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Clayton boosts new housing units

New developments add \$120 million to tax base

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

A development company broke ground in December on a 13-acre site in Clayton that will add 72 apartment units to the community.

Spark Development Co. is developing the Eagle Heights Apartments near the intersection of highways 76 and 10 on land the company purchased from Clayton.

The project will include 72 two-bedroom, two-bath units, each with its own entrance and garage. The first building is expected to open in May, with all six buildings completed and ready for rent by September.

Spark is a real estate development and property management company previously based in Neenah that moved its office this week to a newly built location in Appleton. The Eagle Heights project is one of several multifamily and mixed-use developments the company has undertaken in Clayton and Green Bay as the Fox Valley continues to see demand for additional

housing.

Spark Chief Executive Derek Liebhauser said the company expects all of the Eagle Heights units to be rented by the end of the year. The project is estimated to add between \$13 and \$18 million in assessed value to Clayton's tax base.

Liebhauser, 33, is a lifelong Clayton resident.

"It's a nice opportunity to be able to invest in the community I grew up in," he said. "Obviously, there's a huge need for

SEE **New housing** ON PAGE 8



Photo from Neenah Public Library

Dance party

The Library After Dark event Dec. 26 at the Neenah Public Library featured a Latin dance party led by Allison Lauber de Garza of DanzArte. Guests could learn new dance moves, decorate luminaria and try snacks from Latin American countries. Other events this week at the library included a Retro Video Game Extravaganza and Set Your Intentions for 2026 – Make a Vision Board.

Youth Go names Dornfeld as next executive director

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

About five months after Youth Go's executive director announced she would retire at the end of 2025, the Neenah non-profit youth drop-in center has named her successor.

Longtime youth development professional Mandi Dornfeld will take over as executive director of Youth Go on Monday. She replaces Alice Zarda, who has led the organization for the past two and a half years and spent nearly 25 years with Youth Go. Zarda notified the board in July that she would retire Dec. 31, 2025.

"This marks the first time since 2002 that Youth Go has looked outside the or-

ganization for its executive director, making this a truly unique moment," Zarda said. "Mandi is an amazing, passionate individual, and she is perfectly poised to lead our dedicated staff and extraordinary youth."

Dornfeld brings more than 20 years of experience in youth services, family support, community mental health and organizational leadership. She most recently served as an area director for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, supervising 19 staff

across five counties and contributing to statewide and national youth initiatives. Her earlier roles include positions with

United Way Fox Cities, Family Services-Parent Connection, and regional youth development collaboratives.

"Mandi is a proven leader with deep roots in the Fox Valley and a long history of creating safe, trauma-informed environments for young people," said Matt Borkovec, president of the Youth Go board of directors. "Her strengths in partnership build-

ing and youth-centered program development make her exceptionally prepared to guide Youth Go into its next chapter."

Dornfeld said she is honored to join Youth Go, which has been a trusted place for young people for more than 55 years.

"I look forward to working with staff, youth, families and partners to expand opportunities for young people to be seen, supported and empowered," she said.

Youth Go is located at 213 Nicolet Boulevard. The organization was founded in 1969 and provides no-cost drop-in services, outreach, crisis intervention, and positive youth development opportunities for students in grades 5-12 throughout the Fox Valley.



Dornfeld



Zarda

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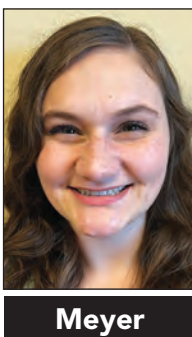
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St. Mary Catholic alum takes center stage

Neenah News

St. Mary Catholic High School class of 2021 graduate Lauren Meyer will be among the performers during an upcoming musical theater performance.

Meyer, who was a 2021 Jimmys nominee for best actress, is one of nine performers selected for the “Reunion in Song Cabaret: 10 Years of Center



Meyer

Stage” program. The performance will be at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 10 in the Kimberly-Clark Theater at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center in Appleton.

The revue-style show is part of the 10-year anniversary celebration for the Center Stage High School Musical Theater Program. Alums are returning for the show to perform alongside the Cornerstone Jazz Orchestra to share their talent in a whole new way.

More information is available at foxcitiespac.com.



Neenah Historical Society photo

A day on the Ice

The Wachholz dray rig pulled by a pair of Roan horses brought a group of men onto frozen Lake Winnebago to watch ice boat races in this undated image. Drayman Richard Wachholz resided at 304 W. Winneconne Ave.



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Calendar of events

Saturday, Jan. 3

Art Activity Day – Snow Friends Sun-catcher, 10 a.m., Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass, 165 N. Park Ave.

Monday, Jan. 5

Winter Wonderland Skate, 4 p.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Thursday, Jan. 8

Candyland Skate, 4 p.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Saturday, Jan. 10

Washington Park Winter Festival, 11 a.m., Washington Park
Hallmark Skate Night, 4 p.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Friday, Jan. 16

Friendly Puzzle Competition, 6 p.m., Fox Crossing Community Center, 1000 Valley Road

Saturday, Jan. 17

First Coffee Run of the season, 8 a.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.

NHS Jazz Stompin’ at the Savoy, 7 p.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts Center

Friday, Jan. 23

Snowshoeing and Animal Tracking Hike, 1 p.m., Fox Crossing Municipal Complex, 2000 Municipal Drive, Grades 1-5

Winter Skate Night, 4 p.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee, 229 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Batsu Dinner and Comedy Show, 6 p.m., Bridgewood Resort Hotel, 1000 Cameron Way

Thursday, Jan. 29

NHS Winter Drama presents O. Henry’s Guide to the Present, 7 p.m., Neenah High School Black Box Theater

Friday, Jan. 30

Fox Crossing Parks & Recreation Daddy Daughter Winter Formal, 5:30 p.m., Bridgewood Resort, 1000 Cameron Way

NHS Winter Drama presents O. Henry’s Guide to the Present, 7 p.m., Neenah High School Black Box Theater

Saturday, Jan. 31

NHS Winter Drama presents O. Henry’s Guide to the Present, 7 p.m., Neenah High School Black Box Theater

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Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Collaborative creations

First grade students at Taft Elementary in December participated in a collaboration with Neenah Middle School art students to create their own piggy banks. The first graders drew what they would like their piggy bank to look like and then the middle schoolers created the piggy banks from clay in their sculpture class. The middle schoolers visited their first grade designers Dec. 15 to present them with the finished products. Art teacher Hallie Jenrette and Taft teacher Annie Hierl organized the project.

