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Photo from Fox Crossing Parks & Recreation Department

Time to Trick-or-Treat

Events have been held throughout the community in preparation for Halloween, including the Fox Crossing Parks & Recreation Department's 12th Annual Trick-or-Treat Trail held Oct. 21 at Fritsch Park. Representatives from area businesses and organizations participated in the event to hand out candy and other treats along a specially decorated path in the park.

County leaders back local aid as cutoff looms

Funds directed to pantries amid SNAP concerns

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

With the threat of a Saturday cutoff to food assistance looming for nearly 700,000 of Wisconsin's residents, several Winnebago County supervisors are ramping up efforts to support food pantries and raise awareness about local food resources.

The state Department of Health Services warned last week that funding for FoodShare, which is Wisconsin's version of the federal SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), could run out starting tomorrow if the current government shutdown continues. The potential disruption stems from a lapse in federal funding that would halt benefit distributions if Congress does not approve a new spending measure.

County supervisors Billy Halbur of Oshkosh, Kate Hancock-Cooke and Stefanie Holt of Neenah, and Kristl Laux of Menasha are expanding outreach efforts and encouraging local businesses to participate in donation campaigns for food pantries.

Hancock-Cooke, who represents District 7, said food pantries are expected to see increased demand if the federal government shutdown halts food benefits.

"These are people who work at Walmart

SEE **SNAP concerns** ON PAGE 10

Gunderson development plans receive approval

Industrial laundry facility coming to Dixie Road

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Gunderson Uniform and Linen received approval from the city's Plan Commission Tuesday to build a new 64,000-square-foot headquarters and industrial laundry facility at 1712 Dixie Road, moving the project a step closer to construction.

The new \$10 million facility will be constructed on the east side of Dixie Road, south of County Highway G, and sits adjacent to warehouse and distribution operations to the south, city-owned land with a radio tower to the east, and residential and agricultural land in the town of Neenah to the north.

Gunderson's site plan approved this

week meets the city's industrial district standards, with building setbacks, parking and landscaping exceeding minimum requirements. Stormwater runoff from the parking lots will be directed to a stormwater pond on the southwest portion of the property. The plan also includes provisions for future building expansions on the east and west sides of the facility.

City conditions for site plan approval included submitting detailed landscape and lighting plans, modifying the location of a north driveway to meet minimum separation requirements, adding a fire hydrant and adjusting the side slope of the stormwater pond adjacent to a city trail.

Doug Gunderson told the city's Plan Commission Tuesday that the facility will not offer dry cleaning. He explained that

SEE **Gunderson site** ON PAGE 6



Neenah News

A for sale sign stands near the future home of Gunderson Uniform and Linen on Dixie Road, where the company plans to build an industrial laundry facility.



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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

Published weekly and mailed free of charge Thursdays for Friday delivery (may vary based on U.S. Postal Service and holidays) to more than 21,000 homes and businesses in the Neenah and Fox Crossing areas. An E-edition of the newspaper can be accessed at www.neenahnews.com.

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



Neenah Historical Society photo

Good clean fun on Halloween

The Neenah Police Department began hosting an annual Halloween party in 1940. By the 1950's, every seventh and eighth grade student was invited to attend. In 1954, 360 pounds of beef and 2,000 buns were needed to feed the crowd. Entertainment was provided by an accordion band, juggling acts, ventriloquists, clowns and more. The police credited the event with a decline in vandalism complaints on Halloween.

Neenah Police holding Campfire with the Cops

Neenah News

The Neenah Police Department is organizing an evening of free and fun family entertainment.

The event will be from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday at the Memorial Park firepit by the woods on the south side of the park.

Officer Joe Benoit and Sgt. Erik Douglas will be joining other members of the department along with community partners to ensure all the kids and adults enjoy some quality time interacting with the local police department with skits and entertainment around the campfire.

Nominations open for excellence in education awards

Neenah News

Nominations are now being accepted for the Fox Cities Chamber's 2026 Excellence in Education awards.

The Excellence in Education awards program recognizes the outstanding achievements of educators in the Fox Cities region.

An upcoming event will acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of full-time, Pre-K through 16 classroom educators working and shining in Fox Cities schools, colleges, universities and other educational settings.

Awards are given to 10 outstanding full-time educators (individuals) who have made a positive impact on their communities. Winners will be recognized at an awards ceremony on March 12, 2026 at DoubleTree by Hilton, Neenah.

To nominate an educator visit, form.jotform.com/250417238349156. Nominations close at noon Nov. 25.

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Calendar of events

Friday, Oct. 31

Trick or Treating hours, 4-7 p.m., Neenah and Fox Crossing
Doty Cabin Trick or Treating, 4-7 p.m., Doty Cabin Museum, 701 Lincoln St.

Saturday, Nov. 1

Helping Hands Art and Craft Fair, 9 a.m., Ron Einerson Fieldhouse at Neenah Middle School
Art Activity Day, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

Wednesday, Nov. 5

Bucky! Screening, 6 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Thursday, Nov. 6

Author Tamra Mand of "Havoc in the Hampton" and "Heartbreak in the Hamptons" Book Signing, 4 p.m., Lyons Fine Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Campfire with the Cops, 5:30 p.m., Memorial Park

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., The-daCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah
Short Story Night, 7 p.m., Lion's Tail Brewing Co.

Tuesday, Nov. 11

Books Are Fun Sale, 9 a.m., The-daCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah
Veterans Day Celebration, 11 a.m., Shattuck Park
Spark! program, 1:30 p.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass
American Legion Post 33 Auxiliary Veterans Day Dinner, 5 p.m., The Dome

Thursday, Nov. 13

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

Saturday, Nov. 15

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.

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Community glass mural 'Fused by Numbers' completed

Neenah News

A collaborative community art project honoring inspirational women from Wisconsin is now on display in the lower level of the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass.

Fused by Numbers was a project which began in 2023, bringing together more than 200 women and girls to create a fused glass mural.

The program was designed to provide a supportive gathering space for women of all ages and skill levels in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants attended free two-hour workshops at Bergstrom-Mahler where they used glass pieces, frit, stringers and dots to make segments of the mural, using the paint-by-numbers concept. Each of the 250 segments were then fused together to create the final piece.

The mural's original design was created by Neenah-based artist, educator and museum docent Michelle Sharp. The piece honors inspirational women from Wisconsin history, including poet Ellen Kort, suffrage leader Jessie Jack Hooper, novelist Edna Ferber, sculptor Helen Farnsworth Mears, Indigenous leader Ho-Poe-Kaw (Glory of the Morning) and philanthropist Theda Clark Peters, among others.



Neenah News

Above: Participants work on individual glass segments of the Fused by Numbers mural during a community workshop at the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass in 2023.

At right: The completed Fused by Numbers glass mural, created by more than 200 women and girls through a Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass community art program, is now on display.

Education and Community Program Manager Kourtney Kositzke said last year that the timeline of the project was set back due to the loss of a kiln. The final 60-foot by 50-foot fused glass mural was finished and on display at the museum last month.

The program was facilitated by Kositz-



ke and Glass Studio Manager Taylor Moller-Roy. Funding was provided through a grant from the Kimberly-Clark Foun-

ation. The museum will hold the official unveiling of the exhibit from 4 to 6 p.m. on Dec. 18.

Festival Foods sale won't impact annual sponsorship of fireworks display

Neenah News

The recent sale of Wisconsin-based Festival Foods to an out-of-state company will not affect the grocer's sponsorship of Neenah's annual CommunityFest fireworks display, the company confirmed this week.

St. Louis-based Schnuck's announced last month that it planned to acquire 100%

of the shares of Skogen's Festival Foods and Hometown Grocers, including the shares held by CEO Mark Skogen and the company's Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

The sale closing was finalized earlier this month. Festival Foods and Hometown Grocers will continue operating under their existing names and maintain their

headquarters in Onalaska and Green Bay, respectively. Festival Foods has a store at 647 S. Green Bay Road in Neenah.

Neenah Park and Recreation Commissioner Lee Hillstrom raised the question during a recent meeting about what impact the ownership change might have on the city's CommunityFest event, which

includes a fireworks show sponsored by Festival Foods.

"Our companies have had success over the years because of strong community involvement, and we expect that to continue," said Schnuck's spokesperson Paul Simon said. "The fireworks sponsorship will continue."

