in the house, I can't get out, you know? Well, I can if my daughter comes, goes out the back door, but we always have to have somebody take us if I've got an appointment or whatever. So now this, I'm glad this is getting done," she said.

The ramps are built for a variety of needs. Many go to older residents who have difficulty navigating steps, but others are for people recovering from knee or hip surgery who may only need a ramp for six to 12 weeks. They also are installed at the

homes of children or young adults who use a wheelchair due to a lifelong condition or illness.

Volunteers build the ramp sections at the Lions Club warehouse in Larsen and then assemble and install them in homes across Neenah, Menasha, Appleton, and surrounding communities within a 25-mile radius. The program typically installs about 60 ramps a year, retrieving and repurposing them when no longer needed. Residents in Clayton and Winchester qualify for ramps at no charge; families outside those towns pay half the cost of materials.

The group built its first ramp in 1989, followed by two more in 1991 and three in

SEE **Mobility ramp** ON PAGE 7



Neenah News

A mobility ramp installed at a home on Winneconne Avenue last week is the 1,500th for the Larsen-Winchester Lions Club.

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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.

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Neenah Historical Society photo

Masonic Temple

Organized in 1854, the Twin Cities Lodge No. 61 Free and Accepted Masons constructed their Temple at 241 E. Wisconsin Ave. in 1925. Chicago architects Childs and Smith designed the building plans, and ground was broken in April 1925. The Lodge is celebrating the 100th anniversary of their building this year.

Brigade spreading holiday cheer by selling wreaths

Neenah News

The Boys and Girls Brigade Wreath Sale is in full swing through Dec. 6 as fresh, fragrant evergreens are ready to deck doors and spread some holiday cheer.

Every purchase supports the group's programs and Camp Onaway. Wreaths can be ordered from a local Brigader or by

stopping at the Brigade Warehouse located at 715 Fairwood Drive or the satellite location located at 701 S. Green Bay Road next to Five Below starting Nov. 15 to pick one up.

For other pick up options, contact the Brigade office at 920-725-3983 to place a wreath order.

Online auction, pop-up shop to benefit animal shelter

Neenah News

The Neenah Animal Shelter will hold its 2025 holiday online auction Nov. 16-20.

Items from the auction can be picked up at the pop-up shop Nov. 22. The pop-up shop will be from 8 a.m. to noon at The Marketplace, 124 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Neenah Animal Shelter apparel will be for sale at the pop-up shop, along with totes, purses, holiday decorations and more. All the items are sewn and carved by two of the shelter's volunteers. They donate 100% of the purchase price to the animal shelter.

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Calendar of events

Friday, Nov. 7

First Friday Concert featuring Sue Fink, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Saturday, Nov. 8

Fall Craft Fair, 9 a.m., Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 1140 Tullar Road

Monday, Nov. 10

Books Are Fun Sale, 8 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah
Short Story Night, 7 p.m., Lion's Tail Brewing Co.

Tuesday, Nov. 11

Veterans Day Ceremony, 8:30 a.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts center

Books Are Fun Sale, 9 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah

Veterans Day Observance, 11 a.m., Shattuck Park

Veterans Day Ceremony, 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., Neenah Middle School Pickard Auditorium

American Legion Post 33 Veterans Day Dinner, 5 p.m., The Dome

Thursday, Nov. 13

Future Neenah Shop and Stroll, 3 p.m., Downtown Neenah

Saturday, Nov. 15

Author Linda Van Camp of "But I'm Too Tired to Take a Bath" Book Signing, 10:30 a.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Little Geniuses Club Kid's Carnival, 11 a.m., Neenah Middle School

Neenah-Nodaway Yacht Club Fall Gathering, 5:30 p.m., Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel & Conference Center

Thursday, Nov. 20

Neenah Historical Society presentation about Neenah Public Schools, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

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.

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

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

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Submitted photo

Parents helped students place flags in the yard outside New Hope Ministries as a way to honor veterans. Almost 100 flags had been placed as of Wednesday.

New Hope Ministries celebrates Veterans Day

Neenah News

New Hope Ministries students have been planning various ways to honor and appreciate the sacrifice of veterans.

The students are coloring cards to send out to veterans around the upcoming Veterans Day holiday. Additionally, the grade school students are preparing a meal that they will deliver to a veteran within New Hope Lutheran Church.

“Our heart for veterans and the community is just as big as ever,” said Emily Runnoe, New Hope Ministries student services and communications coordinator.

New Ministries includes the church, school and learning center.

Since Oct. 1, Runnoe said the school

has been raising funds for DAV Field of Flags. The goal was to raise \$500 by early November. The school has been posting printed flags in its hallway with names of veterans to honor.

They raised nearly \$1,622 and plan to fly 144 lawn flags on Veterans Day.

“The students enjoyed their time putting the flags in the lawn and are continuing to learn how we respect and honor those who serve, along with flag etiquette,” Runnoe said. “We at NHCS are amazed at the outpouring of generosity that we have experienced. Donations have come in from church members, school and learning center families, and even members of the larger community.”

Local events planned to observe Veterans Day

Neenah News

Neenah’s annual Veterans Day Observance hosted by American Legion Post 33 will take place at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Shattuck Park.

