

Neenah News

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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

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INSIDE



Sweet music
Big Band Reunion set for performance
Page 9

State bound
Wendell carries on Neenah tradition
Page 13



Photo by Pamela Hart

Downtown shopping

Businesses throughout downtown Neenah such as Red Door Mercantile were busy with Future Neenah's Warm Your Heart event taking place on Valentine's Day. More than 350 attendees took part in the event during which donations were collected to stock First Presbyterian Church's Blessing Box. See story on Page 5.

Mayor looks back before stepping aside

By Patti Lee
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Outgoing Neenah Mayor Jane Lang is a woman content with her place these days.

After a lengthy process encompassing months, Lang decided in December against running for a second term.

"It was a back and forth," she admits. "It was like 'Yes, I'm doing this' and 'I don't know if I am.'"

There were conversations with her husband, Fred, with their kids and with community members.

"You don't want to feel as if you let anybody down," Lang said. "But, ultimately, as you get older you realize there are less years ahead than there are behind you. We're not promised anything but today. I want to spend it with my family."



Lang

But before that takes place, there's a major to-do list.

It has been quite the journey since Lang was inaugurated in 2022, the second woman mayor of Neenah. The whole country was confronted with the covid pandemic then and is still grappling with the financial, educational and public health fallout. As the city faced economic and labor issues that were beyond local control, Lang put focus on ideas and initiatives that could realistically be accomplished at the local level. Toward that goal the city undertook a cultural evaluation.

SEE **Mayor Lang** ON PAGE 8

New Fox Crossing Kiwanis Club set to serve community

By Eric Endres
NEENAH NEWS

Kiwanis, the organization known for helping children and communities worldwide, is starting a new club in Fox Crossing to provide a service boost and meet the needs of citizens wherever possible.

Club member Jean Long Manteufel said that Fox Crossing is a good-sized, strong community, but without a service club of its own, making this a "golden opportunity" to set one up.

"It just seemed like a really good place to open a club," Long Manteufel said. "So far, it really seems to be hitting very well."

Long Manteufel reached out to the Fox Crossing Police Department and contacts

she knows within different organizations in the community to gather support and get the ball rolling. The club is still in its early stages, putting on events this month to gain interest and momentum.

Kiwanis International began in Detroit in 1915 under its original name, the Supreme Lodge Benevolent Order of Brothers. The name was changed the following year to Kiwanis, a word derived from interpretations of possible expressions in the Algonquian Native American language that the founders took to mean, "we build."

Originally aimed at businesses, the club soon shifted gears to communities and primarily children. According to the

official Kiwanis website, there are now Kiwanis clubs in close to 80 nations and geographic areas, and over 7 million service hours are performed by the "Kiwanis family" each year.

Locally, Kiwanis sponsors the Neenah Key Club and St. Mary's Key Club — service clubs comprised of high school students. Kiwanis is also involved with the Center for Grieving Children (a program from The Boys & Girls Club of the Fox Valley), Easterseals, the Old Glory Honor Flight, highway cleanup and more.

"Where do we see a need, and what do we want to do?" said Long Manteufel.

The new club held an informational event with a lunch provided by Miron

Construction hosted at the company's Neenah facility on Tuesday.

Another organizational event is taking place at noon on Feb. 24 at the Fox Crossing Municipal Complex, located at 2000 Municipal Drive in Neenah. Lunch is provided, and part of the meeting's purpose is to gather ideas for how the club can move forward more officially, including when and where to meet regularly. Anyone interested in learning more or being a part of the club is welcome to attend.

"The club gets to define itself" and what it wants to be, Long Manteufel said of these initial events.

SEE **Kiwanis club** ON PAGE 10

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Corrections

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

About the newspaper

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

Neenah News is owned by Winnebago Media Group, Inc., 36 Broad St. Suite 300, Oshkosh, WI, 54901. 920-385-4512.

Ridener named historical society's executive director

Neenah News

The Neenah Historical Society has named Miranda Ridener as its new executive director.

Ridener has served as the museum coordinator since April 2024 and currently serves as the interim executive director.

Former executive director Erica Suchyta resigned earlier this year.

Ridener has a deep passion for local history through preserving objects and historical documents. Her background in archives brings a strong sense of museum collection management to the Historical Society.

She has a bachelor's degree in history and dance from Anderson University in Indiana and a master's in Public History from Loyola University, Chicago.



Submitted photo

Miranda Ridener has been named the executive director of the Neenah Historical Society.

Just Dance event raises funds for nonprofits

Neenah News

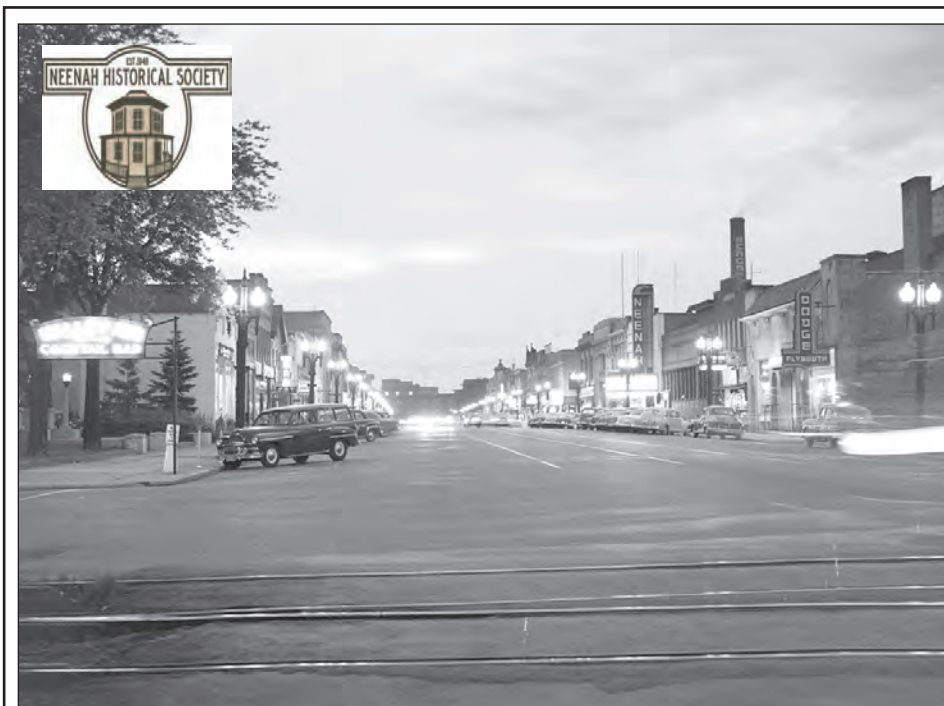
Several dancers and nonprofit partners from the Neenah area will be among those taking part Saturday in Just Dance at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.