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Neenah school tax rate to drop as property values climb

District spending set at \$128.2 million

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Residents in the Neenah Joint School District (NJSD) could see another slight drop in their school tax rate under the 2025-26 budget, marking the fifth straight year the mill rate has fallen.

The mill rate, or the rate taxpayers pay per \$1,000 of a property's value, will fall by 13 cents from \$5.77 to \$5.64, about a 2.3% decrease. That decrease continues a multi-year trend, with the 2024-25 rate dropping by 43 cents.

However, because property values across the district rose by 7.5%, most homeowners won't necessarily see smaller tax bills. The district's total property value grew from \$6.5 to \$7 billion, according to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, spreading the levy across a larger tax base and lowering the rate for individual properties.

The budget approved at a meeting Tuesday sets total spending at \$128.2 million, down about \$1 million from last year's \$129.2 million plan. The total tax levy will increase slightly to \$39.3 million, compared with \$37.4 million in 2024-25.

The 2025-26 tax levy includes \$27.9 million for general operations; \$9.1 million for debt service on the 2020 referendum that funded construction of the new high school and facility improvements; and \$450,000 for community programs such as

the Neenah High School natatorium and auditorium, crime prevention initiatives, health and wellness education, and public communications.

Fund 10, the district's main operating fund, covers everyday expenses such as salaries, classroom materials and basic operations. Nearly all of its revenue comes from state and federal aid and local property taxes. About 71% of Fund 10 spending goes toward staffing costs including salaries and benefits.

Chief Financial Officer Jonathan Joch said at the meeting that staffing and associated costs have been gradually rising, while elementary enrollment has been slowly declining, adding that recent enrollment counts show fewer than 400 students in both this year's kindergarten and first-grade classes.

"Enrollment is what drives the machine here in the state of Wisconsin, and so we will continue to examine that and work on that to get as much enrollment in here as possible, but it's not sustainable to have enrollment creeping down and have staffing creeping up," Joch said.

Business Services Specialist Amy Gunderson said that this year the district's "aidable student" count used by the state to calculate funding went down, as did the district's equalization aid, which dropped by about \$483,000. About 71% of Wisconsin school districts saw similar decreases in state aid.

Equalization aid is based on last year's spending, student membership, property values and total state allocations. Gunderson said Neenah's reduction occurred because the district has higher property values per student, making it appear more capable of funding schools locally through

property taxes.

This year the state increased the revenue limit, which is the maximum amount a district can raise from state aid and local taxes, by \$325 per student, bringing Neenah's limit to \$11,670 per pupil. Gunderson explained this doesn't mean the state gave the district \$325 more per student, but that the district is allowed to collect that much more in total revenue.

"Since we didn't receive this funding and equalization aid, we had to rely on property taxes," she said. "So think of school funding like a seesaw. One side is state aid; the other is local property taxes. When the state doesn't contribute enough, the seesaw tips and local taxpayers end up having to pay more."

The voucher program also has a major financial impact. Under the voucher program, state funds are used to pay private schools on behalf of students who live in the district but attend a private voucher school. Those payments come out of the district's funding.

Between the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years, Neenah's voucher costs rose by \$650,000, adding about 44 cents to the property tax rate. Since 2015, the district has lost more than \$20 million to voucher payments, rising from \$411,000 in 2015 to \$4.3 million today. The number of stu-

dents who can participate in the voucher program has also increased, from 1% of a district's enrollment in 2013 to 10% today.

"Wisconsin ranks third in the nation on the share of state education dollars that go to vouchers, Florida being number one, Arizona being number two," Gunderson said. "If school districts didn't have to lose funding to private schools, they could be adequately funded, along with the possibility of not having to dip into fund balance or to seek an operational referendum."

It was noted at the meeting that other local school districts are in a worse financial position than Neenah. The Menasha Joint School District is currently considering an operational referendum, where residents vote to approve extra funding for the school district beyond what state aid and the regular budget allow.

NJSD Superintendent Steve Harrison said that at this time the district is not moving to an operational referendum.

"That's because we do feel very strongly we owe it to our community to show what we've been doing first with our resources in the best way possible to maximize the resources for our students and staff," he said. "So that if we were to ever get to that position, we can say, here are all the things we tried first and now we truly have exhausted all possibilities."

Pickard Auditorium renovation on hold

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Plans to modernize Pickard Auditorium are currently on hold as the Neenah Joint School District faces competing priorities and financial uncertainty.

Pickard Auditorium is located inside the Neenah Middle School at 1275 Tullar Road and has served as a hub for concerts, drama productions, lectures and community events since it opened in 1972.

The auditorium is named for longtime community supporter Sam Pickard who assisted in organizing a fund drive for the auditorium and was Frank C. Shattuck's personal banker. It is part of the larger Shattuck Performing Arts Center, which was renamed last year to honor the Shattuck family's contributions following the closure of Shattuck Middle School in 2023.

The district unveiled a proposal in July 2024 to update the aging 1,600-seat auditorium, which has seen few upgrades in its five-decade history. The project would pre-

serve its historic character, with improvements to accessibility, lighting, seating, acoustics and backstage systems.

Digital renderings from Somerville Architects presented at a meeting last year showed a lighter, modernized interior, new carpeting and wall coverings, reupholstered seats in "Rocket red," and an upgraded stage and sound system. At that time, school officials estimated the project's cost at just under \$4.5 million, with funding to come from private donations and sponsorships rather than a referendum.

However, Communications Director Jim Strick now says there is no set timeline for launching the fundraising campaign or beginning renovations.

"The fundraising campaign to renovate Pickard Auditorium has not begun and there is no timeline at this point to do so," Strick said. "While Pickard Auditorium is in need of an upgrade, the facility is still fully functional and there have been other higher-priority facility needs in the district."

Strick cited unexpected issues tied to the opening of the new Neenah High School in 2023 and uncertainty surrounding future state school funding as reasons for the delay.

"Even with private fundraising support, the district would be faced with some expenses related to the project, making this a less than ideal time to begin a project of this significance," Strick said.

Strick said the district remains optimistic that the project will move forward when conditions improve.

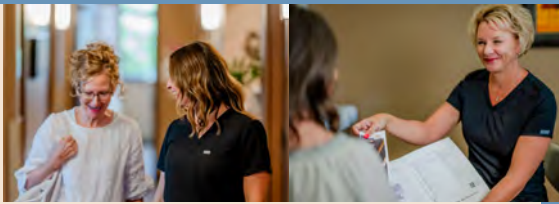
"We are hopeful to be able to complete this project in the near future, but there is currently no timeline in place," he said.



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Lighthouse renovation fundraiser hits halfway mark

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The city of Neenah is making progress on its fundraising campaign to preserve one of its most iconic landmarks, the Kimberly Point Lighthouse.

The fundraising campaign, launched Aug. 7 on National Lighthouse Day, has raised \$150,000 toward the \$280,000 goal. The project's total estimated cost is \$565,000, with about half of that amount covered by fundraising and the remainder budgeted through the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

Through the Kimberly Point Lighthouse Preservation Project, the city plans to renovate the lighthouse by rebuilding the interior and restoring exterior features. The renovated lighthouse will be accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Parks and Recreation Director Michael Kading said the design and scope of the project have not changed since the campaign launched. The city hopes to complete fundraising by next spring, with construction expected to begin in late fall 2026 and

continue through late winter 2027.

Kading said the community response has been overwhelmingly positive and attendees at a fundraising event Oct. 23 said they were excited about the planned renovations and the opportunity to help preserve the historic structure.

The lighthouse sits in Kimberly Point Park on land donated to the city in 1929 by Helen Kimberly Stuart. In 1945, her brother, James C. Kimberly, provided funds for the comfort station that functions as a lighthouse today. The Kimberly family was among those who founded Kimberly-Clark.

Funding for the project has come from a mix of sources, including one large donation, one significant grant and contributions from the local community, Kading said. In August the city announced it received a pledge from Tom Sutter, a descendant of the Kimberly family, to match the first \$10,000 raised by the community.

The lighthouse was extended by 10 feet in 1954 to reach 49 feet in height and continues to operate with a screened halogen bulb visible only from the lake.



Photo by David Hall

Fall colors surround the Kimberly Point Lighthouse in Neenah, which is set to undergo renovations next fall to preserve the historic landmark.

