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Candidates line up for spring election

Two newcomers will vie for mayor

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

Candidates are lining up for the spring election, with mayoral, common council, county supervisor and other local races shaping up to be competitive ahead of the April 7 vote.

Several incumbents have announced plans to seek re-election or filed non-candi-

dacy paperwork, while new candidates are throwing their hat in the ring. The filing period for nomination papers closed Tuesday.

With the number of candidates running for Neenah mayor and school board, there will not be a primary election. Here are the people who will be on the ballot.

City of Neenah - Mayor

Scott Becher and Brian Borchardt have begun campaigning for a four-year seat as Neenah mayor after Jane Lang announced she will not seek re-election, citing a de-

sire to spend more time with her family. Lang was elected in 2022 and will finish her term through the end of April.

Becher, 58, previously served for 10 years as chief of staff to former state Rep. Steve Wieckert and has experience in legislative policy, nonprofit advocacy and public communications.

Borchardt, 53, has worked as a teacher for the past 16 years in the Neenah Joint School District. He has served as a District

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Krueger takes pride in Rocket captaincy
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Photo from Fox Crossing Police Department

Special ceremony

The Fox Crossing Police Department swore in five officers into new positions Dec. 29 during a special ceremony. The changes include four promotions and one new hire. The officers include Chief Tim Callan, Captain Corey Haag, Lieutenant Jon Evers, Lieutenant Adam Kurczek and Officer Noah Wallace. All received a new badge, traditionally pinned on by a loved one.

Engineers to assess Arrowhead Park dike stability



Neenah News

Arrowhead Park in downtown Neenah is a popular spot for biking, walking and fishing.

By Bethanie Gengler
NEENAH NEWS

The City of Neenah is advancing its long-term plan to redevelop Arrowhead Park along Little Lake Butte des Morts, with geotechnical and environmental monitoring projects soon to be underway.

The city is hiring ECS Midwest to conduct subsurface exploration and geotechnical engineering along the lake edge embankment at Arrowhead Park to assess the stability of the dike.

Community Development Director Kelly Nieforth wrote in a memo that the work is required by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to confirm

the structural integrity of the dike during planned park improvements and to ensure it continues to function as intended.

Nieforth said there have been no documented stability issues along the dike since its construction in 1951, including during periods when site improvements such as a papermill wastewater treatment plant, a parking lot, and the Fox Valley Energy Plant operated on the property over the past 60 years.

ECS will perform field exploration at 22 proposed boring locations, identify existing utilities, drill the borings, and con-

SEE **Arrowhead Park** ON PAGE 4



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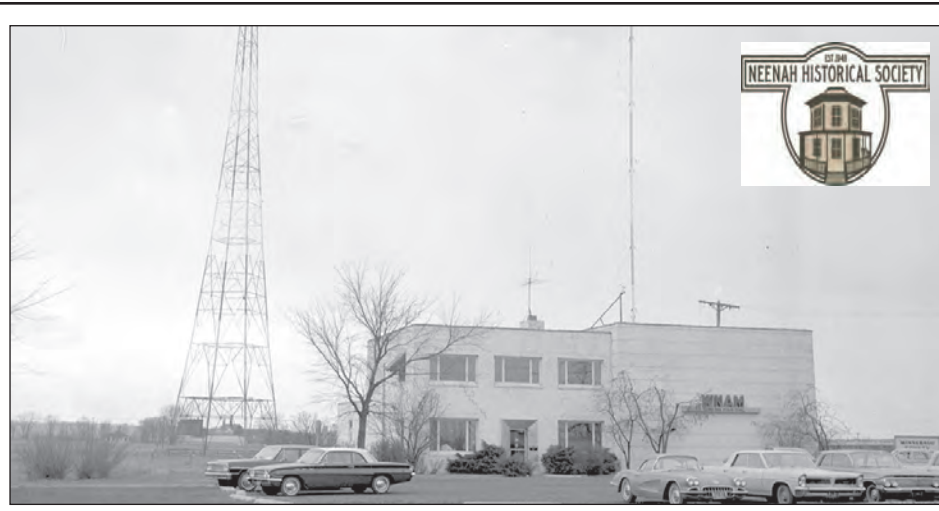
Corrections

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

About the newspaper

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Neenah Historical Society photo

WNAM signs off

On Dec. 31, 2025, local radio station WNAM made its final broadcast. The station began in 1946 as an idea from banker Sam Pickard. The NAM stood for “Neenah and Menasha.” For many years, the station headquarters was on South Commercial Street near where Tom’s Drive In and St. Vincent De Paul are now located.

UWO hosting listening sessions about future

Neenah News

The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh is inviting residents, community leaders, employers, educators, nonprofit partners and other stakeholders across Oshkosh and the greater Fox Valley to take part in two community-based strategic plan listening sessions this month.

The sessions are designed to gather perspectives from across the region as UW-Oshkosh develops its next strategic plan — a roadmap that will guide the university’s academic, workforce, community and economic impact in the years ahead.

“These listening sessions reflect UW-Oshkosh’s deep commitment to partnership, transparency and shared purpose,” said Ed Martini, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. “The

university does not plan its future in isolation. Our success is directly connected to the voices, needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.”

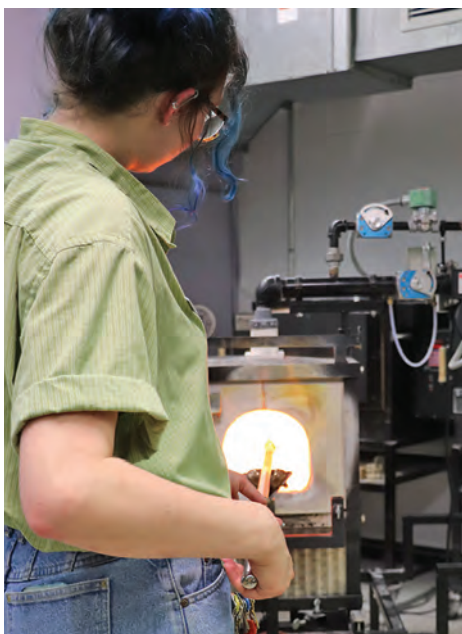
The sessions build on Phase I of the Oshkosh Infinite strategic planning process, which included fall 2025 internal listening sessions, surveys and shared governance forums involving students, faculty and staff. Insights and data gathered during that phase now provide a strong foundation as the university broadens the conversation to community and regional partners.