The event honors those who have served in the United States Armed Forces and remembers those who gave their lives in service to the country.

The program brings together voices from across the community, with remarks from Mayor Jane Lang and local officials, music from the Neenah Community Band and students from St. Margaret Mary Catholic School, and a tribute by area honor guards. Local veterans’ organizations will present colors, followed by Echo Taps and a benediction led by Dan King, Neenah VFW Chaplain.

Community members are encouraged to attend as the courage, sacrifice and dedication of veterans is honored.

Neenah High School and Neenah Middle School are inviting local veterans to

attend Veterans Day ceremonies on Tuesday at each school.

Neenah High School will host an event at 8:30 a.m. in the Performing Arts Center. Veterans are invited to park in Lot 2 in front of the school and enter through the auditorium beginning at 8 a.m. The event will feature a presentation of colors by American Legion Post 33, performances by the high school band, choir and orchestra and recognition of veterans and military members in attendance.

Neenah Middle School will host events from 1:30 to 2 p.m. for fifth and sixth grade students and 2:30 to 3 p.m. for seventh and eighth grade students in Pickard Auditorium. The public is invited to either of the events and may park in the main lot and enter through Door 4.

The American Legion Post 33 is also organizing a Veterans Day dinner at 5 p.m. Tuesday at The Dome. Tickets cost \$20. For more information on the dinner, call Jill Fritsch at 920-379-8612.

MEMORIES

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Funeral home honors veterans with new tribute wall

Neenah News

As communities prepare to mark Veterans Day on Tuesday, one local funeral home is honoring service members with a new tribute wall dedicated to veterans.

Located at the north end of the lobby at Westgor Funeral Home's Neenah location, the display features plaques for each



Karrmann

of the six branches of the military, a bronze statue of a boy holding a folded American flag, and the words: "Proudly honoring all veterans, past, present, future."

"I've always respected and tried to honor all of our veterans who gave the ultimate sacrifice, as well as those still with us," Westgor owner Bob Karrmann said. "This project has been in the works for over a year, and I'm very proud of how it turned out."

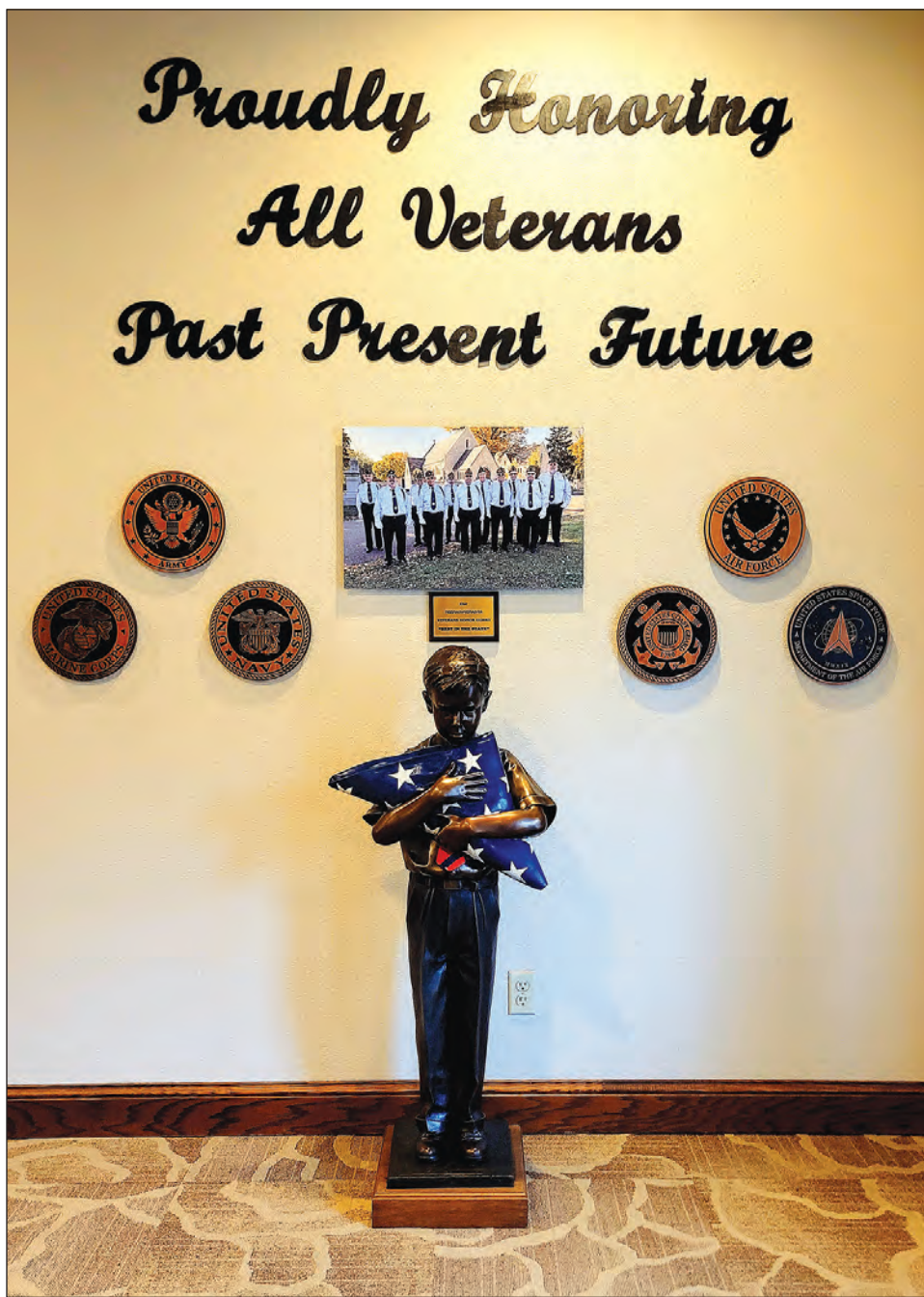
A photo of the Neenah-Menasha Veterans Honor Guard taken at Oak Hill Cemetery alongside the chapel is located in the center. The Honor Guard regularly sends up to 15 members to provide military honors at local funerals.