Veterans, businesses can participate in Honor Rewards program

Neenah News

The Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office is inviting veterans and local businesses to participate in the Honor Rewards program, a free initiative designed to give back to veterans.

The Register of Deeds Office serves Veterans by recording and safeguarding military discharge certificates (DD-214s). In partnership with the County Veterans Service Office, veterans and their families are also provided with free certified copies of their DD-214s.

Sue Fink performs First Friday Concert

Neenah News

Chicago-based singer-songwriter Sue Fink will perform a First Friday Concert at 2 p.m. Nov. 7 at the Neenah Public Library.

Drawing on influences from Joni Mitchell to Christine Lavin, Fink performs for audiences with clever lyrics, heartfelt storytelling and genre-blending tunes that range from tender folk to playful jazz-infused cabaret. Fink serves her songs with a large dose of humor.

No registration is necessary.

The Honor Rewards program is a community service that thanks and acknowledges the nation's veterans for their sacrifices.

Once a Veteran enrolls and their DD214 is verified and recorded with the Register of Deeds Office or CVSO, they will receive an Honor Rewards Card within three to four weeks, which can then be used to access discounts and benefits at participating businesses such as retailers, restaurants and service providers throughout Winnebago County and beyond. Each business determines the discount or benefit it wishes to offer. This service is being made available at no cost to veterans, the county and its taxpayers.

Veterans can register online at HonorRewards.com or through the Winnebago County Register of Deeds

website winnebagocountywi.gov/Register-of-Deeds, by visiting the Winnebago County Veterans Service Office or signing up in person at the Register of Deeds Office.

They can view participating businesses across the state and country at HonorRewards.com.

Businesses can participate by enrolling online at HonorRewards.com (scroll down to the "Businesses" link) and speci-

fy Winnebago County. They can also contact the Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office directly at 920-232-3390 or rod@winnebagocountywi.gov.

Participating businesses will receive a listing on the Winnebago County Honor Rewards website, promotion through regular email updates sent to program members and complimentary promotional materials such as window stickers and flyers to display their support



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Photo from Fox Crossing Parks & Recreation

Creative costumes, wagging tails and happy pups were part of the festive fun Oct. 9 during Fox Crossing's Howl-O-Ween event.

Pets join families for Howl-O-Ween

Neenah News

First-time events were held earlier this month to encourage area families along with their pets to get into the Halloween spirit together.

Fox Crossing Parks & Recreation held a Howl-O-Ween Treat Trail Oct. 9 at Fritsch Park.

Local businesses hosted treat stations and volunteers served hot chocolate.

A Howl-O-Ween event Oct. 4 hosted by the Neenah Parks and Recreation Department and Neenah Animal Shelter featured fall-themed games, a costume contest and plenty of tricks for treats.

The event was held at the Neenah Dog Park.



Photo by David Hall

The Neenah Parks and Recreation Department held a Howl-O-Ween event Oct. 4 at the Neenah Dog Park.

Volunteer Ombudsman Program expands to include assisted living

Neenah News

The State of Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care is expanding its Volunteer Ombudsman Program to include assisted living communities in addition to skilled nursing homes.

This expansion includes community based residential facilities, residential care apartment complexes and memory care settings. By encouraging volunteers to serve in a variety of long-term care settings, the Board on Aging can offer improved advocacy services for individuals, aged 60 and older, living in long-term care communities.

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program is a supplement to the agency's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, which works with individuals and their families to promote and protect the rights of long-term care consumers, while also working with long-term care service providers to define and achieve the highest standards possible. The Volunteer Ombudsman Program currently operates in 35 counties.

Through the guidance of the Volunteer Ombudsman Program, volunteers conduct weekly visits with residents of long-term care facilities. During these visits, volunteers inform residents of their rights and help them address concerns related to their quality of life. By visiting consistently and building trusting relationships with residents, volunteers establish themselves as reliable resources who promote dignity, respect, and person-centered care.

As the number of assisted living communities in Wisconsin continues to increase, the need for volunteer advocates grows statewide. The Board on Aging and Long Term Care is looking for individuals with an interest in advocacy to join this program. No prior long-term care experience is necessary to become a Volunteer Ombudsman, as in-depth training and ongoing support is provided.

To learn more about the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program or to become involved with the Volunteer Ombudsman Program, visit longtermcare.wi.gov or call 1-800-815-0015.

Gunderson site

FROM PAGE 1

Gunderson Dry Cleaners is the retail arm of the business, while he and his sister Sara manage and own the uniform and linen division, which is entirely wet-wash service. The business owns linens for hospitals, restaurants and other clients, renting them out across the state.

"So, it's solvent free, it's wet washed and it's all very environmentally friendly," he said. "It's not what we think of as dry cleaning."

The project is part of a development agreement approved in July, with the city selling 14 acres to Gunderson for the new facility that will initially employ about 100 workers, with an additional 50 jobs expected within five years.

The city will provide up to \$1.7 million in Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) assistance to support the project, which is located in TIF District 13. The assistance will be paid annually over 13 years, based on new tax revenue generated by the development. Gunderson has committed to a guaranteed minimum property value of \$5.5 million.

Community Development Director Kelly Nieforth said at an earlier meeting that the new facility will allow Gunderson to increase operational efficiency and modernize its processes. She said the project will also benefit Menasha, where Gunderson currently operates a downtown industrial plant, by freeing up waterfront property for potential redevelopment.

Site work for the new facility is expected to begin this winter, with construction underway next spring and estimated to take about two years to complete.

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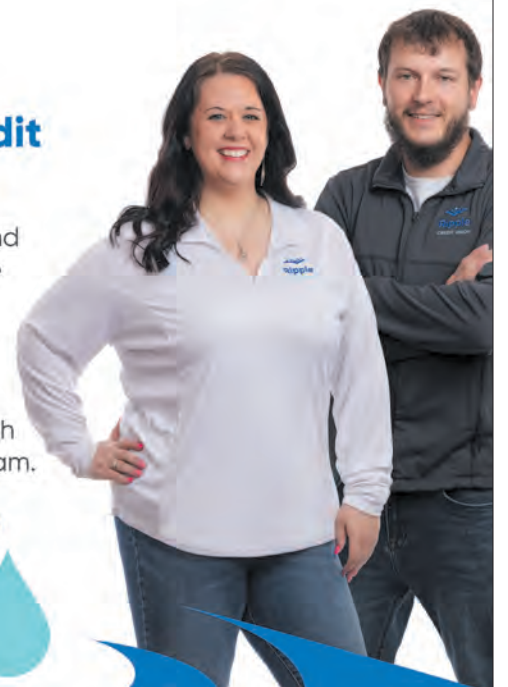
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Neenah News

Construction has begun on a new southbound right turn lane at Commercial Street and Winneconne Avenue.

Turn lane construction begins at Commercial and Winneconne

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Preliminary work on a new southbound right turn lane at Commercial Street and Winneconne Avenue officially began last week and though the intersection has seen some traffic congestion, drivers will not need to plan for detours.

The city recently finalized the acquisition of land needed to construct the new turn lane, approving the \$70,000 purchase last month. The land includes a portion of the former Boost Mobile property at 105 W. Winneconne Ave., which is owned by Computer Corner Holdings of Oshkosh and leased by Saucy Kitchen.

Saucy Kitchen owner Jennifer Kornowski spoke at city meetings in September about the project's impact on access and safety for customers.

"My business is going to be significantly impacted by the turn lane," she said at an earlier meeting. "And I'm not against the turn lane. I'm against the plan to not shift the parking lot into a real safe place, because currently, the parking lots are narrow."

The city was initially preparing to use eminent domain to acquire the property if negotiations with the property owner failed, but the process became unnecessary when the owner accepted the city's counteroffer last month.

Public Works Director Gerry Kaiser confirmed the owner has agreed to the sale and the agreement has been executed. Crews closed the turn lane area last week in advance of construction to control traffic flow southbound onto Commercial Street, which recently reopened following completion of road work on a 1.5-mile

stretch between Tyler and Stanley streets.

"The newly constructed Commercial Street was laid out to accept southbound traffic as a single lane in anticipation of the turn lane already being complete," Kaiser said. "Since it was not, we had to control the traffic flow to avoid vehicle conflicts."