The first session from 4 to 6 p.m. Wednesday in the Becket’s Restaurant Atrium, 2 Jackson St. in Oshkosh, will feature an hour-long facilitated discussion followed by a reception. The second session is scheduled from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Jan. 22 in the new Appleton Public Library, 200 N. Appleton St. in Appleton.

Participants will have the opportunity to share perspectives on how UW-Oshkosh can continue to support regional talent development, innovation, civic vitality and economic growth.

For more information, visit uwosh.edu/strategicplan.

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Calendar of events

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.

Wednesday, Jan. 14

Author Deb Vande Voort of “So-roses of a Cabin,” Meet and Greet, 4 p.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Thursday, Jan. 15

Valley Christian Middle School Theatre presents The Snow White Variety Show, 1 and 7 p.m., Calvary Bible Church, 1450 Oakridge Road

Friday, Jan. 16

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

Valley Christian Middle School Theatre presents The Snow White Variety Show, 7 p.m., Calvary Bible Church, 1450 Oakridge Road

Saturday, Jan. 17

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

New Springs Christian Academy Fundraiser, 10:45 a.m., Evolution Cycle Studio, 1350 W. American Drive

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

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AARON COPLAND: Appalachian Spring. Suite



Photo from Neenah Public Library

Retro video gaming

Video gaming skills were put to the test Dec. 29 during a Retro Video Game Extravaganza at the Neenah Public Library. Participants could play timeless arcade hits and beloved console favorites while competing for gift card prizes from Blind Tiger Games.

Library starts women's empowerment health series

Neenah News

New in 2026, the Neenah Public Library will offer a series on the third Monday of each month called "Women's Health Empowerment" aimed at empowering women to take charge of their health decisions.

This series will focus on topics concerning the changes a woman's body undergoes during perimenopause and menopause. Everyone is welcome to participate and learn from both the experts and each other.

The first workshop will be Journalling with Stacy Parish at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 19.

Parish will help participants start the new year with a fresh approach that goes beyond traditional goal-setting.

This interactive workshop will explore the how and why of journaling as a powerful tool for reflection, creativity and personal growth.

This is a free event held at the Neenah Public Library. No registration is necessary.

For more information, contact library director Nicole Hardina-Wilhelm at 920-886-6300 or director@neenahlibrary.org.



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Middle school teacher placed on leave

Neenah News

A Neenah Middle School teacher has been placed on administrative leave after being arrested and investigated for drug possession.

Benjamin Schmidt, 46, of Neenah was charged Dec. 30 with misdemeanor counts for possession of a controlled substance and possession of Tetrahydrocannabinols (THC).

He faces a potential seven-month sentence in prison and a possible decade-long revocation of his driving privileges if convicted on all counts.

The Neenah Joint School District said in a statement earlier this week that it has been made aware of allegations concerning one of its staff members. Upon discovery of the situation, the staff member was immediately placed on administrative leave, the district said.

“The investigation into the allegations is still ongoing and the staff member remains on administrative leave,” the district said. “The District is committed to ensuring a safe environment for all and, upon conclusion of the investigation, will take all appropriate steps to resolve the situation.”

According to a criminal complaint, a Neenah police officer went to Schmidt’s residence around 9 a.m. Dec. 15 after his wife reported finding drugs in the house. The officer was advised that Schmidt allegedly had “hydroxy 7” and “kratom” in the home. Police said that “kratom,” also known as mitragynine, is a Schedule I Controlled Substance. Further, 7-hydroxymitragynine is a Schedule I Controlled Substance.

The officer was advised that Schmidt is a middle school teacher in Neenah and

that he allegedly often had THC vapes in his vehicle. During a search of the house, police said several items were located, including suspected THC products and items with kratom and 7-hydroxymitragynine on the labels.

Police said in the complaint that Schmidt’s wife explained that he had surgery three years ago and was prescribed medication. She alleged that Schmidt has been spending upwards of \$1,500 on THC and other products each month.

Schmidt’s wife told police she was cleaning the house with her cousin as she prepared to divorce Schmidt. She indicated to police that her cousin told her that the substances they found were not legal. Police said that she told them she was concerned that sometimes Schmidt would come home from work appearing to be under the influence.

While police were searching Schmidt’s house, other officers, including School Resource Officer Erica Geschrei, made contact with Schmidt at Neenah Middle School. Neenah Joint School District Superintendent Steve Harrison was made aware of the police investigation. Harrison requested that Geschrei search Schmidt’s property, classroom and vehicle based on the reasonable suspicion that drugs might be on school property.

After Principal Jennifer Koenecke escorted Schmidt to Geschrei’s office, police said in the criminal complaint he was read his Miranda rights and agreed to answer questions. During a search of Schmidt’s vehicle, Geschrei allegedly located a black vape pen with no identifiable marks on it. She observed a gold-colored substance in the clear part of the vape, which Geschrei believed

appeared to be THC wax that was liquified.

Koenecke retrieved Schmidt’s personal belongings from his classroom and turned them over to Geschrei, who said that she searched a white coffee tumbler and located two clumps of an unknown solid substance sitting on the bottom.

While searching Schmidt’s desk, Geschrei located an empty bag of Kratom Malay, 100 capsules/60 grams, in a drawer.

During a Mirandized interview with police, Schmidt stated that he and his wife were going through a divorce and this incident and report were consistent with what she would do to gain leverage. When asked if he had anything on school property, Schmidt said he did not. He also denied having THC vapes in his car.