School district offers virtual learning options

Neenah News

The Neenah Joint School District (NJSD) will host two informational meetings on Jan. 7 to provide more information about the district’s virtual learning opportunity for the 2026–27 school year. This online option is available to students entering 4K through 12th grade and is offered in partnership with Between the Lakes Virtual Academy and Kiel eSchool. The meetings will be held via Google

Meet at 1 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. and will be the identical presentation. The meeting links will be provided on the district website and are on the flyer. Families who are looking for a more flexible learning environment or a personalized academic path will be provided the key details to help make an informed decision. For more information, contact Jackie Munoz-Ellmann at jmunozellmann@neenah.k12.wi.us.

Fox Cities Chamber launches yearly economic outlook survey

Neenah News

Fox Cities Chamber has opened its 2026 Economic Outlook Survey and is inviting local employers and professionals to share their insights on the current business environment and local economic priorities. The survey is open to anyone who works in the Fox Cities region, including Outagamie, Calumet, and northern Winnebago counties, regardless of industry or organization size. The survey gathers input on topics including business performance, growth strategies, workforce challenges and how the Fox Cities compares to other markets as a place to do business. Participants are

also asked to identify the most important priorities for strengthening the regional economy in the years ahead. The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete and is available online now: surveymonkey.com/r/SLVKLFH. It closes on Jan. 16. Results will be released at the Chamber’s Economic Outlook Breakfast on Feb. 18 at the Hilton Appleton Paper Valley. This year’s program has been changed to a morning event starting at 7 a.m. with breakfast and registration. The presentation, which features bowtie economist Elliot Eisenberg, begins at 8 a.m. Early bird tickets are available online at members.foxcc.net.

Neenah native takes first place in annual event for using AI for good

Neenah News

Travis Jankowski, a computer science major from Neenah, took part in the third annual Hacksgiving: AI for Good Hackathon at Milwaukee School of Engineering. For Hacksgiving, more than 50 MSOE students across 12 teams put their AI knowledge together to solve a problem for this year’s nonprofit partner, the Milwaukee Domes Alliance. Hacksgiving is a three-day hackathon in November that challenges students to use their skillsets to give back to the community by developing an AI-driven solution to support a local nonprofit. The Milwaukee Domes Alliance is the operating partner of the Mitchell Park Conservatory and

helps cultivate a lifelong love of nature for all visitors. For this year’s hackathon, the Milwaukee Domes Alliance asked students to create ideas to increase visitor engagement and streamline internal operations. Jankowski’s team, “Thunder Domes,” took first place and won \$3,000 for their proposal for an AI-powered scavenger hunt called “Sip and Seek.” After three days of analyzing data and brainstorming solutions, the teams presented their ideas to a panel of judges. The Milwaukee Domes Alliance plans to utilize elements from the students’ proposals as they make improvements to the Domes through the Domes Reimagined Project.



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Documents say that on Oct. 10, a co-teacher reported that she saw Salas Nitz approach a child, remove the child's

Investigators contacted the parents or guardians of all 10 children and confirmed none had given permission for melatonin to be administered. Several parents reported their children had appeared lethargic over the previous months, while oth-

When confronted with surveillance footage showing her placing substances in children's mouths or food, Salas Nitz

The YMCA said it continues to support impacted families and outlined its policies and training designed to keep children safe.

Neenah News

In a written order, Judge James Peterson said Westbrook's claims that he did not intend to record sexually explicit content



The videos were briefly reviewed by Peterson in chambers along with contextual evidence, including messages between Westbrook and Kite discussing sexual interest in minors and the exchange of child sexual abuse material. Prosecutors said Westbrook also had connections to “an on-line pedophile group” based in the United Kingdom, which shared illegal material.

Westbrook resigned as Neenah city attorney in 2022 and was serving as Outagamie County's human resources director at the time of his February 2024 arrest. He is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 6 under a plea agreement that calls for eight to 12 years in prison.

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A photograph of a two-story house with a prominent front porch. The house has a brown roof, white trim, and a small dormer window. The porch has a white railing and a small set of stairs leading up to it. The house is surrounded by greenery, including trees and bushes. A small white sign is visible in the front yard.

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A logo featuring a blue compass rose with eight points, set within a circular frame. The compass rose is stylized with a star-like center.

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Award recipients recognized for promoting clean water

Neenah News

Winnebago County Supervisor Chuck Farrey was among the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance (FWWA) watershed impact award recipients last year.

Farrey, a District 30 supervisor and chairman of the county board's Land Conservation Committee, received a Lifetime Impact Award.

For decades, FWWA said Farrey has been a champion for the Fox-Wolf Watershed. His leadership and dedication have supported conservation projects, protected water quality, and inspired collaboration.

Farrey's "lifelong commitment has created a legacy that will benefit our waters for generations," FWWA said.

"The number one thing you have to have that is essential to life is water. Clean water," said Farrey, who has served in town and county government for 48 years. "The effect of the water and quality of the water in this region is really the dominant issue you need to address."

Farrey led efforts in 2023 to expand support for local conservation efforts, with the county board approving a \$3 million funding boost for local farmers.

"To get \$3 million approved for a little department like us to use, it speaks volumes," said Chad Casper, Winnebago County Land and Conservation Department director.

The conservation efforts include soil

health initiatives and installing breakwalls, among of a multitude of practices, Casper said.

"Without those conservation practices, as the population grows, it will get worse," said Farrey, adding that they don't want to get worse but to be able to "maintain what we have and improve upon it gradually."

Other award recipients included Barb Reed, a retired Oshkosh science teacher, who received an impact for her volunteer work on shoreline clean-up projects, and Fox Communities Credit Union, which received an Impact Award for its corporate stewardship. Among other things, the credit union adopted a boat launch in the Oshkosh area.

"I just really enjoy being out in nature and seeing what Fox-Wolf has done," Reed said. "I have learned so much about how these native plants should be the appropriate ones and look how it helps the beauty of areas."