The event pairs 10 community leaders with professional dancers to raise funds for nonprofits across the Fox Valley. Thanks to underwriting from the U.S. Venture/Schmidt Family Foundation, 100% of donations go directly to partici-

pating nonprofits.

The dancers and nonprofit partners include Heather Beresford, Plexus Corp. – Fox Cities P.A.C.; Jodie Larsen, Oshkosh Corporation – Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin; Jake Bergstrom, Bergstrom Automotive – Boys & Girls Brigade and Kathi Seifert, Katapult Group – Fox Valley Humane Association.

For more information, go to fundraise.givesmart.com/vf/JustDance or facebook.com/JustDance.



Neenah Historical Society photo

Neenah downtown 1954

Looking west down Wisconsin Avenue in Neenah at night shows the bright sign of the Valley Inn and the Cocktail Bar, along with the Neenah Foundry lamps that lined downtown.



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Calendar of events

Friday, Feb. 20

Michael O'Connell: The Current Collection Opening Reception, 5 p.m., The Hang Up Gallery of Fine Art, 204 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Saturday, Feb. 21

"Translators" Film Viewing, 10:30 a.m., Neenah Public Library

A Night at the Old Valley Inn – Annual Fundraiser for the Neenah Historical Society, 6 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Neenah

Sunday, Feb. 22

Dan Larson Trio, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Wednesday, Feb. 25

An Evening with Tailspin author John Armbruster, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Thursday, Feb. 26

Wisconsin World War II Prisoner of War Camps presented by Robert Block, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Saturday, Feb. 28

Northeast Wisconsin Chinese Association Spring Bazaar for Chinese New Year, 3 p.m., Neenah High School

Child Care Resource and Referral presents Fairy Tale Ball "Magical Memories," 6 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton, Neenah

Crystal Ball Gala for Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass, 7 p.m., The Ballroom at The Reserve, 116 S. Commercial St.

Wednesday, March 4

Senior Safety and Scam Prevention Education Session, 3:30 pm, Valley VNA Senior Care, 1535 Lyon Drive

Thursday, March 5

St. Mary Catholic High School Theatre Department presents Into the Woods, 6:30 p.m., Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center

Tailspin author will discuss book

Neenah News

Wisconsin author John Armbruster will discuss his book Tailspin at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Neenah Public Library.

Tailspin is the true story of Gene Moran, a World War II tail gunner who survived a four-mile fall without a parachute only to land in enemy hands. This presentation includes video, slides and readings.

A talk with the author will follow after the presentation. Books will be available for sale and signing. No registration is necessary for this free event.

The event will be held in the Shattuck Room.



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Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Afrofusion dance

Coolidge Elementary students participated in an Afrofusion dance last week led by four students from the Lawrence University Afrofusions dance group. The genre emerged between the 1970's and 2000's and has a modern sound that seamlessly incorporates elements of reggae, dancehall, hip-hop and electronic beats. The group also led an Afrofusion dance at Neenah Middle School.

NJSD participating in hygiene supply drive

Neenah News

The Neenah Joint School District is collaborating with local school districts and community agencies to participate in The Family Radio Network's "Help for the Homeless Hygiene Drive."

Donations of personal care and cleaning products will allow local crisis agencies, including schools, to focus their limited financial resources on other essential services. The drive will take place from Feb. 22 to March 13.

The most urgent needs include soaps such as laundry, hand, shower gel and 2-in-1 shampoo; trash bags; diapers and pull-ups (size 4-6); deodorant; wipes; toilet paper; paper towels; tampons and feminine pads.

Each NJSD site will host a donation box in a common area, inviting staff members, parents, students and friends to contribute.

All donations will directly support NJSD families.

NHS DECA students will compete in state conference

Learning, networking opportunities offered

By Eric Endres
NEENAH NEWS

Students from Neenah High School's DECA program are headed to the State Career Development Conference (SCDC) in Lake Geneva next week.

DECA is an international organization that on its official website states its mission as preparing "emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe."

Within Neenah High School (NHS), it's a co-curricular activity offering interested students an opportunity to see and participate in real-world scenarios to learn what might be possible in those vocations. DECA can also prepare college-bound students who may be interested in studying those fields ahead of a future career.

There are 27 DECA students at NHS under the advisory of Benjamin McDonald and Kyle Falk. McDonald and Falk said 19 DECA students competed at the District Conference event in January, with nine of those students qualifying for the SCDC, taking place Monday through Wednesday.

The conference promises a learning environment along with competitive components.

McDonald and Falk said the students will compete in a Role Play Event and a

Prepared Event. The former involves two role plays presented to a judge, as well as a 100-question exam.

The latter involves students preparing a business plan or advertising campaign that includes an element submitted ahead of time, plus a presentation at the conference.

"Students have access to previous years' tests and role plays," McDonald and Falk said of their students' preparation for the conference. "Additionally, this year's leadership team organized some social events for our members that included opportunities to practice role-play with an experienced member."

The SCDC is the second event in the competitive DECA season, with the District Event in January preceding it and the DECA International Career Development Conference (ICDC) later wrapping it up.

This year, the ICDC takes place April 25 through 28 in Atlanta.

But first, the SCDC, which McDonald and Falk hope will be a valuable experience for their students regardless of the competitive outcomes.

"We are always hoping for competitive success and for our members to be recognized on the awards stand, but the conference offers more," they said. "With over 1,500 students in attendance, it is a great opportunity for our members to network, meeting and learning from students from other chapters around the state. The energy and ideas the students come back to Neenah with are what fuel our next year."

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Submitted photo

Colorful addition


The STAR program mural project was completed last week at the Winnebago County Jail. The mural is intended to provide a lasting reminder in a relatively colorless room of both the darkness of addiction and the hope that participants are working toward. Participants in the program worked with deputies, Solutions Recovery and Department of Human Services staff on the project in partnership with the sheriff's office, JEK Foundation and Oshkosh Area Community Foundation. STAR, which stands for Sobriety Treatment Assisted Recovery, helps individuals booked into the jail by offering a recovery pod if they're wishing to get sober.



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Child Care Resource & Referral presents:

2026 Fairy Tale Ball

"Magical Memories"



February 28th, 2026
6:00 pm- 8:30 pm

At DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Neenah
Ticket price: \$25 per person, \$30 at door

- Fairy Tale & Superhero Character Appearances
- Music, Dancing, & Photo Opportunities
- Face-Painting, Games, & Refreshments
- Raffles & Giveaways

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FTI passes on purchase of former UWO-Fox Cities site

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

Faith Technologies Incorporated (FTI) has decided not to purchase the former University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Fox Cities campus in Menasha.

In November 2025, FTI announced its intent to redevelop the campus into a national hub for workforce development and advanced technology training, pending a 90-day review. The Menasha-headquartered company completed its due diligence and announced Tuesday that acquiring the campus was not in its best interests and it will look at other potential sites.