When asked about the THC vape located by Geschrei, Schmidt said it was Delta 8. He admitted there was Kratom powder above the stove at his house that he mixed with hot chocolate. When asked about the substance at the bottom of his travel coffee mug, Schmidt said it was carnation instant protein powder.

Schmidt told police he did not ingest illegal substances while at the school.

Schmidt’s next court appearance is scheduled for Jan. 27.

Arrowhead Park

FROM PAGE 1

duct laboratory tests on the soil samples to assess stability. The company will then submit a report with findings and recommendations to the city.

The services are expected to cost \$53,168 and be completed by the end of February, with funding coming from Arrowhead Park carryover funds in the 2025 Capital Improvements Budget.

In a related project, the city has also contracted Stantec Consulting Services to help implement a Gas Migration Prevention Action Plan at Arrowhead Park. The plan is required by the DNR to monitor for potential gas migration from the former landfill on the site to ensure nearby developments and fill do not inadvertently cause methane migration.

Stantec will install three dual-purpose vents with sampling ports, conduct surface emissions monitoring throughout the park, and submit construction and one-year follow-up reports to the DNR.

Nieforth said prior methane testing by Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue near buildings surrounding the park has consistently shown zero parts per million, indicating no off-site migration.

The Stantec project is expected to cost \$32,350 and will also be funded through Arrowhead Park carryover funds from the 2025 budget.

Arrowhead Park was acquired by the city in 1951 and designated a public recreational area in 1975. The park occupies land previously used for paper manufacturing and a landfill.

Beginning in the 1980s, the city has developed a number of plans for the site. The newest plan was created in 2023 by RDG Planning & Design and proposes an amphitheater, community building, celebration lawn, sculpture garden, inclusive playground, pedestrian overpass over the Canadian National Railroad line, and a destination building with event and dining space.

The plan focuses on connectivity to downtown Neenah and integration with the 3.5-mile Loop the Little Lake Trail, which links Fox Crossing, Menasha and Neenah.

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American Legion Auxiliary seeks scholarship assistance

Neenah News

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 33, Neenah, is requesting scholarship assistance for Neenah High School and St. Mary Catholic High School for junior girls wishing to attend a week at Badger Girls State week at UW-Oshkosh.

ALABGS is a practical civics conference that allows students to learn about state government by actively participating in it.

The program, scheduled for June 21-26, includes nonpartisan activities teaching young delegates responsible citizenship,

the election process and civic duty, creating the mythical 51st state of Badger.

Delegates reside in cities and elect officials and create laws within the city. Each delegate has an opportunity to run for any state position that week and in the process they increase their patriotism and love of country.

Any donation is appreciated to assist Unit 33 in sending as many delegates as show interest.

Any questions can be directed to Char Kiesling, ALABGS Unit 33 chairman, at 920-428-5655.

Neenah student wins Congressional contest

Neenah News

Neenah High School sophomore Clayton Walters won the Congressional App Challenge for Wisconsin's sixth congressional district.

The contest has been held in nearly every congressional district across the country since 2016, including all eight Wisconsin districts. Students in grades 7-12 are invited to submit innovative app designs. The designs are displayed in the U.S. Capitol for the next year and winners are invited to Washington, D.C.

Walters created an app that is called

"Wisconsin Native Landscaping Helper." Users answer three questions about whether to create a planned or wild garden. They are then taken to a screen with buttons that have a common non-native landscaping plant on each.

When clicked, users are taken to a different screen that explains whether the plant is just non-native or also invasive and what that means, along with two native alternatives.

Visit the app challenge website for more information congressionalappchallenge.us/.

Show presents 'hilarious' twist on Snow White

Neenah News

Valley Christian Middle School Theatre is planning to put a different spin on a classic story during performances next week.

The students will be "serving up a variety show full of laughs, surprises and fairytale fun. Expect comedy, twists and plenty

of moments that will keep you smiling."

The show is expected to be something the whole family will love as "it's happily-ever-after with a hilarious twist."

Show times are 1 and 7 p.m. Thursday and 7 p.m. Friday at Calvary Bible Church, 1450 Oakridge Road. Admission is \$5.



Photo from Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department

Volunteer recognition

Rose O'Brien was recognized as the Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department 2025 Volunteer of the Year at the Dec. 10 Park Commission meeting. From helping at special events throughout the year, to always bringing positivity and heart to everything she does, the parks department said O'Brien truly embodies what it means to give back.

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Settlement reached in death of woman in sheriff's custody

Neenah News

The Outagamie County Finance Committee on Tuesday approved a proposed settlement in the 2022 death of Xee Yang, who jumped out of a moving vehicle on Highway 441 in Fox Crossing while being transported by the Outagamie County Sheriff's Office.

The settlement would provide \$400,000 to Yang's widower, Navtej Bhandari, and require a memorial bench to be installed in her honor.

Bhandari filed a civil lawsuit against Outagamie County and sheriff's deputies James Stordock and Thomas Van Horn, claiming that the county failed to provide safe and secure transport for Yang while she was experiencing acute psychosis.

Stordock and Van Horn were trans-

porting 43-year-old Yang of Grand Chute from St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Appleton to Winnebago County Mental Health Institution in Oshkosh on May 30, 2022, when Yang exited the moving vehicle while it was traveling about 65 miles per hour. She died from injuries sustained in the fall.

Neenah News reported in 2022 that Yang was able to open the van door because the child safety locks were not engaged. Following the incident, the Outagamie Sheriff's Office made changes to all of its vehicles to prevent passengers from opening the doors from the inside.

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Department investigated the incident, and the Winnebago County District Attorney's Office later reviewed the report and

declined to press charges against the deputies.

The lawsuit filed in 2023 alleges that the deputies did not take basic precautions, such as riding in the back with Yang or engaging the vehicle's safety locks, and were not equipped with emergency supplies such as a first aid kit or resuscitation equipment.