The Impact Awards recognize individuals, organizations and communities that embody the spirit of stewardship and collaboration.



Farrey



Photo from Neenah Police Department

Advanced training

Neenah Police Department Professional Standards Lieutenant Jason Goetz graduated Dec. 11 from the 296th session of the FBI National Academy, in Quantico, Va. Goetz, who was joined during the ceremony by Police Chief Aaron Olson, is the fourth representative from the department to complete the internationally known, invitation-only program, which accepts fewer than 1% of law enforcement officers worldwide. The 11-week curriculum focuses on advanced communication, leadership and physical fitness. Participants are selected based on exemplary service records and nomination by their agency heads.

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Tuesday, January 27 | 10 a.m. | Oshkosh

Oshkosh Info Sessions: Evergreen Worship & Performing Arts Center
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Looking back at the top stories of 2025

Neenah News

From major developments in local government, new businesses and community milestones, 2025 was a year that left a mark on the Fox Valley. Here's a look back at the stories, events and people that shaped the headlines.

January

Galloway growth: Leading dairy producer Galloway Co. celebrated the completion of a \$70 million expansion at its 601 S. Commercial St. facility, nearly doubling its production of sweetened condensed milk for distribution nationwide. The project began in late 2023 and added a 12,800-square-foot, four-story building with a state-of-the-art evaporator, logistics area and offices, as well as a new semitrailer parking area. Galloway's products, including condensed milk, ice cream mix and beverage bases, are used by commercial food and beverage manufacturers in items



Neenah News

Customers browse a selection of chocolates, ice cream and other sweet treats at Wilmar Chocolates' new downtown Neenah location which opened in August.

such as caramel, syrups and cream-based pies.

Sweet addition: Wilmar Chocolates announced plans to open a second location in downtown Neenah, bringing handcrafted chocolates and ice cream to a storefront across from The Plaza. The Appleton-based confectionery finalized the purchase of the building at 220 and 224 W. Wisconsin Ave.,



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paving the way for an August opening. Sew Biz relocated to make room for the new shop, while neighboring business Elements Unleashed remains in place.

February

Secura milestone: Secura Insurance marked 125 years of operation, tracing its roots from a farmer-led mutual insurer formed after the devastating 1899 New Richmond tornado to a nearly \$1 billion company headquartered in Fox Crossing. Founded in 1900 by Julius Bubolz, the policyholder-owned insurer now works with about 550 independent agencies in 13 states and employs about 1,000 people nationwide, including 600 in the Fox Valley.

Immigration fallout: A Ukrainian family who rebuilt their lives in the Fox Valley under the Uniting for Ukraine program was thrown into crisis after a federal freeze on certain immigration benefits left them without valid work authorization. Tetiana and Ivan Chukhniat, who arrived legally in 2023 with their young son after fleeing the war in Kyiv, lost their jobs despite steady employment, tax compliance and community ties. The pause on immigration processing left the family facing financial hardship and uncertainty about their future in the U.S.

March

Era ends: After more than three decades guiding Neenah's growth, Community Development Director Chris Haese retired, closing a chapter marked by some of the city's most consequential projects. Hired as principal planner in 1991 and later promoted to director, Haese oversaw transformative downtown developments including One, Two and Three Neenah Center, the redevelopment of the former Glatfelter Paper Mill site and ongoing work at Arrowhead Park. Oshkosh's director of community development Kelly Nieforth was hired as Haese's successor.

Evergreen expansion: Evergreen Retirement Community acquired the former Kimberly-Clark corporate headquarters campus in Fox Crossing, a 43-acre site on Little Lake Butte des Morts, with plans to transform the 178,000-square-foot office building into a senior living community. The property at 401 N. Lake St., which served as K-C's home base from 1956 to 1985 before closing in 2020, will be redeveloped in collaboration with Fox Crossing and project partners, marking Evergreen's expansion into the Fox Valley after recent housing projects in Appleton and Oshkosh.

April

Campus future: The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors voted to purchase Outagamie County's share of the 43-acre UW-Oshkosh Fox Cities campus in Menasha for \$1, a move aimed at preventing a disruption to child care services as classes ended June 30. As part of the plan, the Weis Earth Science Museum collection was

SEE Year in Review ON PAGE 7

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Year in Review

FROM PAGE 6

transferred to Outagamie County and to Appleton's History Museum at the Castle.

New executive: Winnebago County voters elected former state Assembly representative Gordon Hintz as county executive, unseating incumbent Jon Doemel in the spring election. Hintz won the four-year term with 30,832 votes to Doemel's 27,374, according to official results.



Hintz

Road work: Construction work began on a \$3.2 million project to reconstruct Larsen Road in the Town of Neenah, improving traffic flow near Neenah High School. The project included widening shoulders, adding turn lanes and new signal lights, improving drainage, and building a multi-use trail.

May

Wheel tax: The Neenah Common Council voted to implement a \$30 annual wheel tax to fund street and sidewalk improvements after suspending the previous Transportation Assessment Replacement Fee over constitutional concerns. The fee will apply to about 27,075 vehicles registered within city limits, excluding vehicles over 8,000 pounds, and will be collected through annual vehicle registration by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Park restoration: The town of Neenah began restoring Conservancy Park, clearing dead ash trees and invasive buckthorn to revive a native ecosystem. A 2.2-acre area, previously overtaken by emerald ash borer infestations and dense undergrowth, will be replanted with native prairie grasses and oak savanna. The 12.5-acre park is across from Lakeview Elementary and near Lake Winnebago.

June

Tri-County transfer: Winnebago County approved transferring ownership of Tri-County Ice Arena in Fox Crossing to the nonprofit Appleton Ice four years ahead of schedule, with a 30-year agreement ensuring the facility remains an ice arena. Appleton Ice, which also operates the Appleton Family Ice Center, launched a \$4.1 million capital campaign for renova-

tions including new ice surfaces, improved insulation and energy systems, and upgrades to the boiler and roof.