Karrmann said the Neenah-Menasha Honor Guard is one of the best in the state and brings comfort to families.

"We've dealt with many honor guards throughout the years, and these guys are top notch," he said.

The tribute also includes photos of the new veteran's memorial flag display at Shattuck Park.

"It's a great tribute to the men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice and to our surviving veterans," Karrmann said.



A new tribute wall at Westgor Funeral Home honors veterans with plaques representing each branch of the military, a bronze statue, photos and an inscription.

Business news roundup

Tammy Schwarzbauer is the new director of sales and catering at the **Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel and Conference Center**. Before joining Bridgewood, Schwarzbauer spent 23 years with WMEP Manufacturing Solutions, where she served in several roles, most recently as senior events manager. Schwarzbauer is a Neenah native.



Schwarzbauer

Kyle Galloway has been promoted to vice president—software engineering at **Secura Insurance**. Galloway joined Secura in 2022 as director—IT. In October 2024, his leadership role expanded to include overseeing all engineering teams within Secura's IT division. In his new role, Galloway will continue to advance Secura's strategic initiatives by fostering high-performing engineering teams and strengthening partnerships across the business.

Glow Spa Neenah has opened at 1576 Lyon Drive and will be offering guests a first-of-its-kind combination of full-service beauty treatments, flexible spa suite rentals and a hands-on candle bar experience. Glow Spa Neenah is open Monday through Saturday by appointment, with Walk-In Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. featuring select services at a discounted rate. Visit glowneenah.com for more information.



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Former city attorney seeks to withdraw guilty plea

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Former Neenah City Attorney Adam Westbrook is asking a federal judge to allow him to withdraw his guilty plea in a child pornography case, claiming his previous attorney provided ineffective counsel and that he is innocent of the charges.

In a motion filed last week in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, Westbrook, 36, argued that his plea was not entered knowingly and that he was pressured to plead guilty before fully reviewing key evidence.

Westbrook, who is represented by the Federal Defender Services of Wisconsin, said his original attorney advised him to

accept a plea agreement before obtaining discovery materials related to a separate child pornography investigation in the United Kingdom. Those materials, according to the motion, contained limited and incomplete information that Westbrook later reviewed and said raised questions about the evidence's authenticity.

The motion also contends that Westbrook did not knowingly admit to creating or distributing sexually explicit material and that the images



Westbrook

at the center of the case do not meet the legal definition of child pornography.

Westbrook was arrested in February 2024 and later agreed to plead guilty to one count of distribution of child pornography under a plea agreement calling for a prison sentence of between eight and 12 years. He has remained in custody since his plea hearing in September 2024.

Westbrook, who resigned as Neenah's city attorney in 2022 and later served as Outagamie County's human resources director, was charged after investigators executed a search warrant at his Neenah home. Prosecutors said he recorded videos of a naked prepubescent boy and sent them to a Racine County sheriff's deputy

who was later convicted in a related case.

In February, that now-former deputy, Preston Kite, was sentenced to 67 years in prison for child pornography, child sexual exploitation and bestiality. Two other Fox Valley men were also sentenced earlier this year in connection with the same investigation.

Westbrook was scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 3 but his sentencing has been canceled and will not proceed until the court rules on his motion to withdraw his guilty plea. The government has until Monday to file its response to the motion.

A hearing on Westbrook's request to withdraw his plea has not yet been scheduled.

City budget

FROM PAGE 1

61% of the costs for Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue, with Neenah's share totaling about \$6.7 million next year.

The Finance Department proposes about \$1.2 million in operating costs, while Human Resources spending would rise by nearly 24% to \$407,960. The Information Systems Division has an \$820,910 budget for 2026.

The city has plans for \$21.9 million in 2026 capital improvements, funded primarily through \$21.6 million in general obligation borrowing. Major projects include \$6.3 million for facility upgrades, \$4.2 million for equipment replacement, and more than \$4 million for sewer and stormwater utility work. Additional support will come from about \$325,000 in grants and donations.

Mayor Jane Lang wrote that her priori-

ties for the 2026 budget reflect her desire to provide the best outcomes for citizens while also supporting city employees.

The budget includes a planned 2.5% pay increase for city employees and a new comprehensive salary evaluation in 2026. Out-of-pocket health insurance costs for city employees are expected to decrease by about \$1,000 compared to 2025, while employees will see a small increase in health insurance premium costs. The city moved to self-funded health insurance in 2024 as a cost saving measure.