"This was always an exploratory process, and we understand there were no commitments that FTI would take on the campus," Winnebago County Executive Director Gordon Hintz said. "We appreciated their thorough due diligence and the thoughtful conversations throughout the process. FTI's feedback and assessment give us a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist as we work to redevelop and repurpose the Winnebago Fox campus."

While FTI is not interested in purchasing the campus, the company plans to explore future collaborative opportunities at the campus including leasing space and working with organizations focused on innovation and technical training, said Charlie Fredrickson, FTI executive vice president.

Prison financial literacy program wins award

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

A program created in Winnebago County to educate prisoners about financial matters before their release won the 2025 Governor's Financial Literacy Award.

Reentry Ready: Focus on Finances educates prisoners about basic financial and community resources, explains different concepts such as budgeting, dealing with debt and learning how to open a bank account. Prisoners typically attend workshops to help them prepare for re-entry into the general community about six months before their release date.



Wenzel

Todd Wenzel, human development and relationships educator for Extension Winnebago County, a division of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension, created the program in response to requests from staff and inmates from the Oshkosh Correctional Institution after gaining approval from the Madison Extension office.

Wenzel already taught the Rent Smart program, which is designed to help individuals find and maintain safe, affordable housing, at the prison and received a lot of personal finance questions during those

"Although the campus wasn't the ideal match for our growth plans, as an organization with teams across the country we are focused on finding a location that will best serve our team members today and for years to come, both locally and nationally," he said. "We are excited to explore supporting technical education and workforce development through new partnerships and initiatives."

Winnebago County took over sole ownership of the 43-acre UW-Oshkosh Fox Cities campus on July 1, 2025, after the university closed the two-year campus due to declining enrollment. Prior to that, Outagamie and Winnebago counties owned the site together under a 1970 agreement. Outagamie County sold the campus to Winnebago County for \$1 in May 2025.

Hintz said the county "will embark on a visioning and market assessment to help determine a future for that campus that adds to our tax base, preserves our community assets and contributes to workforce development and quality of life in our community."

The county will work to open the Communication Arts Center and field house to the public in the short-term, Hintz said. The campus is also home to the Barlow Planetarium and a child care center run by the Menasha Joint School District, which took over operation of the university's child care center.

classes. "There was a definite need out there for this information," he said. "If we can help people get started on the right foot financially when they leave prison, that can help decrease the recidivism rates."

Wenzel pulled the course together utilizing research-based information along with some tips from other programs, such as Rent Smart. The pilot class was held in 2022 at the Oshkosh Correctional Institution. After that, the program expanded.

Reentry Ready is a six-hour class spread over three days. The program helps attendees build strong money skills and answer financial questions they have before they are released from prison, such as finding out what's on their credit report or how to manage their money. About 12 people are enrolled in each class. About 400 participants have been through the class.

"In Oshkosh, we run the program about eight times a year and when we're not offering Focus on Finances, we are usually running the Rent Smart program," Wenzel said.

He said some inmates have been in prison for 20 years or longer and need to learn about the changes in technology and how that relates to banking.

"They don't know about smartphones and how they can be used to help with banking, that most checks are direct deposit, or you can pay bills online," Wenzel said. "It's things we take for granted that they've never heard of before."

After Wenzel rolled out the initial class in Oshkosh, seven other people were trained to teach the program in jails and prisons across Wisconsin. There is also a website with information covered in the class. Prisoners completing the class earn a certificate.

"It was gratifying to win the governor's award since this program is so new, but I feel this is great work that we're doing to help people prepare for life after they leave prison," Wenzel said.

House of Flowers



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Submitted photo

The late Chef David Bennett, who passed away at the age of 31 in 2024, helped to design, build and install the Blessing Box at First Presbyterian Church.

Blessing box seeks donations to serve community members

Neenah News

The Blessing Box located along Doty Street in front of First Presbyterian Church's drive-up circle is accessible to the public 24 hours a day as a way to serve those in need.

Community members may place donations directly into the box at any time. Because the box is not refrigerated, the church asks that no fresh, cold or frozen foods be included.

The Blessing Box was inspired by the church's Mission and Outreach Committee and was designed, built and installed in 2019 by church member, the late Chef David Bennett. It remains a lasting reminder of his generous spirit and caring heart.

Over the past seven years, donations have been faithfully sustained by members of First Presbyterian Church of Neenah, as well as many unnamed community members who regularly stop by to contribute. Throughout the years, several dedicated church members have also taken on the ongoing responsibility of stocking and maintaining the box on an almost daily basis.

The church is especially in need of pre-packaged, shelf-stable food items that are easy to open, ideally with pop-top lids, to better serve individuals who may not have access to kitchens or can openers. Suggested donations include granola bars, tuna or chicken pouches, single-serve pasta or soup cups, crackers, bottled wa-



Submitted photo

Donations can be placed in the Blessing Box along Doty Street in front of First Presbyterian Church 24 hours a day.

ter and fruit snacks. Travel-sized personal care items such as toothpaste, shampoo and shaving cream are also helpful and appreciated.

In addition to the Blessing Box, during the summer months picnic tables are placed in the church's green space at the corner of Church Street and Doty Street. This space is open to everyone in the community — whether they use the Blessing Box or not — as a welcoming place to enjoy a meal, fresh air or a moment of rest.

If someone wishes to donate items that need to be accepted in person, church office hours are typically 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:30 a.m. to noon Friday.

Event helps to bring business to downtown

By Pamela Hart
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Valentine's Day turned out to be a beautiful day for Future Neenah's Warm Your Heart event in downtown Neenah.

With over 350 attendees, businesses were busy serving soups, appetizers, sweets, drinks and snacks on a sunny Saturday afternoon.

Participants started at the Future Neenah office where they received a pink passion colored Neenah Sunset Hill Stoneware mug and a Warm Your Heart tote bag. After sampling their way through the 29 participating businesses, they had a chance to vote for their favorite sample in each category.

When all the votes were counted, Grainworks Old + New won the savory category with their pulled pork sliders. In the beverage category, Wilmar Chocolates earned the most votes for their Wilmar drinking chocolate. Two stores tied for the best sweet treats. Voters enjoyed Bill Paul Ltd's cranberry pear sauce and Elements Unleashed's bourbon cherry crisp.

Business owners appreciated everyone who stopped by to support them. The Cheese Table enjoyed the uptick in sales, especially as a new store downtown, noting that the event helps during this time of year when sales are slower following the holiday season.

Red Door Mercantile sponsored the event for the third consecutive year. Store owner Tina Palmer has been serving savory samplings for Warm Your Heart for the past seven years.

She initiated the idea for a winter event to bring people downtown for a day of fun and friendship. Future Neenah continues to provide excellent events such as this one throughout the year as an effective way to promote the local community, Palmer said.