Downtown drinking: The Neenah Common Council approved a permanent Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA), allowing adults to carry alcoholic beverages in designated downtown areas from noon to 10 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. The DORA covers two routes. It begins at 210 Main St., near Gord's Pub, and continues along West Wisconsin Avenue to Copperstill Bourbon Bar at 211 E. Wisconsin Ave. A second route starts at Lion's Tail Brewing Co., 116 S. Commercial St., and runs to the intersection of North Commercial Street and Wisconsin Avenue.

Recreational access: Winnebago County will now allow ATVs and UTVs on most county highways following a County Board vote. The updated rules permit operation at any time unless otherwise posted, require riders to be 16 or older with a valid license and insurance, and mandate head, tail and brake lights.

July

New club: The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley marked the opening of its newest location in Neenah with a ribbon-cutting and open house at the 35,000-square-foot facility on Marathon Avenue. Built in less than a year, the club offers a wide range of youth programs, learning centers, arts spaces, a gymnasium and workforce readiness areas. The \$17.6 million project was fueled by community support and a fundraising campaign led by John and Tim Bergstrom. The new club is expected to serve about 1,000 young people and their families each year.

Industrial expansion: Menasha-based Gunderson announced plans to build a \$10 million headquarters and 75,000-square-



Neenah News

Kids try out a tabletop puck game at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley's new Neenah location during an open house and ribbon cutting celebration in July.

foot industrial laundry facility on a 13-acre parcel in Neenah's Southpark Industrial Center, bringing over 100 employees to the area. Construction is expected to begin in the fall and take about two years to complete.

August

Town hall: The Town of Clayton purchased a 4.5-acre property at 8386 State Road 76 for \$1.02 million to serve as its new town hall, centralizing offices, meeting spaces, fire department equipment and election activities. Existing tenants include Oink's Restaurant, which has a year-long lease, and ReMixx, a performance venue, which announced it would close to make way for municipal use. Town staff will occupy the building by next summer as part of long term plans to establish a defined town center and pursue potential incorporation.

Coffee drive-thru: Milbrew Holdings received Plan Commission approval to build a 7 Brew Coffee drive-thru at 828 Fox Point Plaza in Neenah. The half-acre site near West Winneconne Avenue and South

Lake Street will feature a 530-square-foot main building, a 240-square-foot storage building, and two drive-thru lanes with space for 17 vehicles.

Lighthouse preservation: The City of Neenah launched a fundraising campaign on National Lighthouse Day to renovate the Kimberly Point Lighthouse, aiming to raise half of the estimated \$565,000 cost, with the city covering the rest. The project will improve ADA accessibility, rebuild the interior and restore exterior features of the landmark which overlooks the Fox River and Lake Winnebago.

September

Investigation controversy: Recently released body camera footage revealed that Neenah's personnel investigation of City Attorney David Rashid duplicated a criminal probe into his April 2024 felony sexual assault charges. The investigation, led by police investigator Craig Hoffer, involved interviews with family members and acquaintances of the alleged victim and concluded there were no workplace violations, even as Rashid faced criminal prosecution. The case is headed to a jury trial in January.

Sales tax: A proposed 0.5% Winnebago County sales tax failed after no supervisor seconded Vice Chairman Chuck Farrey's motion to bring the resolution to a vote. The tax, which would have generated an estimated \$17 million to \$20 million annually with roughly \$6 million shared with municipalities, could still be proposed again in the future. County Executive Gordon Hintz opposed the measure, citing concerns about the revenue-sharing arrangement.

Station remodel: The Neenah Common Council approved a \$5.9 million re-

SEE Year in Review ON PAGE 8



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SCAN ME



Year in Review

FROM PAGE 7

model of Fire Station 31 on Breezewood Lane. The renovation will include a new roof, exterior walls, and a complete gut-to-framing rebuild of the fire station quarters, alongside a separately funded \$1.2 million training tower and storage building.

October

Roadwork complete: Neenah completed a \$10.8 million reconstruction of South Commercial Street, wrapping up one of the largest street projects in the city's history after seven months of work. The 1.5-mile project between Tyler and Stanley streets included upgraded storm sewers, pavement, sidewalks, driveways, traffic signals and streetscaping aimed at improving safety and accessibility. The project was funded with a mix of federal and municipal dollars.

Cheese shop: The Cheese Table opened at 125 W. Wisconsin Ave. in downtown Neenah, offering a selection of Union Star and Willow Creek cheeses, gourmet cheeses, olive oils, wine, crackers, honey and other specialty items. The business is owned by Jon and Kelsey Metz.

Land restoration: Neenah High School in Fox Crossing is undergoing a prairie and native plant restoration on approximately 107 acres of former farmland, led by teachers Ryan Walter and Nathaniel Blood. Supported by a Pheasants Forever grant, principal Brian Wunderlich, the school grounds crew, students, and Merjent Inc., the project involves removing invasive buckthorn, installing bluebird houses and creating an osprey nesting platform. Students participate in soil testing, plant surveys and planning native seed mixes, with the goal of increasing biodiversity and providing hands-on conservation experience.

November

Ramp milestone: The Larsen-Winchester Lions Club celebrated its 1,500th wheelchair ramp installation at the Neenah home of Dennis and Karen Heimer. The ramps, built by volunteers in Larsen and installed across a 25-mile radius, serve se-

niors, people recovering from surgery and those with lifelong mobility challenges. The program typically installs about 60 ramps a year.

Netflix nod: Netflix's new animated feature The Twits includes a hidden tribute to Neenah, featuring a character holding a tourism guide to the city. The reference comes from Neenah native Phil Johnston, the film's director, writer, and voice of the character Mr. Napkin. Johnston, a 1990 Neenah High School graduate, often slips local references into his projects, drawing on his hometown, friends and teachers for inspiration. Johnston is also set to write Sony Pictures' upcoming View-Master movie.

Wastewater upgrade: Area municipalities are planning major improvements to the Neenah-Menasha Sewerage Commission wastewater treatment plant in Menasha to comply with stricter state phosphorus regulations. The project is estimated at up to \$35 million and includes new filters, chemical and polymer feed systems, and possibly UV disinfection. Work is expected to begin in 2027 and take two years to complete. Funding will be shared among communities that use the facility, with potential sewer rate increases for residents.