"Our team remains strong, dedicated, and committed to continuing to provide the very best for the citizens of Neenah, and we remain firm in our convictions to make the best decisions for our entire community," Lang said. "As we undergo the process of budget discussions and decisions at the Council level, I welcome the input and wisdom of our Council members and community members to produce the absolute best possible result for all of us."

Applications open for police citizens academy

Neenah News

Anyone age 18 or older who lives or works in the City of Neenah interested in learning more about police procedures is encouraged to apply for the 2026 Neenah Police Department Citizens Academy.

The police department is accepting applications for the free, 10-week program which offers behind the scenes experiences on law enforcement through interactive topics, presentations and hands-on activities.

Classes are once a week (along with graduation April 7 and an optional Saturday morning class March 7) from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Jan. 20 through March 24 and limited to 16 participants who are selected by the department's command staff through an application process.

The program objectives are to build relationships, to create and develop effective police and community partnerships and give citizens the opportunity to ask ques-

tions. Another objective is to educate citizens on the procedures, responsibilities, guidelines, policies and laws that guide police decision making.

Participants must pass a background check. For more information, go to shorturl.at/VJZHG.

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Contractor sentenced to probation in theft cases



Christopher Koehler (left) is shown in court in May with his attorney.

Neenah News

A Fond du Lac contractor convicted of taking payments for construction work he never completed has been sentenced to probation in both Winnebago and Fond du Lac counties.

Christopher Koehler, 45, owner of Elite Construction, was sentenced in Winnebago County last month to five years of probation for two felony theft by contractor charges. A 10-month jail term was stayed and divided into 60-day increments each year that would only be served if Koehler fails to pay at least one-fifth of the restitution owed or he does not make reasonable efforts to pay. His probation may be terminated early after two years if all conditions are met, restitution is fully paid and no new law violations occur.

The exact amount of restitution he will be required to pay in Winnebago County was expected to be determined at a hearing today. Koehler faced the two charges in Winnebago County after business owners in Oshkosh and Neenah reported paying him a combined \$38,486 for work that was never completed.

In Fond du Lac County, Koehler was sentenced to three years of probation and required

to pay \$4,671 in restitution in a separate felony theft by contractor case.

According to the Winnebago County criminal complaint, Koehler was hired in 2022 to repair the roof and replace windows at Satori Imports in Oshkosh and to install new windows at The Tailored Hide in Neenah after an intoxicated driver damaged the building. Both business owners said they paid large deposits and spent two years trying to get Koehler to follow through, only to be met with repeated excuses and delays.

One victim, Kay Bahr, said in an impact statement that the historic building housing Satori Imports suffered additional damage while waiting for repairs. Another, Leann Wasinger, said she lost significant retail space and had to delay her retirement because of the financial setback. She recently announced that her business, The Tailored Hide, will permanently close in January.

Koehler admitted to an investigator that he used the money from the Neenah and Oshkosh jobs to cover a separate siding project in Jackson, which he claimed became his priority. Neither business had received a refund.

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Mobility ramp

FROM PAGE 1

1992. All the work was initially in Larsen, where local people helped local people. After five years, the club realized the need extended beyond its immediate circle and decided to get organized. By 2008, the group had installed 500 ramps.

“That’s what I call a farmer attitude: ‘We can do that,’” Lead Volunteer Bruce Stowe said.

Stowe joined the effort in 2009.

“I enjoy building, I enjoy helping people, and I enjoy working with the crew – the camaraderie concept of it,” he said.

The ramps’ basic design was established in the 1990s. Over the years, the builders have refined the construction process to

make the ramps easier to assemble, but the overall design has stayed the same. Unlike a deck, which requires footings and a concrete base to prevent shifting during frost, the ramps rest on top of the ground. Some may remain for 20 years, but they are still considered temporary because they are not permanent additions to the house.

Those interested in the ramp program can call 920-427-3236. Stowe said when someone reaches out for help with a mobility ramp, he responds quickly.

“I realized that, when they call me, they need this pretty much now, and so I respect that, and come and take that worry away from them and tell them, ‘This is what we can do.’ Tell them exactly what can we do and when can we do this, so that one thing is off their plate,” he said.

Stowe said he keeps coming back to vol-

unteer year after year because he enjoys helping people.

“Every single one, regardless of what number, that’s why we do it. We help people. And as you can imagine they’re just so thankful that we make it easier for them to

get in and out of the home,” he said.

Sitting in his kitchen last week while volunteers worked on the ramp outside, Dennis said the service made a real difference.

“Thanks to this, that’s a great big step in the right direction, definitely,” he said.



Neenah News


Lead Volunteer Bruce Stowe holds a railing as volunteers from the Larsen-Winchester Lions Club install a mobility ramp at a home in Neenah last week.



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Groups seek to support youth facing homelessness

Neenah News

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley's Home Base program and community partners this month are shining a light on an often unseen and unheard population.

The Youth on the Move initiative seeks to show youth experiencing homelessness that when they walk, they are not alone, but alongside their community.

Organizers are also hoping to highlight businesses and organizations in the community that are safe places for these youth.