With the new turn lane area closed for construction, cars traveling south on Commercial Street and turning right onto Winneconne Avenue must merge behind through traffic, which is causing occasional backups.

Preliminary road work, including project staking and saw cutting, began last week. Pavement removal and storm sewer adjustments were underway this week, with paving scheduled for next week. The project is expected to take four to five weeks to complete.

County offers property fraud alert service

Neenah News

The Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office is offering Property Fraud Alert, which is a free online notification service available to the public. This service allows individuals to have their name monitored within the Register of Deeds Office to track possible fraudulent recordings.

Subscribers receive an alert each time a document is recorded with their name, or a similar name, at the Register of Deeds Office. With the growing threat of mortgage fraud and identity theft, many victims are unaware their property has been compromised until significant damage has occurred.

While Property Fraud Alert cannot prevent fraud, it serves as an early warning system, giving property owners the opportunity to take timely action if suspicious activity is detected.

Anyone interested can sign up online at PropertyFraudAlert.com, through winnebagoountywi.gov/Register-of-Deeds or in person at the Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office.

For more information, contact Winnebago County Register of Deeds Office by calling 920-232-3390, email rod@winnebagoountywi.gov or online at winnebagoountywi.gov/Register-of-Deeds.



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Photo from St. Mary Catholic Schools

Fun ride to school

The Dahlberg family from St. Gabriel Elementary recently won a Ride to School in a Fire Truck contest organized by the Town of Neenah Fire Department. The fire department held the contest as part of its commitment to fire safety education and community engagement. Fourth graders from area elementary schools could enter the contest to receive rides to school on a fire truck throughout the month.

County Supervisors revise shoreland zoning ordinance

By Anya Kelley
NEENAH NEWS

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors has approved a revised shoreland zoning ordinance removing general land-use zoning and handing the power to municipalities.

The revised ordinance gets rid of all reference to general land-use zoning in the county's ordinance. General land-use zoning is typically a local ordinance that divides land into different zones or districts. General land-use zoning determines what lots are residential, commercial or industrial, the type of structures that are allowed to be built and how the land can be redeveloped in the future.

County Executive Gordon Hintz expressed concern about the revised ordinance going into effect immediately if passed by a majority. He pushed for an amendment to the ordinance to wait until April 1, 2026, for it to go into effect to allow all municipalities to develop their own general land-use ordinance as some do not currently have one.

He was also concerned about the legality of the revision. In a Facebook post on Oct. 10, Hintz said he requested that the Corporation Counsel get an opinion from the Wisconsin Attorney General to make sure counties are not required to zone shoreland areas within municipalities, or unincorporated areas.

"We can operate under either paradigm but need to do so compliantly with state laws and with a thoughtful transition that would allow towns time to adopt new zoning ordinances and be ready for the (costly) permitting and enforcement process," Hintz said in his post.

The board approved the revisions to the shoreland zoning ordinance during its Oct. 21 meeting.

Corporation counsel Mary Anne Mueller said in the meeting she was concerned that the revision would bring litigation to the county based on an "interplay between Wisconsin statutes coupled with case law." Supervisor John Hinz asked if the planning committee had been made aware of Mueller's concerns before they voted unanimously to send the revised ordinance and she said they were.

Hinz said the revision has been under

consideration for many years. He said when a committee comes to a unanimous decision on something, he tends to trust them. Supervisor Conley Hanson said the municipalities often know what's best for the county and should be empowered to make their own zoning decisions.

"I cannot imagine that the DNR, having signed off on this, has not also done their due diligence," Hanson said.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provided the model for the revision based on its updated model ordinance from 2023. Since 1968, Winnebago County has been required to administer shoreland zoning specifically to protect water quality and conserve wildlife in the watershed.

According to Winnebago County Supervisor Howard Miller, who brought the revision to the board, the DNR model is up to date with all current state laws regarding shoreland zoning.

"Their model does not include general zoning at all," Miller said. "The DNR said general zoning should not be in here because it does not fit the purpose of this code."

Miller said the county is tasked with protecting nature and not with protecting people which is the job of general land-use zoning. The revision gives the municipalities the power to use their current general land-use zoning code. Miller said municipalities are not allowed to make any special ordinances regarding zoning, so there is no extra work to be done.

"As far as litigation goes, the DNR has provided us a model," Miller said. "So, if litigation does occur, we have the backing of the state. If we go rogue and put general zoning in there, we're on our own if litigation comes up."

Supervisor Chuck Farrey said the only thing the municipalities gain is general land-use zoning authority while the county retains its authority over shoreland. Many permits will still be issued by the county.

After further conversation about the drafted revision and assistance from the DNR, the revised ordinance passed with no further amendments. The revised ordinance will be given to Hintz to sign, veto or refuse to sign.

County approves \$238 million budget plan

Neenah News

Winnebago County officials are moving ahead with planning for next year after the board of supervisors approved the 2026 budget.

The budget, which received a 34-2 vote in favor of it Monday during the county's annual budget session, includes a \$238 million spending plan that aligns with the Winnebago County Strategic Plan. The strategic plan is built on five pillars: transportation, housing, economic development, efficient government and quality of life. The strategic

plan is set to run from 2025-2029.

County Executive Gordon Hintz laid out seven key highlights from the adopted budget. County positions will receive a 3% market adjustment and 2% achievable merit pay to help recruit and retain employees.

The 2026 budget includes reduced use of reserve funds and enhanced cost recovery for program funding to alleviate reliance on property taxes.

The 2026 budget also enshrines the Homelessness, Eviction and Loss Prevention (HELP) program as a permanent fixture moving forward. A statement released by the county said this year's budget "strengthen[s] core county services adding targeted resources in public safety, election administration, human services, emergency management and parks to maintain reliable services and meet state and federal requirements."


The Barlow Planetarium, Communications Arts Center and Fieldhouse on the former UW Fox Cities Campus will be preserved as cultural assets in the 2026 budget, and the budget will increase investment in capital improvement programs for county-wide infrastructure needs.



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Public library calendar

- Nov. 3**
Stitching Group 1 p.m.
Adult Afternoon Program: Exercise Benefits on the Brain 2 p.m.
Rita Williams Atkinson "Of the Struggle" 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 4**
Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-6) 9:15 a.m.
Toddle Time Storytime *with ASL interpretation* (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA 10 a.m.
Tween Create Lab: Faux Stained Glass Succulents 3:30 p.m.
Powered by Yarn 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 5**
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.
Musical Movers 10 a.m.
Field Trip Storytime: Neenah Historical Society 1:30 p.m.
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Nov. 6**
Wee Read Storytime *with ASL interpretation* (ages 2 and up) 10 a.m.
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
Suburban Homesteading: Putting Your Garden and Landscape to Bed 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 7**
Fitness Friday: Boot Camp 9:15 a.m.
Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.
First Friday Concert: Sue Fink 2 p.m.
- Nov. 8**
DIY Spirit of the Season: Mulling Spices 10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 9**
Sunday Concert: Caravan 2 p.m.
- Nov. 10**
Monday Matinee: F1: The Movie 1 p.m.
Buying Your First Telescope 6:30 p.m.
Short Story Night at Lion's Tale 7 p.m.
- Nov. 11**
Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-6) 9:15 a.m.
Toddle Time Storytime *with ASL interpretation* (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA 10 a.m.
Tech Talk Tuesday: All About the Digital Library 1:30 p.m.
Legal Assistance Clinic 4:30 p.m.
- Nov. 12**
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.
Musical Movers 10 a.m.
Field Trip Storytime: Fire Station 32 1:30 p.m.
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
Adult DIY Design Workshop 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 13**
Wee Read Storytime *with ASL interpretation* (ages 2 and up) 10 a.m.
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.

- Family Activity Night: Dinovember 6 p.m.
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
- Nov. 15**
DIY Spirit of the Season: Ornaments 10:30 a.m.
Volunteers! - Ages 11-19 10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 17**
Memory Cafe - Bergstrom-Mahler Museum 1:30 p.m.
Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 18**
Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-6) 9:15 a.m.
Toddle Time Storytime *with ASL interpretation* (ages 12-24 months) 10 a.m.
Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA 10 a.m.
Tween Create Lab: Resist Art 3:30 p.m.
Cookbook Book Club 6:30 p.m.
Movie Talks: Planes, Trains & Automobiles 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 19**
Baby Time Storytime 9:15 a.m.
Musical Movers 10 a.m.
Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
- Nov. 20**
Wee Read Storytime *with ASL interpretation* (ages 2 and up) 10 a.m.
Open Chess 5:30 p.m.
Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.
History Program: Neenah Elementary Schools 6:30 p.m.
- Nov. 21**
Fitness Friday: Balance and Strength 9:15 a.m.
Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 22**
DIY Spirit of the Season: Luminaries 10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 24**
Monday Morning Book Klatch 10 a.m.
- Nov. 27**
Library Closed All Day
- Nov. 29**
DIY Spirit of the Season: Cards, Tags and Bags 10:30 a.m.