December

Medical housing: Construction started on a 56-unit townhouse development for medical residents at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah, on the former Roosevelt Elementary School site. The housing will support ThedaCare's new Graduate Medical Education program, providing one- and two-bedroom units with attached garages to help residents live near work and reduce commute times. The development will be built in two phases.

Mayor election: Neenah Mayor Jane Lang announced she will not seek a second term, stating that she wants to spend more quality time with her family. Lang is a lifelong resident who served eight years as an alderman before her 2022 election. She is the second woman in the city's history to hold the office. With Lang stepping aside, the mayoral race is now open ahead of the April 7, 2026 election. Candidates have until Jan. 6 to file nomination papers.



Photo from Spark Development

A drone view of Scholar Ridge Estates in Clayton shows the newly developed residential lots.

New housing

FROM PAGE 1

housing in the area."

Liebhauser said growing housing demand is driven in part by the relocation of Neenah High School, which opened in a new building on a 220-acre campus in Fox Crossing in 2023.

"It seemed like a great time to really kick off our developments in the Town of Clayton," he said.

The company's portfolio includes the Legacy Park Apartments on Marlo Avenue in Clayton. Construction on the 19-acre development wrapped up last June, and all 182 two-bedroom units are fully occupied.



Liebhauser

"They're really nice, everyone has their own private garage, their own access to the outside," Liebhauser said. "They feel very homey, very private."

Adjacent to the apartments, Spark has developed Scholar Ridge Estates, a 150-lot subdivision on about 100 acres along County II and Marlo Avenue, about a quarter-mile west of Neenah High School. The location is near Willie Beamons and Westridge Golf Course.

Liebhauser said 85 of the lots in Scholar Ridge have already been sold.

"We're just developing the lots and selling to both builders and also spec builders, custom builders and people that are just buying a lot for themselves," he said.

Spec builders are those who purchase lots to construct homes for resale rather than for personal use. All homes in the development must meet specific building requirements, including minimum square footage for different home types and two-car garages.

In Green Bay, Spark is developing Novara, a mixed-use project at the corner of Cormier Road and Holmgren Way. The 152-unit apartment complex also includes more than 8,000 square feet of retail space and is set to open in August.

Liebhauser said Spark focuses on real



Photo from Spark Development

The Legacy Park Apartments in Clayton are part of a growing residential development expected to add significant value to the town's tax base.

estate development and property management. For projects like Eagle Heights and Legacy Park, Spark acts as the developer and long-term manager, partnering with RODAC, a general contracting company out of Hobart that handles the actual building process.

For housing subdivisions like Scholar Ridge, Spark develops the lots. The company handles the planning, utilities and site preparation, but does not construct the homes. Water for the Clayton developments comes from Fox Crossing, while sewage is handled by Clayton.

Town Chair Russ Geise said there are future plans for Clayton to develop its own water department as the population expands. He added that Clayton appreciates the new developments' positive impact on the tax base and housing shortage.

"I respect him as a developer and I'm really glad he has chosen the Town of Clayton to build in," Geise said of Liebhauser. "Whatever they're building people are liking, and it helps our tax base throughout this entire process."

The Legacy Park and Scholar Ridge developments are expected to add a combined total of about \$120 million in assessed value to Clayton's tax base.

Liebhauser said he feels blessed to be able to invest in the town that he calls home.

"As long as we continue to have a great relationship with the town, which we do, and we're continuing to help with the housing supply in the area, I want to continue to invest in this community," he said.

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Public library calendar

Jan. 5 Stitching Group 1 p.m. Adult Afternoon Program: Ice Fishing on the Bay of Green Bay 2 p.m.	Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m. Adult DIY Design Workshop 6:30 p.m.	teens) 2 p.m.	Musical Movers Storytime (ages 0-6) 10 a.m. Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 6 Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-5) 9:15 a.m. Storytime for Everyone (all ages) 10 a.m. Powered by Yarn 6:30 p.m.	Jan. 15 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.	Jan. 26 Monday Morning Book Klatch 10 a.m. DIY Headshots with Your Phone 7 p.m.	Jan. 29 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.
Jan. 7 Baby Time Storytime (birth to 12 months) 9:15 a.m. Musical Movers Storytime (ages 0-6) 10 a.m. Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.	Jan. 16 Fitness Friday: Balance and Strength 9:15 a.m. Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.	Jan. 27 Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-5) 9:15 a.m. Storytime for Everyone (all ages) 10 a.m. Suburban Homesteading: Indoor Plant Care Made Simple 6:30 p.m. Movie Talks: 3 Days of the Condor 6:30 p.m.	Jan. 30 Fitness Friday: Boot Camp 9:15 a.m. Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.
Jan. 8 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.	Jan. 17 Volunteens! – Ages 11-19 10:30 a.m.	Jan. 28 Baby Time Storytime (birth to 12 months) 9:15 a.m.	Jan. 31 Stuffed Animal Clinic (ages 3 and up) 10:30 a.m.
Jan. 10 Boosting Your Parenting Toolbox: Conscious Discipline Workshop 2.0 10 a.m.	Jan. 19 Memory Cafe 1:30 p.m. Women's Health Empowerment Series: Journaling with Stacy Parish 6:30 p.m. Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club 6:30 p.m.	Concert features Parlor Lights at library Neenah News A Sunday concert at the Neenah Public Library will feature live performance from Parlor Lights. Guests are invited at 2 p.m. Jan. 11 to step into a world where music once again shimmers with intimacy, warmth and the charm of a bygone era. Parlor Lights was born from that spirit	
Jan. 11 Sunday Concert: Parlor Lights 2 p.m.	Jan. 20 Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-5) 9:15 a.m. Storytime for Everyone (all ages) 10 a.m. Cookbook Book Club 6:30 p.m.		
Jan. 12 Monday Matinee: A Big Bold Beautiful Journey 1 p.m. Short Story Night 7 p.m.	Jan. 21 Baby Time Storytime (birth to 12 months) 9:15 a.m. Musical Movers Storytime (ages 0-6) 10 a.m. Library Board Meeting 4 p.m. Mah Jongg Meet Up 5:30 p.m.		
Jan. 13 Adaptive Storytime (ages 0-5) 9:15 a.m. Storytime for Everyone (all ages) 10 a.m. Tech Talk Tuesday: All About Google Drive 1:30 p.m. Legal Assistance Clinic 4:30 p.m.	Jan. 22 Wee Read Storytime *with ASL interpretation (ages 2 and up) 10 a.m. Open Chess 5:30 p.m. Family Activity Night: Torn Paper Art 6 p.m. Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.		
Jan. 14 Baby Time Storytime (birth to 12 months) 9:15 a.m. Musical Movers Storytime (ages 0-6) 10 a.m.	Jan. 23 Tween Music Bingo (Fifth grade to	No job too small or large! Now Offering 10, 20, and 30 yard dumpsters. Call for rates and availability. Locally Owned & Operated Neenah, WI	