The 2023-2024 school year yielded a record high of 20,195 students experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin, according to data from the Department of Public Instruction.

November, formerly known as National Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month, has been rebranded to Youth HOPE (Homeless, Outreach, Prevention, Education) Month; to make a difference and promote resources that offer hope and support.

Green footprints are spread throughout more than 100 Northeast Wisconsin businesses and organizations, aiming to bring awareness, provide a sign of solidarity and signal safe spaces for youth in the community.

For November, green is the color symbolizing youth homelessness. Yard signs and flyers near the green footprints provide more information.

New this year, Home Base is also partnering with Appleton West and Neenah High Schools' varsity girls' basketball teams, who will be sporting new shirts during warmups, encouraging their peers

to "Be For the Move" and walk alongside their peers; youth supporting youth. Neenah is pledging its support at its first home game on Nov. 18.

This is the seventh year of Youth on the Move. This year's collaborative effort is

led by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley's Home Base program in conjunction with the City of Appleton, House of Hope, Appleton West, and Neenah varsity girls' basketball teams and coaches, and more than 100 area businesses and orga-

nizations.

To learn more about Youth on the Move, virtual activities, locations that are supporting youth, youth homelessness and more, visit bgclubfoxvalley.org/youth-on-the-move/.



Submitted photo

The Fox Valley Chorus competed Oct. 21 at the International Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Fox Valley Chorus competes on international level

Neenah News

The Fox Valley Chorus competed Oct. 21 at the International Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

The group secured fifth place medals in the small chorus division of Harmony Classics. Over 2,000 Sweet Adelines choruses and quartets performed during the week-long convention.

The Fox Valley Chorus, which has 31 members, ended their performance with the "Beer Barrel Polka," dressed in their Wisconsin finest Packer, Badger and Brewer attire.

This is the 10th time that the Fox Valley

Chorus has progressed to international competition since its formation in 1970. Their most recent destinations have been New Orleans, Las Vegas, Honolulu and Nashville.

The Fox Valley Chorus advanced to the international level after earlier this year earning first place at a regional competition in Rochester, Minn. The group placed among the highest scoring five small choruses in the global Sweet Adelines organization.

Sweet Adelines International, a non-profit music education organization, is one of the world's largest singing organizations for women. It encompasses over

20,000 members throughout the United States and other countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Scotland, England, Wales, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Japan. The Fox Valley Chorus is one of its nearly 400 choruses worldwide.

The Fox Valley Chorus welcomes women singers to their rehearsals from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the Fellowship Hall of the First Presbyterian Church, 200 S. Church St., Neenah (entrance is on Doty Avenue). For details email foxvalleychorus@gmail.com or visit www.foxvalleychorus.org.



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Neenah girls repeat as state cross country champs

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

About one mile into Saturday's WIAA Division 1 girls race at the state cross country meet, defending champion Neenah was in an unfamiliar spot.

The Rockets were trailing.

A talented Slinger team, which finished third at last year's state meet, had gotten off to a fast start as the field completed the first one-third of the race.

"At one point in the race, one of our teammates shouted out that we were in second at the time," senior Natalie Willes said. "So we knew it was going to be close."

The Owls made a strong push at the Rockets' crown but Neenah flourished over the final half of the race to place all seven runners in the top 40 and pull out their second straight title.

The Rockets finished with 71 points at the meet – 13 ahead of the runner-up Owls – to mark the third time in the program's history it has registered back-to-back titles. Neenah won three straight crowns from 1981-83, topping the field each year in the Class A Division.

"We put seven girls in the top 36. We talked about that beforehand but to have them actually do that in the race was awesome," Neenah head coach Mike Heidke said. "I was ecstatic with their performance. It took that kind of performance to beat Slinger."

Although only the first five runners contribute to the team score at a cross country meet, Heidke said that one of the keys to the victory was the finishes of Neenah's non-scoring runners – Natalie Schultz and Willes.

That duo finished 34th and 36th, respectively, and was able to cross the line ahead of Slinger's fourth runner – adding crucial



Photos by Doug Sasse

Above: Neenah runners Elsa Weiland (347), Maddie Schoonover (345) and Natalie Willes (348) run close together during the Division 1 girls race at the state cross country meet on Saturday.

At right: Neenah freshman Sam Zilm keeps pace with Appleton North's Eva Busch on Saturday. Zilm finished fourth overall.

team points to the Owls' total.

"It took putting our sixth and seventh girl in front of their fourth runner that's how we were able to get them," Heidke said. "(Slinger) had a great race plan and were leading at the first mile and we had to slowly chip away at the lead."

As she has all season, freshman Sam Zilm paced the Rockets' finishers by placing fourth overall in a time of 18:08.9. According to Heidke, it is the fastest 5K run at the state meet in program history.

"I was pretty nervous about not performing to what I was expected to perform to," Zilm said. "I felt like once it started, my body took it over. It was pretty cool to (race here)."

Zilm's finish matches the fourth-place finish from Mazie Olkowski at last year's



state meet and the sixth top-10 finish by a Neenah runner since 2011. Elsa Gruber was seventh last year, Allison Parker was sixth in 2011, Jennifer Parker placed fourth in 2013 and Jessica Parker was fourth in 2012 and second in 2013.