The lawsuit also claims that Outagamie County violated Yang's rights by failing to provide safe and secure transport for mentally ill civilians.

In July, a federal judge partially granted and partially denied the defendants' motion for summary judgment, dismissing the claims against Outagamie County

under the Fourteenth Amendment, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. The judge allowed the state-law claims and the individual Fourteenth Amendment claims against Stordock and Van Horn to proceed, determining the deputies are not protected by qualified immunity. The deputies have appealed and the case is on hold pending the outcome of that appeal.

The resolution approved by the Finance Committee Tuesday indicates a settlement has been reached. If approved by the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors next Tuesday, it would authorize the county's liability insurance to cover the \$400,000 payment.

Saturday coffee runs to loop the little lake

Neenah News

Coffee runs are returning as a way to continue exercising over the winter.

The Plaza and Globe Coffee at 229 W. Wisconsin Ave. hosts the runs, which are scheduled from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Saturdays

from Jan. 17 through Feb. 28.

The four-mile route will loop the little lake and go through Fox Crossing, Neenah and Menasha. Fleet Feet Fox Valley organizes the events.

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Spring election

FROM PAGE 1

2 alder since 2020 and Common Council president since 2022 and is making his second run at mayor after losing to Lang in 2022 by about 761 votes.

Common Council

District 1 Alder Cari Lendrum, District 2 Alder Tami Erickson and District 3 Alder Scott Weber have expiring terms in 2026. All three alders have filed declarations of candidacy to continue in their roles for a three-year term. While Erickson and Weber are running for re-election unopposed, Lendrum will face challenger Brian Defferding.

Defferding served six years on the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors from 2018 to 2024, and works as an Assistant Food Service Leader at Kwik Trip.

Lendrum has served as a District 1 Alder for 15 years and works as a property manager and building supervisor at the Neenah-Menasha YMCA. She was most recently challenged for her District 1 seat in the 2023 election, defeating Alexander Collins by a margin of 73 votes.

Neenah Board of Education

Voters will elect three new members to the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education to three-year terms. The seats currently held by Lindsay Clark, Michelle Swardenski and Deborah Watry are up for election, and all three incumbents are not seeking re-election.

Candidates Christian Blanton, Tom Hanby, Becky Heidke Kwiatkowski and Samuel Roth will be on the ballot.

Municipal Judge

The Neenah-Menasha Municipal Judge

seat that is currently held by James Gunz is on the ballot for a four-year term. Gunz is seeking re-election unchallenged.

Town of Neenah

In the Town of Neenah, all town offices carry a two-year term. Voters will elect two town board supervisors, with the seats currently held by David Bluma and James Weiss up for election in April. Both Bluma and Weiss are seeking re-election with no challengers.

Town of Clayton

In the Town of Clayton, voters will elect two town board supervisors to two-year terms. Seat 3 held by Patti Christianson, and Seat 4 held by Scott Reif, are both up for election this spring. Both incumbents are seeking re-election unopposed.

Village of Fox Crossing

Fox Crossing residents will vote for three village trustees, each serving a two-year term. Seats 1, 3 and 5, currently held by Michael Van Dyke, Tim Raddatz and Deborah Swiertz are up for election. All three incumbents are seeking re-election with no challengers.

Board of Supervisors

Winnebago County supervisors are elected to two-year terms. All 36 seats on the Board of Supervisors are up for election this spring, with Neenah News reporting on the candidates that represent our Neenah and Fox Crossing readers in districts 5-10 and 27-30.

In District 5, incumbent Stefanie Holt, who was elected in 2024, is not seeking re-election. Richard Bodenhagen and Shiloh Ramos will vie for the seat.

District 6 incumbent Lucas Reinke, who was elected in 2024, will face challenger Brandon Ramus.

In District 7, incumbent Kate Hancock-Cooke is seeking re-election with no challengers. Hancock-Cooke first won the seat in 2024, defeating incumbent Betsy Ellenberger by a margin of 17 votes.

District 8 supervisor Jim Wise, who was appointed in 2021 and re-elected in 2024, is seeking re-election unopposed.

District 9 supervisor Donald Nussbaum, who was appointed in 2019 and re-elected in 2020, 2022 and 2024, is not seeking re-election. Devin Moonin is running for the District 9 seat unchallenged.

District 10 Supervisor Bryan Stafford, appointed in 2021 and re-elected in 2022 and 2024, is not seeking re-election. Timothy Jacobson is running for the seat again after narrowly losing to Stafford by 133 votes in 2024. He will face Chris Rosenow in the upcoming election.

District 27 incumbent Morris Cox, who was appointed in 2020 and re-elected in 2022 and 2024, is seeking re-election. He is being challenged by Carl Schulze.

District 28 includes parts of Fox Crossing. District 28 incumbent Robert Gustafson is seeking re-election unchallenged. Robert Gustafson was appointed to the board in October to fill a vacancy left by his son, Nate Gustafson, who held the seat

since 2022 and resigned after purchasing a home outside of the district.

District 29 incumbent George Bureau is seeking re-election. He will once again be challenged by Benjamin Frank. Both men initially sought the seat in 2024, with Bureau defeating Frank by a margin of 80 votes.

District 30 represents the Town of Vinland and portions of Neenah and Oshkosh. District 30 incumbent Chuck Farrey, who was first elected in 2002 and has held the seat for 24 years, is not seeking re-election. Matthew Woods is running for the seat unopposed.

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Rockets lose tight battle with unbeaten Ghosts

By Joe Matzek
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Very little separated the top two teams in the Fox Valley Association boys' basketball standings Tuesday night when Neenah hosted Kaukauna.

After 10 lead changes in the second half and four in the final two minutes, the state-ranked Ghosts made one more play than the Rockets, prevailing 57-55 on Tyler Schwalbach's three-point play with 5.6 seconds remaining.

As well as the game went for the Rockets - who had lost their previous two non-conference games to De Pere and Marshfield - the close loss to the second-ranked team in the Bound Wisconsin/Zaleski Sports state poll didn't cheer coach Lee Rabas.