Sara Hanneman, assistant executive director of Future Neenah, commented on the challenge store owners might have with Warm Your Heart and Valentine's Day, which is typically a busy shopping

Fairy tale ball supports early childhood education

Neenah News

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) invites families across the Fox Valley to step into a world of wonder at the first "Fairy Tale Ball: Magical Memories" from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Feb. 28 held at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Neenah.

The evening promises to be filled with enchanted fairy tale characters, music,



Photo by Pamela Hart

Businesses including Fibre were serving soups, appetizers, sweets, drinks and snacks as part of Future Neenah's Warm Your Heart event Saturday in downtown Neenah.

day downtown, happening at the same time.

However, employees didn't seem to mind the business. They enjoyed serving special treats and were grateful for the high volume of customers who visited their small businesses. Customers remarked on how friendly business owners are in Downtown Neenah and looked forward to the special event. For some, this is their favorite one every year with a variety of samples.

Future Neenah collects donations during the event for a local charity each year. This year, the First Presbyterian Church Little Free Pantry Blessing Box received non-perishable food, hygiene items and winter essentials from generous Warm the Heart participants.

This is the second time the church has been selected by Future Neenah to receive donations for their Blessing Box through the Warm Your Heart initiative, and they are grateful for the items received to help those in need.

dancing and whimsical entertainment — all in support of CCR&R's mission to empower families and child care providers by improving the quality and accessibility of early childhood education.

Tickets are \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door. All attendees age 2 and over must purchase a ticket. Tickets are available online at zeffy.com.

POSSIBILITIES TO GROW

Evergreen Fox Crossing, a vibrant new senior living community, is being developed for those who value connection and seek peace of mind.



You're invited to explore our new community and discover how thoughtful planning today can support the life you want tomorrow.

OSHKOSH:
Evergreen Worship & Performing Arts Center
1130 N. Westfield St., Oshkosh, WI

- Monday, March 2 | 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 10 | 10 a.m.
- Thursday, March 12 | 1 p.m.
- Monday, March 16 | 10 a.m.
- Thursday, March 26 | 1 p.m.

NEENAH:
DoubleTree by Hilton Neenah
123 E. Wisconsin Ave., Neenah, WI

- Thursday, March 5 | 10 a.m.
- Thursday, March 5 | 2 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 18 | 10 a.m.
- Wednesday, March 18 | 2 p.m.



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Photo from Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department

The Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department said multiple vehicles drove through the brand-new playground at O’Hauser Park.

Fox Crossing asks for help keeping parks safe

Neenah News

The Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department is asking for help in keeping the parks safe.

The department said multiple vehicles drove through O’Hauser Park on Sunday night, including right through the brand-new playground. The Fox Crossing Police Department has identified one of the individuals involved via video footage and is

working on identifying the others.

“Spaces like this are built for families, kids and our entire community to enjoy and it’s unfortunate that some have no respect for the hard work and money that goes into them,” the parks department said in a Facebook post. “It takes a community to build something special, and it takes a community to protect it. If you notice things that look suspicious, please say something.”

Organization launches campaign to recruit mentors

Neenah News

In collaboration with the NFL’s Inspire Change initiative, Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin is launching The Big Draft, an annual volunteer recruitment campaign to encourage more volunteers, particularly men, to become mentors (“Bigs”).

The campaign is inspired by the NFL Draft – as the NFL drafts the next class of players, Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin will draft its next class of “Bigs” to reach more youth on the waiting list for a mentor in East Central Wisconsin, with a goal of recruiting 75 “Bigs” in 75 Days.

The need for youth mentorship is critical in Winnebago, Outagamie, Calumet and Waupaca counties, as over 130 kids are on the waiting list – over 60% of those youth are young males. Through The Big Draft, Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin is shifting perceptions of mentorship and redefining the everyday moments that can make a big impact on the lives of young people.

“Our programs are focused on the youth we serve; however, mentors often benefit as much or more than their mentees,” BBBS CEO Jaime Kriewaldt said. “Being a mentor allows you to rediscover joy and playfulness – something we often forget about as adult life consumes us. Mentors don’t need to be heroes or professional athletes – they’re the everyday person you see in the mirror.”

To help incentivize recruitment, BBBS is adding in a “Refer a Friend Contest” to the campaign. Anyone who refers a friend or family member to become a mentor will be entered in a prize drawing for a \$100 gift card and mystery prize basket. Anyone, including non-mentors, can refer and are eligible to win. Referral entry is counted once an application and interview is completed. The winner will be drawn on May 6.

To learn more about becoming a mentor and what Big Brothers Big Sisters is doing to recruit volunteers, visit bbbsecw.org/the-big-draft-2026 or contact Jill Grambow, volunteer recruitment specialist, at 920-383-4901 or jgrambow@bbbsecw.org.

Adult program focuses on trip around the world

Neenah News

Bill Volkert, naturalist and retired wildlife educator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, will present “Journey of a Thousand Lifers” at 2 p.m. March 2 as part of an adult afternoon program at the Neenah Public Library.

The presentation will be about an around-the-world trip that Volkert and his wife Connie took from September 2014

through April 2015. Traveling nearly eight months, they covered 12 countries from southern Africa to India and Southeast Asia, sighting more than 1,300 species of birds and over a thousand lifers. They traveled 55,000 miles and took 35,000 pictures to capture their adventures.

The hour-long program will take place on the first floor in the Shattuck Community Room at the Neenah Public Library.



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Photo from St. Mary Catholic Schools

Leadership development

St. Mary Catholic Schools students participated in a SHE LEADS workshop Tuesday in the Leadership Center. The students meet bi-weekly at 7 a.m. to explore ways in which young women can live and lead boldly – discovering their courage and leadership potential. SHE LEADS is a nonprofit organization founded by Vicki Updike, a leadership coach, keynote speaker and lifelong advocate for women and girls.



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Neenah man reunites with nurse who saved his life

Yonkers survived heart attack four years ago

ThedaCare

Four years ago, a brief conversation with a good Samaritan at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah, likely played a key role in saving Mike Yonkers' life.

Yonkers, who volunteered at the hospital after retiring from a career in health care sales and marketing, said he was feeling out of sorts on that fateful December day.

"It was December 29. I had been volunteering for about an hour. I had just taken a patient up to the sixth floor and was walking back down the corridor to my station at the front door," Yonkers said. "That's when I began to feel pretty strong pressure in my chest and a little difficulty breathing."

He sat in a chair right outside the hospital's Cardiac Rehab department.

"Ironically, I was just trying to catch my breath in front of Cardiac Rehab. That's when this person came along. All I remember is this woman was in blue," Yonkers said. "She stopped and said, 'you don't look so good,' and she took my pulse."