Gruber had another strong run to back Zilm's finish, placing 11th overall in the

SEE **Cross country** ON PAGE 11

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Zephyrs fall one step short of return to state tourney

By Joe Matzek
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

St. Mary Catholic came oh-so-close to knocking off the defending state champions in a tense WIAA Division 3 girls' volleyball sectional final Saturday evening.

After coming back to take the fourth set, the Zephyrs pushed Manitowoc Lutheran to the limit in a riveting fifth set, earning three match points before falling 20-25, 25-16, 25-15, 19-25, 18-16 in front of an enthusiastic crowd at Chilton High School.

"They're the defending state champs for a reason," Zephyrs coach Mike Mauritz said. "They're a good team, (but) we took them to five, and we took them to 18-16 in the fifth. It'll feel better in a couple days. Right now it hurts."

The deciding set featured 13 ties. For most of the set, the Zephyrs would tie the score, only to see the Lancers take the next point.

That changed when Autumn Crowe smacked back-to-back kills to give St. Mary Catholic a 13-12 lead. Two points later, the Zephyrs had their first match point at 14-13.

Manitowoc Lutheran stayed alive when Sallieann Burrows' kill landed just inside the baseline, but a tip by Adele Brennan gave St. Mary Catholic its second match point at 15-14.

The Lancers' Ava Stuebs came back

with a kill to tie the score before a Manitowoc Lutheran kill attempt landed out, leading to the Zephyrs' third match point.

But Manitowoc Lutheran went back to its go-to hitter, Stuebs, who delivered three straight kills to end the two-hour match.

Despite falling short of the state tournament, Mauritz said Saturday's effort made it feel as though the Zephyrs made it to the Resch Center.

"The kids always set a goal (that) they want to go to state," Mauritz said. "We were a point from doing that, so I think we made our goal, as disappointing as this is. We lose some key seniors, but we've got a lot of young kids that got experience, so I hope next year we come back."

Junior hitter Piper Neubauer said the Zephyrs' comeback in the pressure-packed fourth and fifth sets will help the underclassmen next year.

"Some of our girls were at state last year for basketball, but for most of us, it's the first time we've been in a place like this," Neubauer said. "With us getting that lead, I think it really brought us closer together. I think it helped us realize we had to play as one and forget everything else and just love each other and play the way we needed to play."

The Lancers (33-9) were defending Division 4 state champions, but were moved up a division this year because



Photo by Joe Matzek

The St. Mary Catholic volleyball team accepts their sectional runner-up medals after falling to defending state champion Manitowoc Lutheran last Saturday night in Chilton.

of the WIAA's tournament performance factor. They were sixth in the final state rankings and most of their losses came to state-ranked Division 1 and Division 2 teams such as Divine Savior Holy Angels, Oconomowoc and Oconto Falls.

The Zephyrs and Lancers had faced each other in Big East Red Division play on Oct. 7, with the Lancers winning in straight sets.

But the unranked Zephyrs (27-8) led most of the first set and broke free from a 19-19 tie by taking six of the last seven points, including three kills from Crowe, who had six kills in the opening set.

"They set and passed the ball really well," Mauritz said. "She (Crowe) got lots of chances to just rip the ball. And we controlled that set."

Manitowoc Lutheran - and more specifically, Stuebs - came back to control the second set. The junior hitter pounded 10 of her 35 kills in the set, most from her preferred left side, and her team cut down on errors that hurt them in set one. The Lancers also had little trouble in set three, pulling away with an 11-5 run to finish the set.

The Lancers started the fourth set with an 8-3 lead and looked like they were on the way to closing the match, but the Zephyrs turned the momentum and dou-

bled up the Lancers 22-11 the rest of the way.

St. Mary Catholic went on an 8-2 run featuring three kills from Luci Nackers, to take the lead. The teams traded the lead before the Zephyrs broke free from a 17-17 tie with another 8-2 run to close the set. A combo block by Brennan and Bethany Ruppert set up set point, which Neubauer won with an ace off the net tape.

"I think we just realized that we wanted it, and I don't think we lost that (feeling) in the second and third. I just think we couldn't connect," Neubauer said. "And I think that in that fourth set ... we had to go take it ourselves, and we couldn't just keep waiting for them to keep messing up. We had to make our own plays."

As in the first set, the difference was the Zephyrs' improved passing in the final two sets, Mauritz said.

"The biggest change from (sets) two and three is we passed the ball in serve receive better in four and five and gave ourselves some chances," Mauritz said. "We know (the Lancers) are going to convert on theirs, so we had to give ourselves enough chances to stay with them."

Crowe led St. Mary Catholic with 22 kills. Nackers had eight kills and 11 digs. Sammi Weiss had 15 assists, Bitsy McCauley had 10 digs and Brennan had six kills.

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Photo by Doug Sasse

Neenah's Elsa Gruber tries to work past a Slinger runner on Saturday.

Cross country

FROM PAGE 9

race – three seconds short of making the top 10 again. It was the fourth time at state for Gruber – and Willes, too – and she said there is no better way to end her career than with a state title.

“Mazie (Olkowski), always told us that last year going out with a bang was the best feeling and I feel like I can relate to that,” Gruber said. “It feels pretty awesome.”