Photo from Miron Construction

Career showcase

Miron Construction welcomed 60 students from 13 local high schools to its Yard Operations in Menasha for a construction careers showcase event Oct. 21. The hands-on experience aimed to educate students about the opportunities available in the construction industry.

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County board urges increased support for SNAP

By Anya Kelley
NEENAH NEWS

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors is voicing its support to increase funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The ongoing federal government shutdown has effectively cut off all federal dollars to programs that have not been deemed essential. Services such as Social Security and the United States Postal Service are guaranteed funds, but SNAP, also known as FoodShare, is one of many services to lose its federal dollars. FoodShare benefits are 100% funded by the federal government and will end starting in November.

Along with the federal government shutdown, the passing of the H.R. 1 bill, or the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, implemented immediate changes to the FoodShare program that started Oct. 1. H.R. 1 increases the work requirements for individuals who receive SNAP while also changing what is considered an error. Now, if a state has higher than a 6% error rate they will be fined.

Starting Saturday, county government workers will be required to verify the additional requirements without adding additional staff members. According to a letter sent by the Wisconsin Counties Association, 56 more staff members are required to keep the state's error rate low. That totals

\$16.1 million needed to avoid penalties.

The Wisconsin Counties Association put together a call to action for county governments asking each county to send a letter to their representatives and senators to support a funding request. The funding request will not require counties to spend extra dollars on SNAP. Instead, it encourages the state to make a budget correction to allow their dollars to fill the federal gap.

At its board meeting Oct. 21, the county board voted in favor of a resolution to support increased funding for the SNAP program.

"The changes in the laws regarding SNAP payments are going to impact all counties in Wisconsin," Winnebago County Supervisor Kate Hancock-Cooke said. "The issue is that there will not only be further need to evaluate or to verify SNAP payment recipients, which will cost our manpower and our time to do, but also, that we will be concerned about having a higher error rate."

Currently, Wisconsin ranks in the top five lowest error rates in the country. In 2024, the error rate sat at 4.47% while the national average was 10.93%. When a state has a high error rate, they are subjected to federal penalties and, in some cases, increased oversight. Error rates include underpaying and overpaying households for their benefits.

"What we're recommending is that we

ask the governor and the state legislature to cover us for those increased funds so that we don't start having higher error rates and suffering penalties," Hancock-Cooke said.

Supervisor Conley Hanson said resolutions like these are not uncommon, but they seem to be more effective when they are sent to the legislative committee. Since the issue is time sensitive, Hancock-Cooke said waiting three months for the resolution to hit the floor could deem it ineffective. Vice chairman Chuck Farrey agreed that the time sensitivity made it pertinent to vote at last week's meeting.

Supervisor Rachael Dowling was in favor of sending the resolution back to the legislative committee and said she would rather have all 36 county board supervisors personally call and send letters to the state.

"Thirty-six voices, a chorus of meeting for support, is going to be louder than a letter that might get there in 30 days," Dowling said.

Supervisor Lucas Reinke disagreed with sending it back due to the time sensitivity and said the county board can both send a letter to the state, and everyone can contact their representative. The vote to send the resolution back to the legislative committee failed 13-22 and discussion for the original motion began again. The resolution passed by voice vote.

SNAP concerns

FROM PAGE 1

who are on SNAP," she said. "These are people who work at McDonald's. They have jobs. They just are below the poverty line, or very low fee jobs."

One of the initiatives involves posting QR codes at businesses like Great Harvest, enabling customers to make direct monetary donations to local food pantries. Hancock-Cooke is also encouraging businesses to post a list of the local food resources that are available. The 15-page list is on the county website at winnebago-countywi.gov/206/nutrition-food.

"I want to make sure that people are aware that this is going to impact their friends and neighbors, and that our local communities need our support," she said. "These people need our support, and this is a direct way to do it, and it's the most efficient way to do it."



Neenah News

A volunteer pushes a shopping cart through Vinnie's Pantry in Neenah last December.

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Laux, who represents District 2, said she's been visiting and contacting grocery stores to implement their "round up" programs, an initiative that allows customers to round their purchase totals up to the nearest dollar, with the extra change donated to local food pantries.

Laux said her goal is to help Winnebago County residents access food, and providing supplies to local food pantries is the quickest way to do that. She added that she hopes food pantries will temporarily ease their requirements by reducing paperwork and lowering barriers for those seeking assistance.

"No one should go hungry in the richest country on earth," she said. "If the federal government is failing us, state and local governments must try to fill in the holes. A well-run government has a duty to the gov-

erned to make sure no one goes hungry."

Winnebago County has already made financial contributions to assist local food pantries during the shutdown, allocating a total of \$40,000 this month through its Human Services Department. The funding includes \$5,000 for the Omro Community Food Pantry and the Winneconne Community Foundation, and \$10,000 for the St. Joseph Food Program, Oshkosh Area Community Pantry and Salvation Army.

County Executive Assistant Koby Schellenger said officials plan to request contingency funds from the Personnel and Finance Committee on Thursday to provide grocery relief assistance through the Human Services and Veterans Services programs. Details of the proposal are still being finalized.



Submitted photo

Jack Brucks won the Open Amateur Division Championship in a nine-round national flat track motorcycle racing series.

Neenah teen captures National Flat Track Series championship

Neenah News

Jack Brucks, 15, of Neenah captured the Open Amateur Division Championship aboard the 1st Impressions Team Husqvarna in a nine-round national flat track motorcycle racing series, concluding in Neeses, S.C.

The series, promoted by Cory Texer Promotions, spanned nine months and brought riders to top tracks across the country. Racing a 450cc Husqvarna, provided by Eric Hoyt, owner of the

Jacksonville, Fla.-based 1st Impressions Race Team, Brucks displayed consistency, speed and determination to secure the championship title against national and international competition.

"This has been an incredible experience, and I'm so grateful to my team and supporters for giving me the opportunity to race at this level," Brucks said.

The victory marks a milestone in Brucks's young career as he will step into his Professional racing career in March 2026.

Big Brothers Big Sisters honors award recipients

Neenah News

Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin (BBBS) hosted its annual Dream Big Gala, an evening that unites supporters, volunteers and donors to celebrate individuals and community partners.

The event Oct. 9 was full of celebration as BBBS recognized its 2025 award recipients. The 2025 Dream Big Gala presented by Miron Construction is hosted every October and is the largest fundraiser for BBBS. More than \$174,000 was raised during this year's event.



Kriewaldt

"The heart of our organization continues to beat thanks to the dedication of our volunteer mentors," BBBS CEO Jaime Kriewaldt said. "They are the heart of everything we do, providing their time, guidance and unwavering support. These mentors offer friendship, emotional support, consistency and a safe place for the

youth we serve to be their authentic selves and grow into their full potential."

Kriewaldt said the Bigs of the Year awards honor the exceptional individuals who embody the spirit of mentorship and go above and beyond in their commitment to their Littles. They are examples of the life-changing impact a caring, consistent mentor can have on a young person, Kriewaldt said.

Walter (Wally) Thomson, who has been matched with his Little for over five years, was honored as the Big Brother of the Year. Kelsey Preston, who has also been matched with her Little for five years, was recognized as the Big Sister of the Year.

The High School Big of the Year, Kendra Zahn, has been matched with her Little Brother for five years and is hoping to continue their match now that Zahn has graduated high school. In addition, Zahn received a \$1,000 scholarship from BBBS.

The Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award honors an individual or community partner who inspires change, makes a lasting difference and turns small acts into extraordinary impact.

Exercise shows benefits to brain health

Neenah News

LaReina Tipping, program manager at the Brain Center of Green Bay, will present Exercise Benefits on the Brain at 2 p.m. Monday at the Neenah Public Library.