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Senior Standout is brought to you by: 

Buss showcases sharp shooting touch with Rockets

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

There is no doubt that basketball is an important part of Ellie Buss’ life. The Neenah senior comes from a basketball playing family and has played the game from a young age. She is now in her third year as a starter for the Rockets and has already committed to continue her playing career at NCAA Division II Maryville University next season.

So, there is no denying it’s a high priority. But she doesn’t like to take the court without first consuming another important aspect in her life.

“I eat a pickle before every game,” Buss said, noting that the tradition started in eighth grade. “I just love pickles. They are my favorite food.”

That pre-game nourishment might just be the key to her success on the court.

Buss has been the Rockets’ top perimeter shooter the past two seasons. She made a team-high 91 3-pointers last season while shooting nearly 38 percent from behind the arc and has already made 28 shots from behind the arc through 11 games this season.

Buss credits her teammates for helping her get her shot attempts but she also does some mental preparation before games to get into a shooting zone.

“I’m kind of a visualizer so before the game, I like to visualize the game to get my head in the right space,” Buss said before a recent practice. “Then, once I see that first one go in during warm-ups, I know I’m ready to go.”

Every shooter has had games where it doesn’t seem like they can miss and Buss is no different.

She said that playing at Fond du Lac last season – when she finished 7-of-10 from behind the arc and tallied a career-high 30 points – was the most recent game when things were rolling.

“It’s an awesome feeling,” Buss said. “I haven’t had one of those games this year yet but I know at Fond du Lac last year I

Senior Standout



had a good game. My teammates just kept getting me the ball.”

When Buss is on a roll, she joked that she is in shooting range “anywhere on the court.”

Maybe not anywhere, but she does have range to fire away from well behind the 3-point line.

“I like to shoot deeper 3s, so I like the wings the best. The corners are fine, too, but I like the wings,” Buss said. “I’m lucky enough Coach (Andy) Braunel trusts me to shoot it that deep. Sophomore year I was launching them and he (wasn’t too keen on it) but now as a senior, I have that freedom.”

As steady of a shooter as Buss is, though, she will go through stretches where the shots aren’t falling.

It’s something that every player who tends to shoot from distance goes through and Buss has learned to deal with the frustration when that happens.

“It’s very frustrating. You just have to control the controllables when it happens,” Buss said. “I just try to keep playing my hardest on defense and get the ball to my teammates who have a hot hand.”

When a shooter is struggling to see one go in, the accepted philosophy is that they need to keep shooting.

Buss said that can be a hard adage to follow.

“I don’t want my teammates to think I’m being selfish so that mental battle is hard. I know my teammates trust me so I know I have to shoot the ball,” Buss said. “Once one goes through, then hopefully the rest will go through.”



Neenah News
Ellie Buss is in her third year of starting for the Neenah girls basketball team and brings a strong shooting eye to the court for the Rockets.

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Prep sports roundup

BOYS BASKETBALL

Neenah pulls away in second half

The Rockets had a trio of players reach double figures in a 78-41 rout of Appleton East before Christmas.

Neenah took a 10-point lead at halftime before outscoring the Patriots 44-17 in the second half to break the game open.

Jacob Jungwirth matched his season high with 18 points off the bench to lead the Rockets.

Kolton Fleege followed with 12 points and seven rebounds, while Jackson Rindy finished with 10 points. Nick Schultz finished with nine points and six assists in the win.

Neenah forced the Patriots into 22 turnovers in the game, while committing just six.

Zephyrs capture Holy Buckets title

St. Mary Catholic had a big night from behind the 3-point line and handed Roncalli its first loss of the season with a convincing 80-51 win in the title game of the Holy Buckets Tournament.

The Zephyrs finished 14-of-22 from behind the arc with Tarver Trinkner, Mason Uhlenbrauck and Dylan Brenn each hitting four 3-pointers in the game.

Four players finished in double figures for the Zephyrs led by 20 points from Uhlenbrauck. Trinkner added 18 points and Brenn totaled 15 in the win.

Max Vosters chipped in 14 points, while leading the team along with Brenn with seven rebounds.

Luke Fairweather finished with 10 assists in the game for the Zephyrs.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Defense steps up in second half of win

Neenah held previously unbeaten Monona Grove to just 16 points in the second half to pull away for a 59-48 win at Just-A-Game Fieldhouse in Wisconsin Dells on Monday.

The Rockets trailed by one at halftime but outscored the Silver Eagles 28-16 in the second half to collect the nonconfer-

ence victory.

Rowan Klesmit finished with 13 points and seven rebounds to lead Neenah, while Ellie Buss and Farrah Danforth each added 10.

Before the holiday break, Neenah rallied in the second half but couldn't overcome a 22-point halftime deficit in an 81-71 loss to Appleton East.

Danforth posted a career-high of 22 points, including a 10-of-11 performance at the free-throw line, to lead the Rockets.

Sydney Michalkiewicz finished with 16 points off the bench for the Rockets, while Buss scored 12 points and Klesmit finished with 11 points ad seven rebounds for the Rockets.

Crowe paces Zephyrs in tourney win

Autumn Crowe poured in 26 points, including 17 in the second half, to lead St. Mary Catholic to a 69-60 win over Green Bay Preble in the first game of the Preble tournament on Monday.

Crowe also added 12 rebounds and eight steals and was 8-of-10 from the free-throw line in the game.

Gabby Guerrero and Luci Nackers each added 17 points in the win for St. Mary Catholic.

The Zephyrs rolled in the second game of the tournament on Tuesday, putting up 48 points in the first half en route to a 79-28 win over West Bend West.

St. Mary Catholic led 48-13 at halftime.