A good Samaritan

The woman, it turns out, was former ThedaStar flight nurse Erin Rusch. The blue attire was her flight suit. She's now a team member in the ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah Emergency Department.

"She said, 'you really need to go to the emergency department. Let me walk you down there,'" Yonkers recalls. "She ended up walking me down there which was sev-



Photo from ThedaCare

Mike Yonkers was recently reunited with nurse Erin Rusch, who he credits for saving his life after she noticed him experiencing the symptoms of a heart attack four years ago. She walked him to the Emergency Department while he was volunteering at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah.

eral yards down the corridor."

It was a good thing Yonkers didn't refuse her help. It turns out he was having a heart attack.

On Valentine's Day of 2023, Yonkers underwent triple bypass heart surgery. Today he is healthy and back to volunteering at the hospital.

"But I never knew this person's name who found me in the hall and helped me," he said. "All I remember is the blue uniform. I asked around but nothing ever came of it."

Neenah college student dies in skiing crash

Neenah News

A University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh student was killed in a skiing crash Feb. 5 at Granite Peak.

The campus community is mourning the loss of Alexandria J. Blattner, 20, of Neenah, who held roles in various clubs and organizations.



Blattner

"On behalf of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, I extend our heartfelt sympathies to Ally's family, friends, classmates, and all who knew her," Chancellor Manohar Singh wrote in an email to students and staff. "We share in the profound sense of loss felt across our campus, and we stand ready to support Ally's family and loved ones in any possible way we can during this incredibly difficult time. This loss is felt deeply within our community. I encourage each of you to take care of yourselves and to look out for one another as we grieve together."

Sigma Sigma Sigma National Sorority said that Blattner was a member of the Ep-

ilon Kappa Chapter.

"She inspired others through her leadership and service, holding roles within Tri Sigma, UWO's College Panhellenic Council, and the Oshkosh Student Government," the sorority wrote in a social media post. "Our hearts are with our Epsilon Kappa sisters and Ally's loved ones during this difficult time."

Blattner was a 2024 graduate of Neenah High School. She was a sophomore at UWO studying pre-nursing and psychology.

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Until now. Yonkers and Rusch were reunited on Jan. 30. It was emotional, their first meeting since December 2022.

'I owe her my life'

"You can say I owe her my life," Yonkers said, dabbing a few tears. "My instincts would have been to sit there for a while, hoping things would get better. Who knows what would have happened?"

For Rusch, it was an opportunity to have all her questions answered about the stranger she aided four years ago.

"There was construction at the hospital at the time and I ended up going down a hallway that was not normally my typical pathway," she said. "As I was coming down the hallway, I saw Mike. His color didn't look good, he was breathing heavier, he seemed anxious and flustered and as I got closer it caused me a little concern. I got three steps past him and my gut was telling me I have to stop and ask if he is OK."

Yonkers told Rusch he was fine. He said he likely had a bit of indigestion. She didn't agree.

"I said, I just don't feel like you're OK," she recalled. "I offered to help him to the Emergency Department. Eventually, he agreed. We made it down to the Emergency Department and I watched him go to the registration desk before I left."

That was the last Rusch saw of Yonkers.

Reunited after four years

Now, four years later, she's happy to see her instincts were spot on and even happier that the stranger she aided four years ago had a positive medical outcome and is no longer a stranger.

"It's interesting because we don't always get follow up," she said. "It's been four years and in that time I've had the privilege of caring for hundreds of patients. To get a follow up up like this, years later is absolutely why we do what we do."

Yonkers and Rusch encouraged others to take action when experiencing symptoms that may be indicative of a heart attack including chest pain or tightness, shortness of breath, fatigue, heartburn and more.

"Take your symptoms seriously, even if it turns out to be a false alarm," Yonkers said. "It's worth taking the time and the effort to get checked out."



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Mayor Lang

FROM PAGE 1

“The question was how do we (city government) best serve Neenah,” Lang said. “We wanted to retain the first rate people who were contributing qualities and expertise we valued and also attract more of those people to come to work here. With talent at a premium, we wanted to figure out how to make this a great place to work.”

First up was employee feedback: How they perceived their role, what they enjoyed, what needed improvement and how to make the work culture better.

“It was vital input leading to ideas and initiatives not only for us but for the city at large,” Lang said.

That was a big undertaking in what would become a multi-faceted initiative – A Strategic Plan for the City of Neenah.

“Department heads were asked to lay out their priorities and goals for the next three to five years,” she said. “That’s a big ask.”

Aspirations and ideas from supervisors were honed and shared. The upshoot of this endeavor always came back to a sticky roadblock. With funding and talent at a premium, how does the city meet the challenge?

As Lang puts it, “You can have the lofty goal of ‘every park weed free’ but how would you staff that, where’s the funding?”

The answer always came down to the same thing. Engage Neenah residents to learn about and invest in their community. Inspired by the hugely successful volunteer program at the Neenah Public Library, (where there’s a volunteer waiting list), the Neenah Parks and Rec citizen volunteerism, and the “Service above Self” motto of the Rotary Club, the “Friends of

Neenah” idea began to congeal last fall.

“There’s so much benefit when a person recognizes a need and joins with a group of like-minded people to accomplish it,” Lang said. “When you invest yourself in your community – not just your tax dollars, because certainly nobody’s excited about that – but yourself, your time, your efforts, the benefits are beyond measure.”

Friends of Neenah is now in the process of observing similar programs in other cities and devising an organizational structure. Lang is determined to get it in play before the end of her term.

Friends of Neenah dovetailed into another community initiative: The Neenah “Citizen’s Academy.” The idea was fueled by a motivated summer intern, Nina Bhattacharjee, a Neenah High School senior and school board student representative. Bhattacharjee’s summer project was focused on learning as much as she could about how Neenah local government functions. She met with department heads and supervisors learning the functions of all 12 departments.

From going on an inspection with Community Development to learning how to operate the garbage and plow trucks at Public Works, the intern brought her findings back to collaborate with Lang and assistant Holly Miller. Together the trio developed a plan to share that information with residents, forming the bones of the academy’s curriculum.

The interactive eight-week program kicks off at 6:30 p.m. March 26 in the Council Chambers. While registration is closed for 2026, the weekly activities will be featured on the Neenah, Wisconsin Government pages on Facebook and Instagram, and in the quarterly Neenah Notes.

Lang is energized and committed to completing these initiatives. They are part



Submitted photo

Outgoing Neenah Mayor Jane Lang is preparing for the end of her term after announcing plans late last year not to seek reelection.

and parcel to what she considers the role of mayor to be.

“To me this is a job...a 24/7, 365-day job,” Lang said. “The mayor is the city manager. I absolutely want to give it my all. And I hope that I’ve accomplished some positive things for the city in the past four years.”

Lang knows intimately the important relationship of council, city management and constituent.