Regular physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Not only is exercise good for a person's muscles and bones, but it is also an important part of

keeping the brain healthy, too. Exercise improves blood flow and memory; it stimulates chemical changes in the brain that enhance learning, mood and thinking.

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

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March 4, 2026:	Tuesday, February 17	Friday, February 20
June 3, 2026:	Tuesday, May 19	Friday, May 22
September 2, 2026:	Tuesday, August 18	Friday, August 20

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Neenah finishes as Division 1 state runner-ups

Neenah News

Neenah's depth has been the team's calling card all season.

The Rockets finally ran into an opponent that was just a little bit deeper.

Neenah fell to Brookfield East, 6-1, in the title match of the WIAA Division 1 Team State Tennis Tournament on Saturday at the Nielsen Tennis Stadium in Madison. It was the fifth time the Rockets have finished as the state runner-up.

"They just had more depth than us and we live on being a deep team. They were just better," Neenah head coach Dan Grassl said. "The girls really played well and stepped it up."

The Rockets, who were making their 22nd trip to the state meet and seventh appearance in the championship match, weren't able to get things going against the Spartans.

Only the No. 1 doubles team of Sydney Michalkiewicz and Rebekah Thomas were able to notch a win against Brookfield East. The Neenah duo beat the Spartans' Shriya Pusunuru and Cece Bonfillio, 6-3, 6-1.

All six of the Spartans wins came in straight sets.

"There was always still a little hope as things went on that we could win enough matches and pull it out and win state," Grassl said. "They ran out of steam at the end but really played their hearts out and did everything they could to try to pull it off."

Neenah had only three seniors taking the court for the team state tournament and Grassl believes the experience should benefit the program in the future.



Submitted photo

The Neenah High School girls tennis team, shown above after winning the sectional title, finished second at the WIAA Division 1 Team State Tennis Tournament.

"I think it's going to motivate them all. They got a taste of it and got to see what it's like to not just make it to Saturday but to Saturday afternoon," Grassl said. "I'm expecting a lot of them to be fired up and work hard in the offseason and whoever comes in new will get that same feeling and excitement."

Neenah, which has won state titles in this format in 2015 and 2021 has advanced to the state meet in 13 of the last 14 years, opened this year's event with a 6-1 win over Verona.

The Wildcats sported the state runner-up singles player, McKenna Thorson, who earned Verona's lone victory.

The rest of the matches went to the

Rockets and most of them were in convincing fashion.

"Everybody was focused and ready to go and not overlooking Verona which was something I was worried about," Grassl said. "It went well."

Ella Motto highlighted the match by posting a 6-0, 6-0 win at No. 2 singles as the Rockets lost just three games combined at the lower three single flights. Rachel Thomas added a 6-0, 6-1 win at No. 3 singles, while Lauren McDonald cruised to a 6-2, 6-0 win at No. 4 singles.

Neenah had just about as easy of a time in doubles as all three Neenah flights won in straight sets.

Michalkiewicz and Rebekah Thomas

won 6-1, 6-1 over Zoe Strunz and Eliza Hudson at the No. 1 flight, with Ava Motto and Cecelia Alexander earning a 6-1, 6-3 triumph over Jillian Halted and Addie Koehler at the No. 2 flight.

Rounding out the sweep was Josie Kohlbeck and Evelyn Buss at No. 3 doubles who beat Riley Ray and Emma Eckmayer 6-0, 6-2.

Things didn't get off to a great start in the semifinal match against University School as the Rockets trailed early in the first three matches on the court.

But the Rockets would rally to win all three matches and went on to beat the Wildcats, 5-2.

"We were down in three matches right off the bat, which were matches we knew we had to win to make it to the finals," Grassl said. "Getting those three matches, obviously the girls had to play really well after getting over some nerves. That was key to getting in the finals."

McDonald's effort at No. 4 singles highlighted the effort as the senior dropped the first set to Anaya Amin but rallied to claim the 3-6, 6-3, 10-3 win.

Rachel Thomas added a 6-4, 6-1 win at the No. 3 flight.

The Rockets took all three doubles matches to win the meet, including Ava Motto and Alexander's come-from behind win at the No. 2 flight. Motto and Alexander bounced back from a rough first set to edge Olivia Gourlay and Natalie Friedman 1-6, 6-4, 12-10.

Both Rebekah Thomas and Michalkiewicz at the No. 1 flight and Kohlbeck and Buss at No. 3 doubles won in straight sets.

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GIRLS TENNIS**



Zephyrs roll to regional final win over Amherst

By Joe Matzek
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

When Amherst drew close in each set, St. Mary Catholic didn't waver in their WIAA Division 3 regional final match last Saturday evening.

The top-seeded Zephyrs came up with clutch moments at the end of each set to sweep the fourth-seeded Falcons 25-18, 25-21, 25-19 at the McClone Gym.

"I thought they (the Falcons) played really well, and we couldn't really get a lot of separation," SMC coach Mike Mauritz said. "Then we would (get separation), and then they would make a couple of plays and they would get back in. So it was never comfortable."

Amherst featured some tall, hard-hitting players, most notably junior middles Ivy Boelk and Hollie Singer, who provided the bulk of their offense. But Mauritz said

the Zephyrs played well defensively in the back row and on the block.

"We touched a lot of balls at the block because they're pretty good sized, and we managed to block a few balls, (which) I think helped us play better defense," Mauritz said.

Junior libero Bitsy McCauley said anticipation and communication helped the Zephyrs on defense.

"(You) just have to stop and make sure that you can see (the hitters) and know what they're doing, and just make sure you're talking," said McCauley, who led SMC with 10 digs.

SMC (26-7) took a 14-8 lead in the opening set on a kill from Luci Nackers. But Amherst (19-12) narrowed the deficit to 20-17 before the Zephyrs won five of the final six points, including a kill by Bethany Ruppert and a tip by Nackers,

followed by an overpass into the net by Amherst on set point.

The Zephyrs also led most of set two, leading 20-13 before the Falcons took four straight points.

Amherst pulled to within 22-20 on a Rachel Portmann ace and 23-21 on a Singer kill, but the next Amherst serve went into the net and another error gave the Zephyrs the set.

Although SMC never trailed in the final set, Amherst tied the score at 10-10, then the Zephyrs took four straight points and led 21-15 following a Nackers tip. After the Falcons closed to 22-18, Autumn Crowe and Nackers followed with kills, and Crowe ended the match two points later with another kill.

McCauley said the energy from teammates and classmates helped the Zephyrs in key moments.

"I think (because of) our energy, from the bench and on the court, everyone just gets a lot more comfortable on the court," McCauley said. "We know that we have the support of our teammates and the energy from the student section can do that too."

Crowe had nine kills and seven digs, Nackers made eight kills and Sammi Weiss totaled 16 assists for SMC.

The Zephyrs and Falcons had played each other in the first match of the season, with SMC winning 25-21, 23-25, 15-13 in their home tournament on Aug. 27.

SMC hosted third-seeded Peshtigo on Thursday night, with the winner advancing to the sectional final against the winner of the Manitowoc Lutheran-Brillion match Saturday at 7 p.m. at Chilton.

Results of Thursday's match were not available for this edition.

St. Mary Catholic tennis team drops close state semifinal matchup

Neenah News

It was about as close as it could be.

St. Mary Catholic won sets in six of the seven matches against Altoona in a WIAA Division 2 semifinal last Saturday at the Team State Tournament but came out on the short end of a 4-3 final score.

"We were pretty darn evenly matched with Altoona," St. Mary Catholic head coach Lizzy Auth said. "If we would have gotten blown out, that would have felt bad. Close is good. It means they were meant to be there."

It was the Zephyrs first appearance at the Team State Tournament since 2004 and a win would have been the program's first victory in a WIAA Team State match.

St. Mary Catholic won all three doubles matches on the day, including dominant victories at the top two flights.

Two-time state champions Adel Schneider and Vivie Auth did not lose a game in posting a 6-0, 6-0 win at No. 1 doubles over Lucy Day and Elyse McCaffrey, while the Zephyrs' No. 2 pairing of Nadia Alexander and Lorelai Miller powered to a 6-1, 6-1 win over Brynn Bauman and Julie Her.