Crowe went 9-of-9 from the free-throw line and finished with 26 points to lead the Zephyrs, who hit eight 3-pointers in the game.

Bitsy McCauley added 17 points in the win, including four 3-pointers, and Guerrero chipped in 10.

HOCKEY

Simonson's goal lifts Rockets to win

Cartyr Simonson scored 11 minutes into the third period to break a tie score and lift Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha to a 3-2 win over the Bay Area Storm in the first game of the NHM Tournament at the Community First Champion Center on

SEE **Prep Roundup** ON PAGE 12

Obituaries

Donald Eugene Warner

Donald Eugene Warner, formerly of Shawano, Wisconsin, passed away peacefully on December 22, 2025 at age 87.

Don was born on January 28, 1938, in Burrton, Kansas, the fourth of five children to Ralph Warner and Fern (Barger) Warner. He left Kansas at age eight to live with his maternal Aunt Eunice and his Uncle Edwin Schultz near Cecil, Wisconsin. After graduating from Shawano High School in 1956, Don served in the U.S. Army for three years. He then attended the Milwaukee School of Engineering, obtaining a Bachelor of Science Degree in mechanical engineering in 1966.

Don spent the majority of his career in the paper industry, including 28 years with Kimberly-Clark Corp., starting as a design engineer, working his way up to mill manager, and ultimately retiring as a project manager for capital expansions. His work took him across the country and the world, including consulting stints in South Korea and at several facilities in Canada.

After retirement, Don devoted considerable time to volunteer activities, including acting as a reading tutor in an adult ESL program, as well as spending 10 years with the Shawano Area Food Pantry and Resource Center and several years with Habitat for Humanity in Shawano.

Before dementia fastened its cruel grip, Don enjoyed traveling, reading, doing crossword puzzles and playing golf. He was thrilled to return to Shawano in retirement and loved his home on the Wolf



River. He could be seen most days cutting trees for firewood, clearing brush or using his tractor for various outdoor projects. An engineer to the last, he frequently schemed and tinkered to make those projects more efficient.

Don is survived by his wife, Margaret Warner, and five children from his marriage to his late wife Kathleen (Whitehouse) Warner, including daughters Karen Warner, Grafton, WI; Joan (Travis) Dolence, Fargo, ND; and Janet (Dominick) Warner, Tucson, AZ; and sons Stephen (Michelle) Warner, Saint Paul, MN; and John (Sara) Warner, Wisconsin Dells, WI. He leaves 17 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister Patricia (Robert) Appel, of Anna, Texas.

Don was preceded in death by Kathy, his wife of 39 years, and by his brothers John Price, Richard Warner and Merle Dean Grimes.

A memorial service for Don will be held at Westgor Funeral Home in Neenah on Saturday, January 3, 2026. Visitation will be from 9:00am to 10:30am with a memorial service to follow. A luncheon will be served at Bridgewood Resort and Conference Center in Neenah following the memorial service. Don will be laid to rest at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Shawano.

In lieu of flowers, kindly send donations to: Shawano Area Food Pantry and Resource Center or Habitat for Humanity of Shawano.

A special thank you to Thedacare Hospice and Valley VNA for their professional and caring staff.

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SPACE Deadline: Noon, Tuesday, January 13, 2026

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Fox Valley 2026

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Senior Standout

FROM PAGE 10

Buss has the added degree of difficulty of often having to shoot over defenders.

Listed at 5-foot-7, Buss isn't going to tower over opponents but in a sport where height is important, her size has not held her down.

"It's never really been a problem for me," Buss said. "A lot of shorter people will say heart over height - which is definitely very true - but for some reason I always feel taller on the court when I play even though I'm not."

Buss has plenty of basketball support to fall back on as she is the daughter of two former coaches - her father, B.J. was a long-time coach at Xavier and her mom, Jen, was on the staff for Appleton North's back-to-back state championship teams - and the sister of a former Neenah standout.

She said she had plenty of one-on-one battles with her sister, Sammie, growing

up without much success. But there was one memorable win when she was a freshman when the two were squaring off at a friend's house.

"She broke a TV once," Buss said. "She got so mad because my dad called a foul and she kicked the ball and broke a TV."

Sammie, who is currently playing at UW-River Falls after two seasons at Bemidji State University, has imparted plenty of basketball knowledge on her younger sister, but Ellie said she has learned more than basketball from her sibling.

"My sister is a great basketball player but I have learned so much mental stuff from her, to never stop going," Buss said. "She's still playing basketball after three (ACL) surgeries. She's awesome."

Like her sister, Buss will continue her playing career at the next level when she heads to Maryville University, located in a suburb of St. Louis.

Buss was offered a scholarship from the university as a sophomore and committed in the fall of her junior year at Neenah. It

was an early decision but one that Buss has not regretted.

"Early in the process I was kind of debating. Maybe I could have waited for a D-1 offer but I know I for sure made the right decision," Buss said. "Going to a school that really wanted me was important to me because I want to be wanted."

Before Buss dons a Saints uniform, though, she does have her senior season to complete at Neenah and with the team off to a 9-2 start it has the makings of a special campaign.

Buss played a key role on the Rockets' state runner-up team two years ago and she believes the current group has the chance to make another trip to the Resch Center in March.

"We have a bunch of super talented players and we are super deep, too," Buss said. "(Getting to state) is the main goal but it is all about taking it one game at a time is super important to us. Focusing on one team at a time and when that time comes, then it will come."

Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 11

Sunday.

The Rockets followed that win with an 8-3 victory over New Richmond on Monday and were slated to play in the championship game on Tuesday. That result was not available by deadline.

Preston Liedke tallied goals in each of the first two periods against Bay Area as the Rockets built a 2-0 lead, but the Storm answered with a pair of goals in a three-minute span in the second period to send the game to the third period tied at 2.

Simonson scored the go-ahead goal shorthanded with just less than six minutes left in the period to boost the Rockets back into the lead and they were able to hold on from there.

Keegan Krueger and Clay Laabs picked up assists in the win.

Matthew Nelson finished with 18 saves in goal for the Rockets.



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Bowl Games

At this time of year, newspapers and TV trumpet the excitement of college football teams competing in bowl games!