Behind Gruber, Elsa Weiland came in 19th place before Izzy Malloy and Maddie Schoonover finished 26th and 27th, respectively.

Despite how close it was, the Rockets weren't watching the scoreboard as they approached the finish line. Instead, they were focusing on getting past a last runner or two and would figure things out afterward.

“I feel like it was mainly just seeing who was in front of us and pushing to see who we could get and not just the scoreboard,” Schultz said.

“I feel like we put it all out there and we need a lot to recoup ourselves (after the race),” Schoonover said. “Once we can get back in the moment then we can see the score and that's when it hits.”

When the final totals were posted, the Rockets had their title.

“For me it was kind of a relief. I was pretty nervous,” Malloy said. “When I'm coming down the home stretch, my whole goal is to not focus on anything else. I'm at the point where I'm seeing stars and that's definitely the way it was at state.”

That might have been the situation for all of the Neenah runners.

“Before the race, we kind of made a little joke that if all of us finished and didn't see stars, we didn't run hard enough,” Willes said. “I think all of us did see stars so I don't think any of us were focused on the scoreboard at the time.”

Neenah won last year's state by more than 60 points over Wauwatosa East and

returned five of the seven runners from that group – Zilm and Weiland were running at state for the first time.

That definitely put a bull's-eye on the squad's back but the team downplayed the pressure of trying to repeat heading into the race.

“We definitely downplayed (repeating as state champs) because we didn't want to put that extra pressure on your back,” Heidke said. “We talked about that you can only do the best that you can. I felt whatever happened, they were prepared for whatever outcome occurs.”

Even though the team downplayed the pressure, it didn't mean it wasn't there.

“I feel like a lot of people put it on us that we have to win,” Schoonover said. “We were confident in winning but there were definitely some good teams there and good competition so we had to really compete for it.”

With two in a row taken care of, how soon can the talk start of winning three straight?

Heidke laughed when asked and said definitely not for a while.

“It's definitely too early to think about that,” the coach said.

Arrowhead was the last Division 1 girls program to win three straight titles, earning their trophies from 2011-13. Waukesha West (1998-2001), Middleton (1995-97), La Crosse Central (1988-90) have joined Neenah's previous three-peat as programs who also have won three straight state titles.

But even if the coach hasn't started thinking about it, some of the runners already have.

“I already started looking,” Malloy said, admitting that she was into the stats and numbers of the sport. “I would really hope for it. It's going to be a lot of work in the offseason, that's for sure.”

Added Schoonover: “Losing two very important seniors on the team, we are going to have to make up for it with a lot of work. But it's a possibility for us for sure.”

Verhagen leads Neenah boys at state

Neenah News

Neenah's boys cross country team won a tight three-way battle to finish in the top 10 in the Division 1 race at the WIAA State Cross Country Meet in Wisconsin Rapids on Saturday.

The Rockets finished with 290 points to take 10th among the 20 teams, finishing one point ahead of West Bend East and three points ahead of Green Bay Preble for the spot.

Neenah placed 14th overall last year and the finish matches the 2022 placement as the programs finish in a non-COVID year since winning the title in 2018.

Zach Verhagen led the Rockets with a 21st place. Verhagen, who finished 99th as a sophomore and 100th last season, ran a consistent race to earn the top-25 finish as he stood 25th after the first mile and moved up to 22nd at the two-mile mark.

Verhagen's finish was the best individual finish for a boys runner since Austin Henderson won the individual state title in 2021.

Oliver Steiner was the next Neenah runner to finish, placing 83rd overall, five places ahead of Elliott Drake. Both runners used a strong second half of the race to earn their finishes as Steiner moved up 31 places after the first mile, while Drake improved 33 spots from his position after the opening mile.

Gideon Benner in 118th place and Jackson Holzheu in 143rd place rounded out the scoring runners for the Rockets.



Photo by Doug Sasse

Neenah's Zach Verhagen leads a pair of runners down a small hill at The Ridges Golf Course in Wisconsin Rapids during the state cross country meet on Saturday.

Also competing for Neenah was Brayden Willis, who placed 145th, and Isaac Rangel, who was 185th.

Stevens Point won their fourth straight Division 1 team title, while De Pere's Grady Lenn was the Division 1 individual champion.

Hansman, Mulroy post wins at FVA meet

Neenah News

Sydney Hansman and Anna Mulroy each won events as Neenah finished comfortably in second place at the Fox Valley Association swim meet last Saturday at Appleton East High School.

The Rockets totaled 409.5 points at the meet to trail only Appleton North, which finished with 619. Fond du Lac and Oshkosh West tied for third with 304 points.

Hansman edged Oshkosh West's Neva Schlies by less than two points to claim the top spot in the diving competition. Hansman led three Neenah divers in the top seven in the event as Sophia Diaz placed sixth and Meredith Buttron took seventh.

Mulroy registered her win in the 100-yard backstroke as she edged Appleton North's Lauren Barnes by five-tenths of a second. Mulroy also posted a third-place finish in the 50-yard freestyle.

Three other Neenah swimmers posted a pair of top-six individual finishes at the meet.

Elisabeth Hang placed fourth in the 500-

yard freestyle and added a fifth place in 200-yard freestyle, while Breleigh Maurer took fourth in the 100-yard breaststroke and placed fifth in the 200-yard individual medley.