At No. 3 doubles, the St. Mary Catholic pairing of Bree Pauly and Elsa Rossmesl endured a lengthy three-set match, but were able to rebound from a second-set loss to score a 7-5, 4-6, 10-8 win over Hudson Rosentrater and McKenzie Bek-

ker.

All four singles matches were tight battles with three of the four flights being decided in three sets. Unfortunately for St. Mary Catholic, all four ended up going Altoona's way.

Both Erin Blaney and Ella Chier won the first set in their No. 1 and No. 2 singles matches, respectively, but lost the second set by a 7-5 score. Each Zephyr also extended the third set past the normal 10-point ending mark before falling.

Blaney fell to Addie Peters 11-9 in the third set, while Chier lost to Sheyenne Her 12-10.

The No. 1 singles match was actually the last one on the court and Auth was

impressed with the way the players handled the situation.

"That was a lot of pressure for Erin, but she handled it with grace. Both players did," Auth said. "It was intense because they were playing for their teams but it was beautiful tennis."

Halle Janssen dropped the first set in her No. 3 singles match to Holly Her but came back to even the match with a 6-3 win in the second set. Janssen couldn't keep the momentum going and lost the third set, 10-5.

At No. 4 singles, Kaylee Sommerfeld played two close sets against Rylan Lut-

SEE **Zephyr tennis** ON PAGE 15



CONGRATULATIONS ON A GREAT SEASON!



ST. MARY CATHOLIC ZEPHYRS GIRLS TENNIS





Submitted photo

The Neenah girls will attempt to defend their WIAA Division 1 state title on Saturday after winning the sectional title last Saturday in Stevens Point. The team consists of (from left) Elsa Gruber, Natalie Schultz, Natalie Willes, Maddie Schoonover, Sam Zilm, Elsa Weiland and Izzy Malloy.



Submitted photo

The Neenah boys cross country team will be making its sixth straight trip to the state cross country meet after finishing second at sectionals last Saturday. The team consists of (from left) Isaac Rangel, Brayden Willis, Zach Verhagen, Jackson Holzheu, Elliott Drake, Gideon Benner and Oliver Steiner.

Neenah squads ready for another run at state meet

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

The specter that hovers over a defending state champion and the bull's-eye that is naturally imprinted on the back of their uniforms can be a bit overwhelming at times.

Every team is different and every season is different, so repeating the accomplishments of the previous year is never easy even if the expectations are there to do so.

The Neenah girls cross country team enters Saturday's state meet as the reigning Division 1 title-holders, yet all of the pressure that comes with shouldering that load doesn't seem to be weighing them down at all.

"Not that I'm aware of," Neenah girls head coach Mike Heidke said when asked if the team is feeling pressure. "They are a pretty relaxed group. They just enjoy being with each other and are excited to race at state."

The Neenah girls will be looking to repeat as Division 1 state champions on Saturday at The Ridges Golf Course in Wisconsin Rapids. The meet begins at noon

with the three boys races, followed by the three divisions of girls races.

The Neenah boys, who are making their sixth state trip and are going to state for the 28th time in the last 35 years, are scheduled to take the course at approximately 1:10 p.m., while the girls are slated to start at about 3:05 p.m.

The Neenah girls are making their fifth straight appearance at the state meet and 32nd overall and enter the meet off a dominant showing at the Stevens Point where they put all seven runners in the top 15 and totaled just 22 points.

"I'm really excited but definitely a little bit nervous. I'm just excited to see what we can do together," said freshman Sam Zilm. "It was great to feel a little bit of pressure to get me ready for state."

Zilm is lone newcomer to the state lineup for the Rockets but has had an impressive debut season.

She has served as the Rockets top runner all season and is coming off a record-setting win in the Fox Valley Association Meet as well as a win in the sectional race where she finished 18 seconds ahead of teammate

Elsa Gruber.

"She's had a great season," Heidke said. "She's a really good racer and it's been fun to see what she does race to race."

Gruber finished seventh at the state meet last year and is one of two members of the Rockets who will be running at state four the fourth time. Natalie Willes is also a fourth-time qualifier.

All of that experience is certainly a benefit for the Rockets.

"The state meet has a reputation for being very tough course but they have run there enough times that, it's tough, but they know it's doable," Heidke said. "It just helps them be confident in what they are going to do racing."

Neenah's showing at the sectional meet at Standing Rocks Park in Stevens Point should also be a benefit for the team heading into the state meet.

The course is similar to the track at The Ridges and gave the Rocket a runners a taste of what to expect on Saturday.

"We used it as a tune-up because the courses are both supper hilly, so it gives us a nice preview what state is going to be like,"

Gruber said. "I think we are used to what it's like (at state). I think we are pretty confident."

Behind the 1-2 finish of Zilm and Gruber at sectionals, Elsa Weiland finished fourth and Izzy Malloy came in sixth. Maddie Schoonover in ninth place rounded out the scoring runners for the Rockets with Natalie Schultz and Willes taking 14th and 15th, respectively.

Only one other team at sectionals – runner-up Hortonville – at more than two runners in the top 15.

Now the Rockets just have to repeat that type of performance on Saturday.

"Everyone just has to run like they have been running. They have all been doing great so as long as everyone tries their best, I don't see a problem," Gruber said. "We don't talk about (repeating) too much because we like to keep it light at practice but I think all of us know it's going to be hard. Just have everyone run their best and see what happens."

Muskego was the last girls team to win

SEE **Cross country** ON PAGE 15

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Prep roundup

FOOTBALL

Neenah drops playoff contest in OT

De Pere converted a two-point conversion in overtime and edged Neenah, 28-27, in a WIAA Division 1 first-round playoff game last Friday night.

Neenah had won seven straight first-round WIAA playoff games and hadn't lost in the first round since 2016.

Ashton Van Beek had a huge night for the Rockets after missing the team's regular-season finale because of injury. The junior quarterback rushed for a career-high 242 yards and four touchdowns on 32 carries as Neenah racked up 362 yards rushing in the game.

Cooper Sieck added 73 yards on 13 carries and Brock Hoenhe finished with seven carries for 47 yards.

The Rockets outgained De Pere on the ground, 362-24.

Neenah couldn't slow down the Redbirds' passing game, which accumulated 393 yards in the game as quarterback Holden Woodfill finished 26-of-45.

Neenah, which was seeded second in its playoff grouping, led 13-10 at halftime. De

Pere tied the score with a field goal entering the final quarter where each notched a touchdown.

The Rockets finish the season with a 7-3 record and were co-champions of the Fox Valley Association.

Zephyrs can't slow down Bears in loss

Bonduel's potent running game proved to be too much for St. Mary Catholic in the Zephyrs' 49-21 loss to the Bears in a WIAA Division 6 first-round playoff matchup last Friday night.

Bonduel finished with 380 yards on 41 carries against the Zephyr defense, with the Bears' Carter Moesch finishing with 17 carries for 42 yards and four touchdowns.

Quarterback Tarver Trinkner paced the Zephyr offense finishing 9-of-16 for 133 yards. Trinkner also added a team-high 62 yards rushing and scored a pair of touchdowns.

Dominic Todd added the other touchdown for the Zephyrs.

Maxwell Osgood and George Voss led the Zephyr defense with eight tackles apiece, while Brennan DuPoint and Alex

in Wisconsin."

Verhagen led the Rockets at sectionals with a fifth-place finish to key Neenah's performance, but it was the rest of the scoring group that boosted the team in the final standings.

Oliver Steiner was the second runner to cross in 14th and will get to run at state this year after missing last year's meet because of an injury.

Steiner was a part of the Rockets' perfect finish at the FVA meet but was diagnosed with a stress fracture and wasn't able to compete again.

"It was pretty disappointing not to run last year, so I'm pretty excited to run this season," Steiner said. "I think a lot of our focus will be just enjoying it. Most of us are seniors so this is going to be our last race."

Three of the remaining five runners who raced at sectionals were also seniors. Gideon Benner in 20th place and Brayden Willis in 30th place were among the scoring runners at sectionals, while Jackson Holzheu finished 37th.

Verhagen also knows it will be his last high school cross country race.

"It was important to me to make it (as a senior)," Verhagen said. "It's always a fun course to run but it's depressing in a sense too, because it is my last one."

Freshman Elliott Drake also scored for the Rockets at sectionals, placing 17th, while the squad was rounded out by Isaac Rangel in 43rd place.