In 1923, when the Tournament of Roses annual football game in Pasadena, Calif., moved into a new, bowl-shaped stadium, the game became known as the Rose Bowl. The term "bowl" has been used to describe championship games ever since.

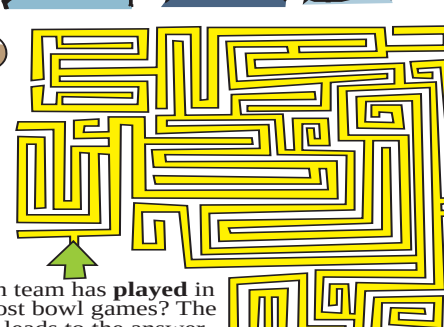
How many footballs can you find on this page?

Go Team

College football fans are known for their intense team loyalty. How many differences can you find?

Back to Back to Back ... One team earned a spot to play in 36 bowl games in 36 years, the longest consecutive bowl game record. Fill in the missing vowels to reveal this team.

FL _ R _ D _
ST _ T _



Which team has played in the most bowl games? The maze leads to the answer.

Notre Dame Fighting Irish Alabama Crimson Tide

Most Wins

Which college team has won the most Rose Bowl games? Cross out the word FOOTBALL each time it appears below. The remaining letters reveal the answer.

FOOTBALLUFOOTBALLNIFOOTBALLVEFOOTBALL
FOOTBALLRSIFOOTBALLTYOFOOTBALLFFOOTBALL
SOUFOOTBALLTFOOTBALLHFOOTBALLERFOOTBALL
NFOOTBALLCALFOOTBALLIFFOOTBALLLOFOOTBALL
RFOOTBALLNIFOOTBALLA

Map It!

Today, more than 30 college bowl games are played across the United States in December and January. Below are just some of them. Draw a line from each of the bowl games listed below to the state in which that game is played.



Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Boise, ID

Quick Lane Bowl
Detroit, MI

Pinstripe Bowl
Bronx, NY

Military Bowl
Annapolis, MD

Music City Bowl
Nashville, TN

Peach Bowl
Atlanta, GA

Gator Bowl
Jacksonville, FL

Rose Bowl
Pasadena, CA

Fiesta Bowl
Glendale, AZ

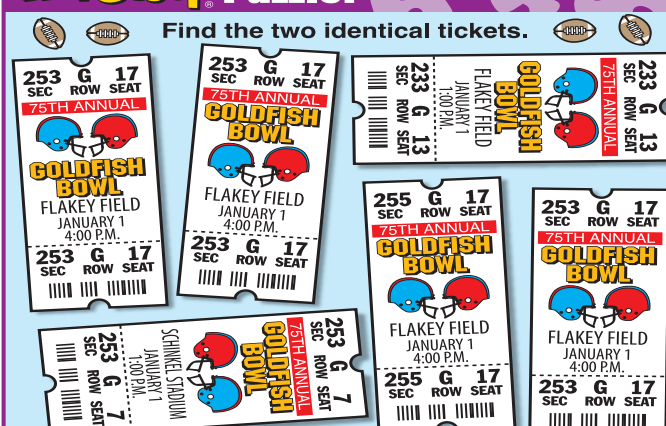
Cotton Bowl
Arlington, TX

Sugar Bowl
New Orleans, LA

Standards Links: Geography: Use map skills to find the location of places.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Find the two identical tickets.



Standards Links: Investigation: Find similarities and differences in common objects.

Double Word Search

TOURNAMENT
FOOTBALL
COLLEGE
JANUARY
STADIUM
HELMET
GAMES
ROSES
FIELD
BOWL
FANS
TEAM
GOAL
NAME
WIN

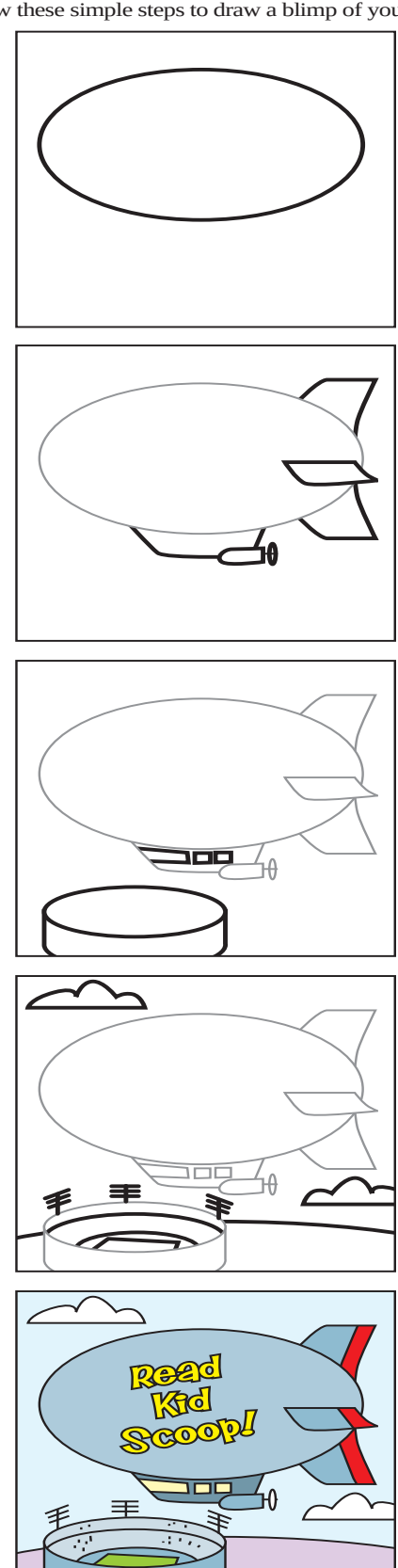
Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards, sideways and diagonally.

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

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

Let's Draw It!

Blimps fly over football stadiums with onboard cameras providing spectacular overhead views of the crowd below. Follow these simple steps to draw a blimp of your own!



Go to kidscoop.com/how-to-draw/ to learn how to draw a football player, a cheerleader and a crazy football fan, too!

Standards Links: Visual Arts: Know how different media and processes communicate ideas.

Write On!

Fitness Favorite

What is your favorite way to exercise? Why?