“There’s a certain level of knowledge and experience that comes from serving on city council” Lang said. “It’s one of the most important qualities for a mayor – possessing the skills and attitude that help you to work well with others. As an alderman for eight years, I was already building relationships with all the department heads here. These are the people you’ll work with side by side every day. You want to function as a team, establishing and retaining positive, healthy, respectful relationships. That’s what builds community.”

“Think of the decisions that people came together to make in the past,” Lang continued. “Decisions that have a lasting impact on us today. If, for instance, they voted down the purchase of Riverside Park in 1872, where would we be? Now it’s a part of our lives, such a beautiful community amenity. People had the foresight to recognize that both for themselves and for future generations.”

The idea that every resident is writing the city’s history each day has always been a north star for Lang. As she steps to the other side of the desk, the mayor is as dedicated as always to the community she loves. As to what she will miss most, Lang is misty eyed as she says, “It’s the team, the amazing, talented people who work here. It’s been such an honor and privilege to work with them. They all have such diverse ideas for their departments but they come together as a unit in order to serve the community we love.”

Lang emphasizes that she’s not going anywhere.

“I’m blessed to have grown up in Neenah, to live here,” she said. “There’s still much for me to do and I will continue to contribute to this great community. I will just play a new role.”

For Jane Lang, come springtime that role will be “Citizen.”

Candidate forum focuses on Neenah races

Neenah News

The League of Women Voters of Winnebago County is organizing a candidate forum to learn more about those running for election in the Neenah area.

The event will be March 12 at Neenah City Hall, 211 Walnut St. It will start at 6 p.m. with the Neenah Common Council, followed at 6:45 p.m. for the Neenah Board of Education and at 8 p.m. with

mayor of Neenah.

The forum will provide an opportunity to hear from the candidates. Anyone interested can attend in person or view the recording later with a link posted at LWVWinnebago.org.

Participants will respond to questions from the audience as well as those submitted prior to the forums by emailing wclwvinfo@gmail.com. Questions must be for all participants in a given race, should relate to public policy, must be respectful of all attendees and may be reworded for clarity and brevity.

The candidates for Neenah Common Council include in District 1 incumbent Cari Lendrum and challenger Brian Defferding.

Four candidates are running for three open seats on the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education. The candidates are Becky Heidke-Kwiatkowski, Christian Blanton, Samuel Roth and Tom Hanby.

Scott Becher and Brian Borchardt are running for mayor of Neenah

The forum is hosted by the League of Women Voters of Winnebago County and co-sponsored by LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities, the City of Neenah, Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education, the Doty Island Development Council and ESTHER Fox Valley.

For more information on what will be on the ballot and where to vote, go to myvote.wi.gov.

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Big Band Reunion continues to expand its horizons

Neenah News

Neenah and Fox Cities music aficionados know that from the end of September through Memorial Day some of the best music in Wisconsin is played from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on Monday nights at Cranky Pat's in Neenah by the Big Band Reunion.

Now in its 35th year, the BBR, under the leadership of co-directors Marty Robinson and Ken Skitch, is an 18-piece jazz big band comprised of some of the best musicians in Wisconsin. They have built a repertoire over the years that enables them to go an entire season without playing the same composition twice.

In addition to delivering consistent instrumental excellence every Monday night, "we try to have one special event per month," Skitch said. "We have a lot of regulars who come out and our audiences always enjoy it when we have special guests."

Over the years, the guests have included both instrumentalists and vocalists.

The special event Monday will be a first for the BBR as the band will feature three male vocalists, each performing four songs each.

"We're expanding our horizons," Skitch said. "We recently had a 'Diva Night' featuring two female vocalists, Christine Granatella and Erin Krebs, and it went great. We're going to open up the flood gates, and we'll be hoping for similar results."

"Anyone who's joined us really enjoyed it," he added. "They've had a blast."

The idea for this particular evening began as a conversation between Skitch, who is the BBR's lead trombonist, and BBR veteran tenor saxophone player, Mark TeTai.

"When we play our dance book at special events, we hire a singer, usually a female, to play with us," Skitch said. "Mark recently approached me about singing with the band."

The multi-talented Skitch, who sang lead vocals with legendary Wisconsin bands including Fat Brass and Nearvana,

had been thinking about "getting back out front of the band after 20 years."

"It's a spot I've enjoyed before, and I want to feel it again," he said.

The conversation expanded as Skitch and TeTai spoke of vocalist George Halas, who has appeared with the BBR many times over the years.

"We've had George before, and we'd love to have a return engagement," Skitch said. "We both thought adding George would fill out the evening and make it a special night."

"It's consistent with the mantra of the band," he added. "Old, new, slow, fast, jazz, funk, blues and all styles throughout an evening. We have three vocal styles — I've got the pop, George covers the blues and rock side and Mark will be singing more traditional big band arrangements and quite a range of tunes. It should be a fun evening."

Each of the three singers will perform a three-song set and will return for an encore.

Skitch's four offerings will be selected from a list that includes "This Masquerade," "Late In The Evening," "You Don't Know Me," "Fly Me To The Moon," and "Sir Duke."

In terms of style, "I've been influenced by a lot of singers and I try to adapt my singing to emulate the singers that made the song famous but I do have my own aspects," Skitch said. "Singing Stevie Wonder is different than singing a Paul Simon tune. Of course, there is only one way to sing "This Masquerade."

TeTai's songs will be drawn from a list that includes "When I Fall In Love," "Night and Day," "All of Me" and "Our Love Is Here To Stay."

"Mark has a real smooth approach and his style has some Spanish influence from singing with Salsa Manzanera, so it's a Latin and jazz combination," Skitch said. "He's a kinda laidback person and that will come through in his music."

Halas will sing "Does Anybody Really

Know What Time It Is?" "Stormy Monday," "God Bless The Child" and "Come Fly With Me."

"George is a fan of many styles and he approaches the music from the perspective that he doesn't want to sound like the original," Skitch said. "He sings from the heart. He makes it his own, and he really enjoys what he sings."

"Singing with the BBR is an incredible experience," Halas said. "The band generates a powerful energy that invites a singer to hop on and enjoy the ride. The synergy is most uplifting, very enjoyable and draws the audience into the fun."

"The band is very excited," Skitch added. "We've been talking about it for a month."



Submitted photo

Big Band Reunion co-director Ken Skitch will be among the vocalists who will each be performing four songs as part of a special event Monday.



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Submitted photo

Mark TeTai, who plays the tenor saxophone for the Big Band Reunion, will be one of the vocalists during Monday's performance.



Submitted photo

Fox Crossing Kiwanis club members held a recent meeting at Stuc's Pizza.

Kiwanis club

FROM PAGE 1

"It'll be up to the club where they're going to meet and how often they're going to meet," she said.