Last year, the Neenah boys finished 14th in the final team standings and look to be somewhere in the middle of the pack again this season.

But coming off the strong showing at sectionals and the past few weeks, the Rockets may have a few more surprises up their sleeves.

"I feel like we have stepped up the past few weeks," Steiner said. "We knew we were capable of it but a lot of teams probably counted us out at sectionals and then we came through at sectionals. All of our guys shown up really bright which was great to see. Hopefully we can do it again."

Where the Rockets finish is important to Verhagen, too, but not as much as being able to be running as a team at state.

"In a sense finishing in a certain place is important to us," Verhagen said. "But also just the accomplishment of getting there is big for us."

Klinkhammer each had seven.

St. Mary Catholic, which was making its first WIAA playoff appearance since 2002, finishes the year 5-5.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Rockets ousted in regional final

Neenah nearly knocked off top-seeded Menomonee Falls in a WIAA Division 1 regional final on Saturday.

The ninth-seeded Rockets rallied from being down two sets to force a decisive fifth set before falling 25-22, 25-11, 23-25, 24-26, 15-10.

Neenah advanced to the regional final with a 25-21, 25-21, 27-25 victory at Manitowoc Lincoln.

Leah Oldenburg led the Rockets with 12 kills in the match, while Lilly Romjue finished with 11 and Elaina Kramer had seven. Finley Kelley and Maddy Lautenschlager finished 18 and 16 assists, respectively.

Paige Hoelzel led the team with six blocks, while Ella Lindgren finished with a team-high 21 digs.

Lindgren and Romjue each totaled three aces to lead the Rockets.

Zephyrs open tourney road with win

St. Mary Catholic knocked off Ripon 25-20, 25-18, 25-12 in a first-round Division 3 playoff match last week.

Autumn Crowe led the team with 13 kills, while Adele Brennan added seven. Sammi Weiss paced the team with 18 assists.

Zephyr tennis

FROM PAGE 13

teke but fell 6-3, 6-4 as the Railroaders were able to complete the sweep of singles matches.

"Those matches could have gone either way," Auth said. "(Most of the lineup) it was their first time at Nielsen and that's

Crowe also finished with 14 digs, while Luci Nackers had nine and Bitsy McCauley finished with eight.

Piper Neubauer had a team-high three aces in the win.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Rockets lose close battle with Terrors

Neenah fell just short of knocking off Appleton West in the first round of the WIAA tournament last Friday.

The Rockets won the first set and led the match 2-1, but couldn't hold off the Terrors in a 22-25, 25-18, 23-25, 25-16, 15-10 defeat.

CROSS COUNTRY

Zephyrs compete at sectional meet

The St. Mary Catholic boys team placed 11th and the girls were 12th at the WIAA Division 3 sectional meet held last Saturday in Manitowoc.

The girls were led by the duo of Audra Post and Claire Higgins, who placed 35th and 37th, respectively. Claire Misinski and Alice Troian Mello placed 76th and 77th, respectively, with Chloe Beckett coming in 90th.

The Zephyr boys were led by Fritz Staner in 16th place with Brady Deleew placing 30th. Ethan Auer finished in 69th place, followed by Leo Gruber in 71st and Brandon Debraal in 87th.

Only two of the 12 runners that competed at the meet for St. Mary Catholic were seniors.

an intense place. It's a different environment and the girls handled themselves so well."

Altoona, which was making its eighth trip to the team state tournament, fell to Shorewood, 6-1, in the Division 2 state title match.

Shorewood was the No. 4 seed entering the tournament and beat top-seeded Edgewood 5-2 in the semifinals.

Cross country

FROM PAGE 14

back-to-back Division 1 state titles, claiming the crowns in 2018 and 2019.

It would be an impressive accomplishment and any such feat does come with at least a little bit of pressure – even if it is solely from within.

"I feel like there is pressure there but I also think it's kind of a privilege to have that pressure because we have all worked so hard for that," Zilm said. "It's just pressure to perform for the team."

The Neenah boys won't be under the same scrutiny as the girls entering the state meet, in fact, the Rockets are genuinely happy to make it.

Making the trip to Wisconsin Rapids has almost been a given with the tradition and talent in the Rockets program, but heading into last week's sectional that wasn't necessarily the case.

Having replaced all but one runner from last year's state qualifying team, the Rockets endured some ups and downs over the course of the season and weren't necessarily one of favorites to emerge from the sectional.

Neenah simply went out and had one of its best meets of the season, finishing 13 points ahead of Marshfield for the second spot and continued its string of state appearances.

"Looking (online) beforehand, we weren't supposed to make it to state so it's always a good feeling that we did something we weren't supposed," said senior Zach Verhagen, the lone returning runner from last year's state squad. "It's a great feeling."

Head coach John Morgen said the team had to overcome plenty of hurdles throughout the season in order to be at this point and he is appreciative of what the team has accomplished.

"I'm so very proud of this team," commented Morgen. "This season has been filled with numerous health related setbacks yet here they are with an opportunity to compete in the most important race of the year. This team has been about pushing boundaries, testing limits and overcoming adversity all year long.

"I can't wait to see them take on the challenge of competing against the best runners

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Blue Ribbons for All!

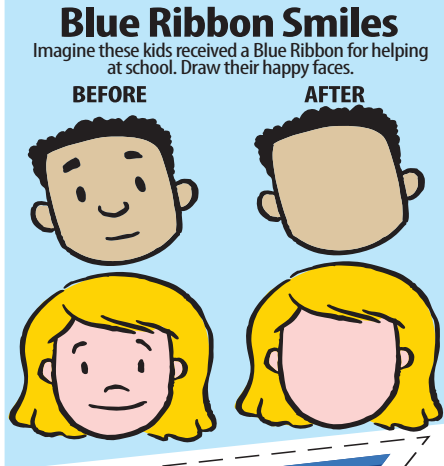
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Fire Chief John Cunningham has a burning desire to make a difference. He wants to tell people that they are appreciated and that they matter.

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"I want to start a wildfire of acknowledgment," says Chief Cunningham. "This is the kind of fire we don't want to put out!"

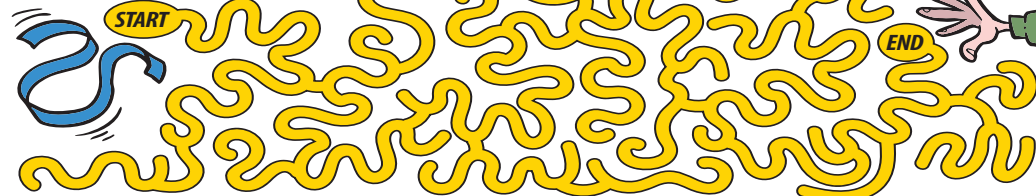


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Research shows that the average child hears nearly 500 negative comments each day, and only about 75 positive comments.

Color the spaces with two dots red and those with one dot green to create a pie graph comparing negative vs. positive comments most kids receive each day. (Red = negative, green = positive.)

Take a moment today to tell a friend that he or she matters and makes a difference! When you do that, YOU are making a difference, too!

Double Double Word Search

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

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

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

Kid Scoop Together
You Can Give a Blue Ribbon Today!
 The 7-Step Blue Ribbon Acknowledgment Ceremony:

1. Honor someone: Say, "I have a Blue Ribbon that says, 'Who I Am Makes a Difference,' and I want to honor you for. . ." (Tell them the reasons they make a difference for you.)
2. Ask: "Will you accept my gift?"
3. Ask: "May I have permission to put it on you?"
4. Place: Affix the Blue Ribbon above their heart, pointing upward toward all their dreams coming true. **IMPORTANT:** Do not affix a Blue Ribbon to silk or leather!
5. Cheer: Say, "In order to get the cheerleaders on the ribbon jumping for your dream, I'm going to point to them and shout BING!" Bing: This is the sound that helps make dreams come true!
6. Gift: Gift them two extra Blue Ribbons to honor others.

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With hundreds of topics, every **Kid Scoop** printable activity pack features six-to-seven pages of high-interest extra learning activities for home and school! Get your free sample today at:

kidscoop.com/activity-pages/

Write On!

You Matter to Me!
 Write a message to a friend or family member telling them some of the reasons why they matter and make a difference.

Standards Link: Language Arts: Write descriptively using supporting details.

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