Bridgett Bloomhuff earned a third-place finish in the 100-yard freestyle and placed one spot behind Hang in sixth place in the 200-yard freestyle.

Neenah also scored top four finishes in all three relay events, including runner-up finishes in both the 200-yard medley relay and 200-yard freestyle relay.

Mulroy and Maurer swam legs on both second-place relays with Hang and Bloomhuff joining them on the medley relay team, while Anna Benthein and Sophie Wypszynski rounded out the 200-yard freestyle relay team.

The quartet of Hang, Wypszynski, Bloomhuff and Ellen Farrell placed fourth in the 400-yard freestyle relay for the Rockets.

Neenah will be competing at the WIAA Division 1 sectional on Saturday in Neenah.

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Veterans Day

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month people around the world remember the soldiers who have fought in wars.

It was started after World War I. More soldiers had died

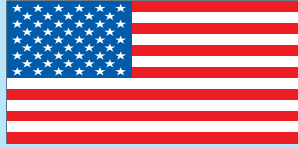
in WWI than in any other war before that one. An Australian journalist by the name of George Honey asked people around the world to observe two minutes of silence at 11:00 a.m. as the treaty to end the war was signed.

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Flags: A High-Flying Tradition

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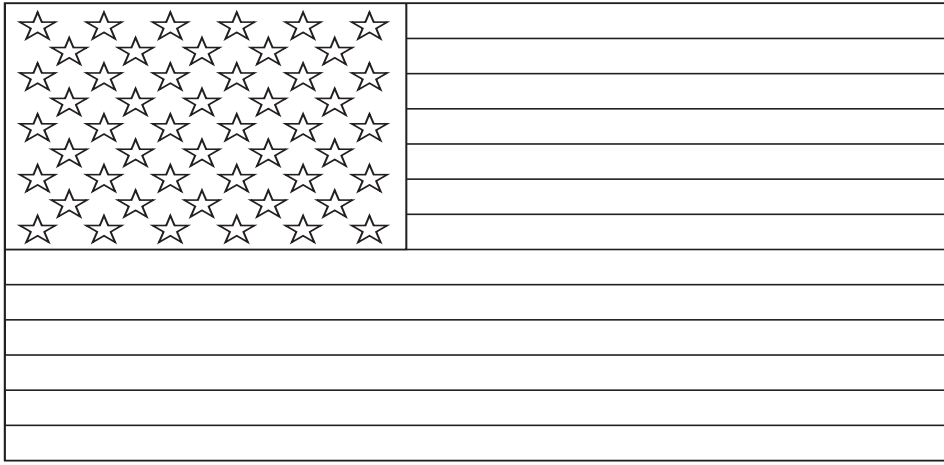
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The stripes are symbolic of the rays of light emanating from the sun.

There are 50 stars representing the 50 states and there are 13 stripes representing the 13 original states.

Red symbolizes hardiness and valor. White is for purity and innocence. The blue represents justice.

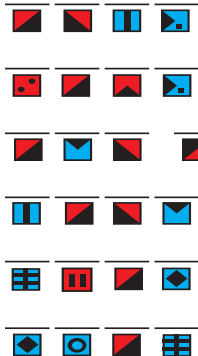


THANK YOU VETERANS!

The Six Branches of the U.S. Military

Men and women who serve in our military are called veterans. Veterans Day is a day to thank them for their service defending our nation. Use the code to discover the six branches of the American military.

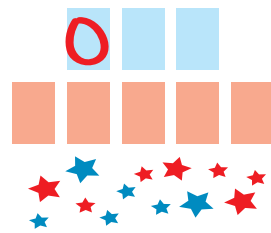
SECRET CODE	
	= A
	= C
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	= E
	= F
	= G
	= H
	= I
	= L
	= M
	= N
	= O
	= P
	= R
	= S
	= T
	= U
	= V
	= W
	= Y



How many stars can you find on this page? Have a friend try. Who found the most stars?

Circle every third letter to discover a nickname of the American flag.

O D F L J S D W V
G B N L Q L O B
C R U G Y



Extra! Extra! Veterans Day Words

Look through the newspaper for five or more words that describe a veteran. Put the words into ABC order.

Standards Link: Research: Use the newspaper to locate information.

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Here are some common symbols. Circle each one you have seen. Underneath each symbol, write what it means.



Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

Double Double Word Search

VETERANS
MILITARY
COUNTRY
SYMBOL
PURITY
SECRET
NATION
DREAM
VALOR
STARS
LIGHT
FLAG
CODE
BLUE

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

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

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

Kid Scoop Together Flag Etiquette

There are rules for flying the American flag that help people show their flag the proper respect.



1. Flags are flown at half-mast to show grief for lives lost. When the flag is flown at half-mast, it should first be raised to the top of the flag pole for a moment and then lowered slowly to the half-mast position.



2. The union (stars and blue panel) should always be in the upper left corner when a flag is displayed as shown above.

3. The flag shouldn't be flown in bad weather. When possible it should be taken down at night. If the flag is flown at night, it should be illuminated by a spotlight.

4. The flag should never touch the ground.

5. When a flag becomes old or damaged, it can be donated to a local Scouting troop for proper disposal.

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