Kaukauna made 21 of their 32 shots for 66 percent and scored 34 points in the paint, including six layups by Schwalbach in the opening half. The Rockets did hold the Ghosts 20 points below their season

average.

"I'm disappointed how we played defensively," Rabas said. "(We gave up) just way too many easy baskets. We didn't give up many threes and didn't let them shoot many threes, but we were just terrible on the ball."

Though Kaukauna led much of the second half, the Rockets kept within four points and took the lead at 53-52 on Roan Koeper's basket in the lane with 1 minute, 20 seconds to play.

The Ghosts recaptured the lead when Schwalbach scored on a layup with a minute remaining. Neenah countered when Nick Schultz hit a short jumper around a Koeper screen with 14.5 seconds left.

But Schwalbach struck again when he found an opening and drove for a layup, was fouled by Schultz and made the ensuing free throw for the winning points.

"We have to be better on the ball," Rabas said of the final defensive possession. "We can't let him get into us the way that

he did."

Rabas decided not to take a timeout and the Rockets hustled the ball into the frontcourt, where Koeper nearly hit a three-pointer from the top of the key, but the ball hit the front of the rim and bounced away.

"Every year, when something like this happens early on (in the season), I want to let them play," Rabas said of his decision. "At times I think the defense gets set and they get what they want."

Koeper delivered a huge game, scoring 26 points on four three-pointers, six baskets in the lane and two free throws. The 6-foot-9 senior entered the game averaging nine points a game but made his first three shots from distance and had 15 points in the opening half while being guarded by 6-10 Ghosts senior Andrew Jensen, a DePaul commit.

"Tonight's a microcosm of what could be, because what he did tonight, we'd like to see on a consistent basis," Rabas said.

"They weren't guarding him on the perimeter and he got a couple of threes early, and he just has to keep being aggressive and finishing like he was tonight."

Neenah hit six three-pointers in the opening half and trailed just 29-28 at half-time.

"We knew they might not guard our bigs (on the perimeter) and we have confidence they can shoot the ball," Rabas said. "Jacob (Jungwirth) had one and Roan hit a bunch, so we wanted them to shoot the ball."

Schwalbach led Kaukauna (8-0 overall, 5-0 FVA) with 19 points, Jensen scored 15 and Jonah Roehrig had 14.

Jackson Rindt scored 10 points for Neenah and Schultz and Matthias Charles both had seven. The Rockets (6-4, 5-1) were 22-of-50 from the floor for 44 percent.

Neenah plays at Fond du Lac on Friday before facing conference contenders Kimberly and Appleton North next week.

Prep sports roundup

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Rockets pull away in second half for win

Neenah erupted for 41 second-half points to roll to an 80-64 win over Kaukauna on Tuesday night.

Rowan Klesmit scored 21 points to lead four players in double figures for the Rockets.

Ellie Buss finished with 19 points, while Farrah Danforth scored 13 and Sydney Michalkiewicz added 11.

The Rockets led by three points at half-time.

Over the holiday break, Neenah picked up a 59-48 win over Monona Grove at the JustAGame Fieldhouse in Wisconsin Dells.

Klesmit finished with 13 points and seven rebounds for the Rockets, while Buss and Danforth each scored 10.

Zephyrs easily topple Resorters

Autumn Crowe continued her torrid scoring pace for St. Mary Catholic, put-

ting up 29 points in a 75-28 win on the road against Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah on Tuesday night.

Crowe is averaging 27 points a game over her last four contests and upped her season-scoring average to nearly 21 points per game. She scored 22 points in the first half as the Zephyrs built a commanding 39-18 lead at intermission.

Luci Nackers added 13 points in the win and Piper Neubauer chipped in eight points off the bench for St. Mary Catholic.

The Zephyrs finished an impressive 20-of-24 from the free-throw line in the game.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Balanced effort carries St. Mary Catholic to win

Five players finished in double figures and the Zephyrs topped the 90-point mark for the second time this season in a 92-66 win over Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah on Monday.

Mason Uhlenbrauck knocked down six 3-pointers and finished with 23 points to lead the way for the Zephyrs, who improved to 9-3 overall with the win.

Max Vosters added 18 points for the Zephyrs, while Tarver Trinkner scored 15 points, followed by Luke Fairweather with 13 and Gavin Beck with 11.

Fairweather also had nine assists in the game.

Last Friday, the Zephyrs picked up a 71-54 win over state-ranked and previously unbeaten Wittenberg-Birnhamwood.

Vosters poured in a season-high 24 points - which included four 3-pointers - to lead the way for the Zephyrs. Dylan Brenn added 18 points and Uhlenbrauck finished with 17 points.

St. Mary Catholic finished a perfect 20-of-20 from the free-throw line in the win led by an 8-of-8 performance by Trinkner.

The Zephyrs also dropped a 65-64 decision at West Bend West last week, despite 16 points from Uhlenbrauck and 14 points and six assists from Fairweather. Vosters also reached double figures with 13 points.

Rockets fall to Redbirds in overtime

Neenah was unable to maintain a four-point halftime lead and fell in overtime to De Pere, 59-56, in a Wisconsin Basketball Yearbook contest at Concordia University during the holiday break.

Nick Schultz led the Rockets with 12 points with Jackson Rondy adding 11 off the bench for Neenah. Kolton Fleege finished with nine points and 11 rebounds for the Rockets.

Neenah also came up short in a non-conference tussle with Marshfield last Saturday, losing 57-45 to the Tigers.

The 45 points was the Rockets lowest output of the season.

Xavier Bezares was the lone player in double figures for the Rockets with 13 points. Schultz finished with nine and

SEE **Prep roundup** ON PAGE 9



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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 8

Roan Koeper had eight.

BOYS WRESTLING

Rockets finish third at On The Water Classic

Declan Koch claimed the 165-pound title and Neenah had four wrestlers grab top-five finishes overall as the Rockets finished third at the prestigious two-day tournament.