Long Manteufel said she hopes the club reaches 30 members who can come up with ideas to serve Fox Crossing. Anyone looking to learn more or be part of the

group can visit the club's Facebook page (facebook.com/FoxCrossingWIKiwanis), email membership@kiwanis.org, call Long Manteufel at 920-585-7769 or show up at one of the meetings.

"Members are welcome, ideas are welcome," Long Manteufel said. "Bring us your thoughts and your challenges, and let's see what we can do as a community to solve problems and have fun, 'cause it is fun to volunteer."

Brucks named Wisconsin Horseperson of the Year

Neenah News

Katie Brucks of Neenah has been named the 2026 Wisconsin Horseperson of the Year, an honor presented by the Wisconsin Horse Council in recognition of her contributions to the state's equine community.

She was also awarded the special achievement award for her equestrians with disabilities equestrian team.

Brucks is known for her dedication to horsemanship, education and advocacy, with a particular focus on inclusivity and opportunity within the horse industry.

Through her work at Lucky Stables in Neenah, she has created programs that serve riders of all ages and abilities, including equestrians with disabilities, while promoting strong fundamentals, sportsmanship and lifelong learning.

The Wisconsin Horseperson of the Year award recognizes individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership, service and commitment to advancing the horse industry in Wisconsin. Brucks' impact spans competitive equestrian sport, youth education, community outreach and mentorship, making her a positive and influential presence across multiple disciplines.

"I am incredibly honored and humbled to receive this award," said Brucks. "Wisconsin has an amazing equine community, and I'm grateful to be part of a state where horse people truly support one another. This recognition belongs to the horses, students, families and professionals who have trusted me and shared this



Submitted photo

Katie Brucks of Neenah was named 2026 Wisconsin Horseperson of the Year.

journey."

In addition to her hands-on work, Brucks is known for her advocacy for ethical horsemanship, rider safety and access to quality instruction.

Her passion for education and her willingness to support others have made a lasting impression throughout the Wisconsin equine community.


The Wisconsin Horse Council will formally recognize Brucks during its 2026 awards celebrations at the Midwest Horse Fair April 19 in Madison.



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Neenah News

Left: Sturgeon Spirits General Manager Todd McLean serves up a cocktail. Right: Sturgeon Spirits was serving up drinks and food on the ice of Lake Winnebago over the weekend as the sturgeon spearing season got underway.

Full-service cocktail bar pops up on Lake Winnebago

By Dave Gill
NEENAH NEWS

Latitude: 44.01959.
Longitude: -88.49672.
Altitude: 741 feet.
Attitude: Spirited.

Those are the coordinates of and the demeanor at Wisconsin's first legal full-service cocktail bar. The bar on the ice one mile east of Oshkosh off Merritt Avenue on Lake Winnebago was launched by Sturgeon Spirits Craft Distillery during the first weekend of sturgeon spearing.

Sturgeon Spirits founder and owner Karl Loewenstein said having a cocktail bar on Lake Winnebago has been a dream of his even before his hobby became Sturgeon Spirits Craft Distillery about three years ago.

"This has been a dream I've had from the very beginning," Loewenstein said.

"I love sturgeon season, I love the lake and to be able to take my hobby – which became my new second business – is just amazing and exciting."

"When we opened in February 2023, it wasn't just a business launch," Loewenstein continued. "It was a deliberate alignment with a 94-year-old calendar. To celebrate three years by finally 'cutting in' our own place on the ice feels like a homecoming. It's a nod to the patience and persistence that both the sturgeon and this community have shown for generations."

On a very busy Sunday afternoon, a couple of Bar on Ice patrons braved their first ever sojourn onto a frozen lake to soak in the atmosphere and a couple cocktails.

"Never, I'm still scared," said Nick Trapp when asked if he'd ever been on

a frozen lake before. "But when I heard there was a pop-up bar a mile out on Lake Winnebago, we had to give it a shot."

"I've never ice fished before," said Trapp's girlfriend Bailey Winters.

But that didn't stop her and Trapp from driving to Bar on Ice to order some Bloody Spears (cranberry vodka and Sprite) and taking a few minutes to enjoy a relatively warm Sunday on two feet of Lake Winnebago ice on some comfortable outdoor furniture.

Loewenstein said Bar on Ice hours will resume this weekend at the same location for the 19th annual Battle on Bago, with hours scheduled from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. with free coffee from 6 to 9 a.m.

But if last weekend is any indication, those hours could be extended due to popular demand.

Last Saturday Loewenstein said they were open past 4 p.m. and at one point even ran out of cups to necessitate a trip back to shore to re-supply.

To get permission to have the first legal cocktail bar on Lake Winnebago was an adventure unto itself, with Town of Oshkosh Board Chairman Jim Erdman and the town board coming to the rescue.

"I must have put more than 100 miles on my car," Erdman said.

He was trying to figure out whether

the Town of Oshkosh had jurisdiction to issue such permission.

So, after many miles, phone calls and research, Erdman and the Town of Oshkosh board gave its stamp of approval, which allowed Sturgeon Spirits to officially apply for a temporary license from the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue to make Bar on Ice a reality.

As crowds gathered at Bar on Ice over the weekend, a separate entrepreneurial spirited enterprise set up nearby with a big red and yellow sign that read "Hot Food." The outfit, called The Snack Shack (brats, hot dogs, hamburgers), even had a mini billboard on the lake road pointing toward the "Hot Food" and the Bar on Ice.

At the Bar on Ice, customers had many sturgeon spearing themed cocktail options to choose from, including Bloody Spear (cranberry vodka and Sprite), Sturgeon General (bourbon and Coke), Ice Hole (blood-orange gin and Squirt), Fish Whistle (chocolate liqueur and root beer) and Bottom Feeder (blackberry brandy or vodka, honey and root beer).

"It is the perfect moment to have the first Bar on Ice in Wisconsin," Loewenstein said. "This is fulfilling a dream I've had from the moment I got the idea for the distillery."

Plans set for Winter Battle on Bago

Neenah News

The 19th annual Winter Battle on Bago is set with activities this weekend.

Fishing will take place on Lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne and Poygan. Anyone fishing in areas that are off-limits will be automatically disqualified from the tournament.

The tournament headquarters is located on Miller's Bay in Menominee Park. The heated tent will include music, food and prizes with free admission. No fishing tickets are required to join the fun in the tent.

Over 425 fishing prizes are scattered throughout the rankings and 130 raffle prizes with winnings such as a brand new truck, cash prizes, gift cards and more – totaling over \$475,000 in prizes between the two raffles.

The tournament begins at 6 a.m. today when ticket sales end. Scales will be open for weigh in from 4 to 8 p.m. A fish fry will take place from 5 to 10 p.m. with live music featuring Glam Band from 7:30 to 11 p.m.

Scales will be open at 8 a.m. Saturday and participants must be in line by 2 p.m. Music will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. with fishing prizes announced at 4 p.m. and raffle prizes announced at 5 p.m.