The Rockets finished behind only Hortonville and Coleman in the 64-team tournament.



Koch

Koch pinned all five of his opponents en route to the title, stopping Cole Berth of Coleman in 2:32 in the title match. Two of his pins came in the first period and none of

Koch's matches lasted into the third period.

Landen Sheppard finished 5-1 and took third at 157 pounds for the Rockets. Four of Sheppard's five wins were either by decision or major decision and he beat Benjamin Miller of Wittenberg-Birnamwood 1-0 in the third-place match.

Broden Butzke and Kaden Roth each placed fifth for the Rockets. Butzke went 5-2 with four pins at 113 pounds, while Roth also had four pins in finishing 4-2 at 190 pounds.

Jaxon Ennis (138) and Brayden Milbrodt (215) each finished 10th in their respective weight classes, while Garrett Nedens was 12th at 126 pounds.

GIRLS WRESTLING

Kurszewski wins title at Bi-State Classic

Kylee Kurszewski finished 5-0 to claim



Photo by Melissa Ives

Neenah's Kylee Kurszewski works to roll an opponent to her back during a 126-pound match at the Bi-State Classic in La Crosse. Kurszewski went 5-0 at the tournament to claim the 126-pound title.

the 126-pound title at the Bi-State Classic held at the end of December in La Crosse.

Kurszewski topped Anna Behling of Bay Port 12-6 in the title match to earn the championship after rolling through the field at the two-day tournament. She recorded her first two wins by pin and then scored a 19-3 technical fall win in the quarterfinals. She notched another pin in the semifinals to reach the title match.

The only other wrestler to place for the Rockets was Amari Richard, who took sixth at 132 pounds. Richard finished 4-3 at the tournament with one pin.

HOCKEY

Rockets capture title at holiday tournament

Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha used a three-goal third period to knock off Stevens Point, 4-2, in the championship game of the NHM Holiday Tournament

last week.

The game was tied at 1 entering the third period when Mark Sutton gave the Rockets the lead with a goal off assists from Cartyr Simonson and Vinny Scholl. Preston Liedke then scored to make it a two-goal cushion with about four minutes left in the game

Macsen Selch and Liam Kelley assisted on the Liedke goal.

After Stevens Point cut the lead back to one, Scholl scored a short-handed goal with less than a minute to go to seal the win.

Zach Verhagen also scored in the game for the Rockets, while Drew Drach and Keegan Krueger added assists.

Matthew Nelson made 33 saves in goal.

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Michelle is a Menasha native who has been working for Westgor Funeral Home since September 2009. She is currently the President of the Fox River Valley Funeral Director Association and was a charter member of the Rotaract Club of Neenah/Menasha as well as a member of the Neenah Kiwanis Club.

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Senior Standout is brought to you by: **Nicolet NATIONAL BANK**

Krueger takes pride filling leadership role for Rockets

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

There are a number of individual letters that appear on the hockey jersey Keegan Krueger dons for every game.

Most prominently are the NHM that identifies the Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha co-op team he is proudly a part of. The Neenah High School senior is in his second season playing at the varsity level for the Rockets.

There is also the letter “C” that is displayed on his shoulder, signifying that Krueger is one of the two captains for the Rockets this season.

And as much as he values being a part of the program he grew wanting to be a part of, being able to skate around with that “C” is something special.

“It means everything. The ‘C’ is a big responsibility, but I am happy to have it,” Krueger said after a practice earlier this week. “Going from a little kid watching to being out there with all of the guys now. It’s everything I have ever dreamed of.”

Earning the captainship, which was announced after the season last spring, was something that Krueger was hoping for but wasn’t sure he would land the title.

“I wasn’t expecting too much because last year was my first year on the (varsity) team,” Krueger said. “At the end of the day, I want whatever is the best for the team.”

Krueger has played on the top defensive pairing for the Rockets all season, anchoring a unit that has allowed just 16 goals in 13 games while recording four shutout wins.

Krueger has also made his mark on the offensive end. He has five goals and seven assists already this season, topping his point production from last year already.

“I try to use my vision to the best of my abilities and try to make plays and produce when I can,” Krueger said. “I want to go out there and play my game and whatever comes from it, comes from it.”

Senior Standout
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Krueger has been adept this season at joining the offensive rush at times for the Rockets, which is a tricky proposition for defensemen.

Read the play right and jumping into the play can lead to a goal. Make the wrong choice and it could open the door for a scoring chance for the opponent.

“I definitely enjoy jumping up into the rush but you don’t want to lead the rush every time because if it falls apart you can have an odd-man rush going the other way,” Krueger said. “If I can slip in somewhere I will try to or if it’s more where I can see the forwards are doing what they are doing, I will try to stay back. You have to read and react.”

Entering the week, the Rockets had gotten off to a 12-1 start and were ranked fourth in Division 1 – a similar start to last season when the team finished 19-4-1 and made it within one win from the state tournament.

It was a disappointing finish to a memorable year.

“Last year was the most fun I have ever had playing hockey,” Krueger said. “Just coming out every day and working hard with your best friends. It was truly amazing. Being able to play in those big games gave me goosebumps.”

Krueger hopes to have more opportunities like that this season.

And there would be no better way to finish off his high school career than playing his final games in the Bob Suter LEGACY20 Arena in Middleton at the state



Neenah News

Keegan Krueger plays on the top defensive pairing for the state-ranked Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team and serves as one of the captains for the squad.

SEE **Senior Standout** ON PAGE 11

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Senior Standout

FROM PAGE 10

tournament. "You always try to look at one game at a time and getting better each and every day, but at the beginning of the year (going to state) definitely looked like a possibility," Krueger said. "We just have to make sure we are putting in the work. I think it's all up to us. It's about the effort we put in and the mental preparation we put in."

Krueger said he started playing hockey when he was five or six years old, following in the skate tracks of his father and uncle who both played.

It didn't take long for him to find a passion for the sport.

"I took to it right away. I wasn't necessarily ever the best player out there, but I always fit in," Krueger said. "My dad has had the biggest impact on me in hockey. He's always pushing me and sometimes getting under my skin a little bit but he's

also always there to give me a hug when something good happens."

There are plenty of players on the current NHM roster that Krueger has played with while growing up.

Those experiences of being on the ice together has played a role in the team's success.

"This team's been together since we were really young so it's definitely a positive on the chemistry side of things," Krueger said. "You can look on either side of you and trust the guys around you."

In some regard, this will be the last season of hockey for Krueger. He doesn't plan on continuing onto a junior league somewhere to eventually link up with a collegiate program.

Instead, he wants to dive headfirst into his education – he plans to attend UW-La Crosse next fall – with a long-range plan of eventually landing in law school.

On the other hand, completely stepping away from the ice is not on his "Things to do" list either.

"I will forever be playing hockey," said

Krueger, who plans to play on the club hockey team at La Crosse. "This sport has been my entire life."

In fact, he hopes to involve hockey with his career. His plans to study sports management in college with the law school studies allowing him to pursue a future as a sports agent or working in the front office of a franchise.

"I always wanted to stay in the sports industry," Krueger said. "I have always thought that law was a pretty cool thing and always wanted to stay in sports so

that's where the dots connected."

Before he gets to that, though, there is the unfinished business of his senior season and his hopes of helping lead his team to lofty heights.

"I remember going to the Alliant Energy Center (for the state tournament in 2019) and watching that Neenah team that was there and I would love to go and represent the city and the school at the state level," Krueger said. "It would mean everything to get to state. It would be a memory I would be telling my kids for years."

Obituaries

Celeste Hathaway

September 25, 1952 – December 22, 2025



As an honest, selfless, and caring matriarch, thoughtful friend, and passionate volunteer and leader, Celeste Hathaway sparkled in life and brought joy to many in her short 73 years.

Celeste was born on September 25, 1952 in Ames, Iowa to Roger Hathaway and Denese (Bredall) Hathaway. She lived in Milwaukee and Neenah, Wisconsin, then Kankakee, Illinois and returned to Neenah in 1969 for her senior year of high school. She was a member of the Quill and Scroll Honor Society, played guitar, and she modeled for a local bridal shop. Celeste attended University of Oshkosh studying Business and Psychology for two years before she married Dr. Richard Habighorst from 1972 to 2006. She became a legendary homemaker and business manager at Habighorst Chiropractic.

Her love for volunteering began at age 14 when she became a candy striper in a small hospital in Kankakee, Illinois and continued through high school. Then at Theda Clark Hospital in Neenah she served as a "Pink Lady" for four years before joining the Board of Directors and then became President of the Theda Clark Auxiliary, where she drove record membership. She continued volunteering for several organizations, including Altrusa of Oshkosh, and worked with the Oshkosh Police Department to support their K9 program, neighborhood watch, and National Night Out events.

Nicknamed "Diamond Lil", Celeste was a driver for the Habighorst Chiropractic mini grand-prix go-kart races in Menasha, Wisconsin in the early 1990s. Her claim to fame: she rhinestone studded the kart and made sure the team had stylish and studded duds and won the Hot Dog award but never led the team to a race victory.

Celeste brought her talents to several businesses over the years, including becoming a master hair stylist, a dispatcher for Winnebago County, and then as a new

accounts representative at North Shore Bank in Menasha.

She was a gifted hostess and planned several community celebrations and private events with artistic flair, and she was an active member of the Republican Party.

Celeste loved all animals, especially her dogs. She enjoyed working with cats, dogs, horses, an even llamas as an animal chiropractor assistant with a certification from the Wisconsin Chiropractic Association.

Celeste passed away on December 22, 2025 after a short battle with aggressive lung cancer; she beat a different lung cancer 8 years ago.

She is survived by her son Jonathon and Laura Habighorst and their son Ben, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, daughter Jodi (Habighorst) and James Bernicky and their children Gavin and Genavive Bernicky, Naperville, Illinois, brother Craig and Dawn Hathaway and their two children Paige Hathaway and Mason and Becca Hathaway, Colleyville, Texas, aunt and uncle Dana (Shroyer) and Gary Jansen, Mason City, Iowa, and her Westland Terrier Archie.

Celeste is preceded in death by son Travis John Habighorst, her parents, her grandparents Shirley (Lincoln) and Glen Hathaway, step-grandfather Harold Shroyer, and Dewey and Myrtle Bredall, her uncle and aunt Otto and Patsy Lehmann, her great grandparents Addison and Anna Lincoln, and her great-aunt and uncle Lenis and Raymond Willson.

The family would like to thank her friends, family members, and the staff at ThedaCare Hospice and Senior Stride for their care and concern as she faced hospice head-on for the past few months.

Celeste will be cremated and laid to rest in a private ceremony with immediate family this summer. In lieu of flowers or cards, kindly donate to the Oshkosh Humane Society or another animal rescue organization of your choice. Celeste's friends and family are asked not to mourn, but to shine on by celebrating and spreading kindness with their families and friends.

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Kid Scoop

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Here's a Greek fable by a man named **Aesop** about a race between a tortoise and a hare. It may surprise you who wins!

THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE



The hare ran so fast some of the words flew out of the story. Can you find where each word belongs?

- BLINKED
- CROSSED
- SNOOZING
- SLOWEST
- EASY
- SPRANG
- FASTEST
- WIN
- MORNING
- TIRED

There once was a hare who always bragged that he was the _____ animal in the forest.

"Not even the wind is as fast as me!" the hare would boast.

The tortoise got _____ of such bragging.

"We all have heard you talk and talk about how fast you are, but we have never seen you _____ I'll race you," said tortoise.



The hare laughed and laughed. "There's no way you can beat me! I am the fastest and you are the _____!"

The hare and the tortoise agreed to race the next _____.

They would race to a big tree down the road and around a bend. Many other animals came out to _____.

GO! The hare zipped off the starting line in a blur, leaving the tortoise in a puff of dust. The tortoise coughed, _____ her eyes, and took the first of her slow, steady steps.

The hare was soon way ahead, far down the road. The tortoise could hardly see the hare in the distance, but she wasn't worried.

As the hare rounded the bend in the road, he laughed and thought, "This is too _____! I'm going to rest. That tortoise is so slow that I'll get up in time and still beat her to the finish line!"



The hare laid down on the warm, soft grass and fell asleep! Later, when the tortoise walked right by the _____ hare, he didn't

wake up. The tortoise didn't stop. She just kept walking her slow and steady pace.

When the tortoise was nearly to the finish line, the hare woke up. Yawning and rubbing his eyes, he was shocked to see the tortoise



The hare _____ to his feet and ran as fast as he could to try catching up to her to _____ the race.

But by then it was much too late. The slow little tortoise _____ the finish line first. All of the forest animals cheered loudly for her!



About Aesop

Aesop was a storyteller. He lived about 2,500 years ago in ancient Greece. His favorite story to tell was a **fable**. A fable is a very short story with a **moral**, or a lesson to teach.

Aesop's fable *The Fox and the Grapes* tells about a fox who tries and tries to reach grapes on a high branch. Embarrassed by being unable to jump high enough to reach them, the fox walks off angrily, saying loudly that the grapes are sour and not worth the effort anyway.

Use the code to discover the moral of Aesop's fable *The Tortoise and the Hare*.

▲ = A	▲ = O	■ = and
● = C	■ = R	■ = D
▲ = E	▲ = S	■ = the
■ = I	▲ = T	■ =
■ = L	■ = W	■ =
■ = N	■ = Y	■ =

Extra! Extra!

Strike a Pose

Look at a photo in the newspaper. Can you make the pose of the person in the photo? How long can you hold the pose?

Standards Link: Value physical activity for enjoyment and health.

Kid Scoop Puzzler



There's Lots of Hares in There!

How many hares can you find in two minutes? Have a friend try. Who found the most?



Double Double Word Search

- TORTOISE
- BRAGGED
- FASTEST
- LAUGHED
- SLOWEST
- ASLEEP
- BOAST
- AESOP
- MORAL
- FABLE
- HARE
- BEND
- BEAT
- RACE
- WINS

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

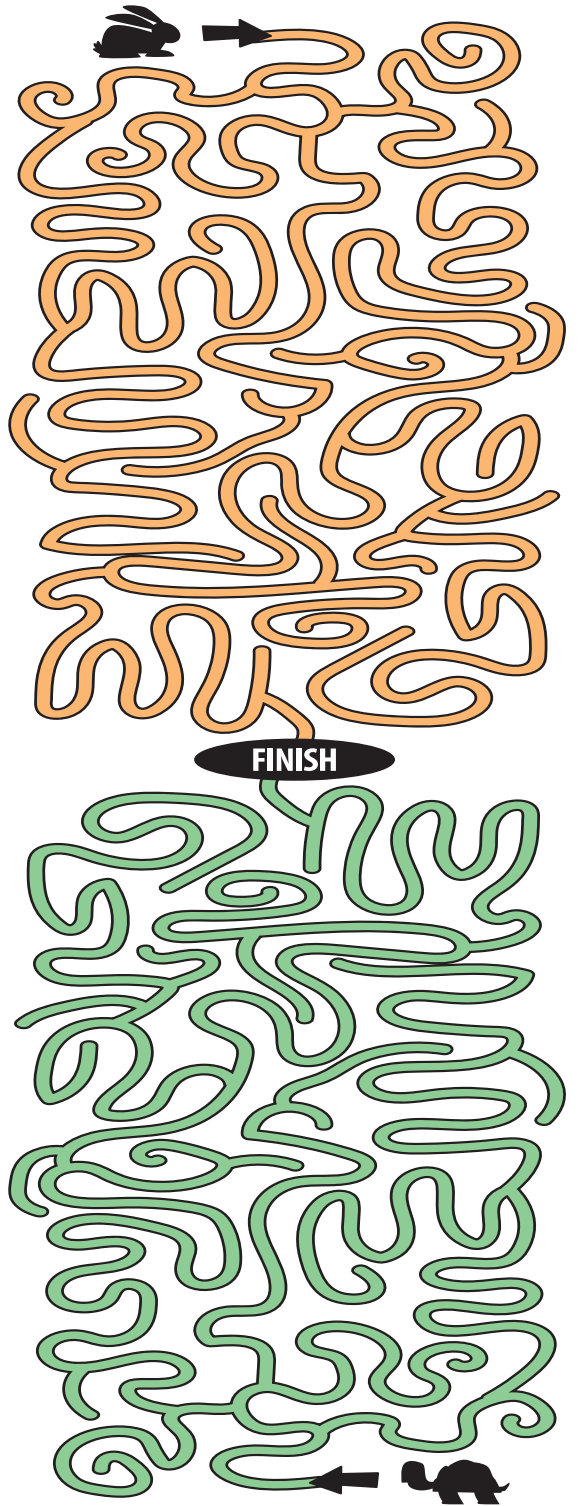
A	D	E	G	G	A	R	B	E	D
S	S	O	P	H	B	E	A	T	E
P	L	F	S	L	A	R	O	M	H
F	O	A	E	C	A	R	T	P	G
A	W	S	A	B	T	L	E	E	U
B	E	T	E	O	E	E	S	W	A
L	S	E	I	A	L	N	W	I	L
E	T	S	E	S	R	E	D	N	M
O	E	T	A	T	R	A	L	S	S

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



Kid Scoop Together: Ready, Set, GO!

One person is the hare and the other is the tortoise. Race against a family member to reach the finish line first.



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Write On!

Tortoise or Hare

Are you more like a tortoise or a hare? Why?