In 2007 five members of the Oshkosh Southwest Rotary came together to create the event after seeing the growing issue of youths being stuck behind a television or computer screen. They decided to rally the community to help fund efforts to get youths up, outdoors and involved in local conservation efforts. Since its inception, Battle on Bago has generated net proceeds of nearly \$2.6 million.

With over 12 different service groups and organizations working the fish fry and bartending, it's an event that includes a wide range of organizations. In addition, Battle on Bago donates fish to many local organizations and nonprofits within the area such as the food pantry and Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services.

More information is available at battleonbago.org.

Winnebago ice report

By Jim Nobbe
PAYNE'S POINT HOOK & SPEAR FISHING CLUB

Due to the recent rainfall and warm weather, we are going to pull our truck bridges off no later than 7 a.m. Thursday.

If you are relying on our truck bridges to get out to your sturgeon shack or fishing, I would suggest you either pull your shack or come up with a different route to get to it. We plan to have an update later Wednesday

day or first thing Thursday morning on where our ATV and UTV bridges will be placed for the coming weekend. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Also, please drive SLOW when approaching shore.



Local college graduates

The following students from Neenah were among 900 graduates from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in December:

Matt Cartwright, biology - BS
Brayden Gullickson, accounting - BBA
Layla Heger, business administration - MBA

Adam Steckbauer, Magna Cum Laude, accounting – BBA

The following students from Neenah were among the 534 graduates from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point for the fall 2025 semester:

Tiffany Krajnik, Bachelor of Fine Arts, interior architecture

Rachel McNeely, Bachelor of Fine Arts, interior architecture

Ethan Thiel, Master of Business Administration, app leadership and decision making

The following students from Neenah were among the 628 graduates from UW-Eau Claire this fall and winter:

Ella Buksyk, nursing, BSN

Jason Fisher, Arts and Sciences, BS, geospatial analysis and technology

Emma Gordon, Health and Human Sciences, BSW, social work

Kenzie Hayes, business, BBA, marketing

The following student from Neenah was among the 305 graduates receiving degrees from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls during fall commencement in December:

El Popp, BS, conservation and environmental planning, Cum Laude

The following student from Neenah was among the graduates from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in December:

Wiley B. Zirbel, Bachelor of Science, finance

The following student from Neenah was among the graduates from the University of Minnesota Duluth in the fall semester 2025:

Aaron Nussbaum, mechanical engineering B S M E

Zephyrs can't get past hot-shooting Winneconne

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

St. Mary Catholic's success on the girls basketball court has been founded in its defense.

Over the past five seasons, the Zephyrs had allowed 70 or more points just six times and in only three of the last 10 seasons, St. Mary Catholic has allowed multiple teams to hit the 70-point mark.

In fact, only once in the past 10 seasons has a team scored more than 80 points in a game against the Zephyrs.

As good as St. Mary Catholic is on that end of the court, though, sometimes it just doesn't matter.

The Zephyrs ran into a hot-shooting, athletic Winneconne squad on Tuesday night and suffered just its third loss of the season in a 93-70 contest at Winneconne High School.

"The biggest aspect of our team is our defense and we could have done better tonight," said junior Autumn Crowe. "They just came out on fire and we needed to step up. We brought effort but I think we could have closed out harder and tried to get them to hit less 3s."

The Wolves, who have fluttered in and out of the Division 3 state rankings this season, shot a whopping 63 percent from the floor in the game and knocked down 7-of-9 from 3-point range.

St. Mary Catholic did force 22 turnovers in the game, but couldn't overcome the Wolves' torrid shooting.

"We have some things to work on," St. Mary Catholic head coach Jeff Chew said. "We just have to move on and improve on a few things."

The two previous losses for the Zephyrs, who entered the week as the top-ranked team in Division 4, have come against teams – Oostburg and Laconia – who reached the WIAA State Tournament last season.

Winneconne lost to eventual Division 3 state runner-up Xavier at sectionals a year ago.

"We can learn from this because Winneconne is obviously a good team," Crowe said. "We'll look forward and try to get better and try to get to state."

Things couldn't have gotten off to a rougher start for the Zephyrs, who tallied only a Bitsy McCauley layup over the first four minutes as Winneconne jumped out to a 14-2 lead.

Luci Nackers' lay-in sparked a quick spurt for St. Mary Catholic as Lucy Norville followed with a basket and Gabby



St. Mary Catholic players Lucy Nackers (15) and Lucy Norville (right) battle for a rebound during the first half of Tuesday's nonconference loss to Winneconne.

Guerrero drained a 3-pointer to pull the Zephyrs within five.

Following a Winneconne basket, Crowe knocked down a 3-pointer to trim the deficit to 16-12 with just under 11 minutes left in the half – but that was as close as the Zephyrs would be the rest of the night.

The Wolves put together an 11-4 run to take their first double-digit lead of the

game at 27-16 before a Guerrero 3-pointer stemmed the tide. Nackers then scored the Zephyrs' next nine points over a 2½-minute span to keep St. Mary Catholic within 10 points, however, Winneconne was able to extend the lead to 44-29 at halftime.

"It is really tough (to play from behind)," Crowe said. "As a team, we have to think that we are still in this and we can

keep going but it's hard to come back from that."

The Wolves throttled any chance of a Zephyr comeback early in the second half, holding St. Mary Catholic to just four points in the first five minutes as Winneconne's lead ballooned to 60-33.

SEE **SMC girls** ON PAGE 15

Rockets can't hold off Cardinals in close FVA home loss

By Joe Matzek
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

After losing for the second time in three games, the Neenah boys' basketball team is running out of time to find answers.

Coach Lee Rabas sent out various lineups Tuesday night, but the Rockets lost their lead in the final minute and fell 51-49 at home to Fond du Lac.

"Just trying to find a combination that could play and be effective," Rabas said.

Rabas never found a solution. Neenah, which entered the game tied for third with Kimberly in the Fox Valley Association standings, led for much of the evening, but its largest lead against the sixth-place Cardinals was five points.

The Rockets (14-8 overall, 11-5 conference) still led 49-46 after Matthias Charles sank two free throws with just over a minute remaining. But that was Neenah's last points of the game.

After Fond du Lac's Keondre Schaeferkoetter drove for a layup, Neenah passed the ball around in the frontcourt with a one-point lead. The Cardinals' trap was successful, forcing a turnover followed by a Neenah foul with 11.2 seconds to play.

"We went 5-of-10 from the free-throw line and we threw the ball away when they were trying to foul," Rabas said.

Jensen Jacobitz made two free throws to put the Cardinals up 50-49, their first lead since 25-24 early in the second half.

Nick Schultz drove toward the basket to try to give Neenah the lead, but he was stopped by two defenders and his shot was blocked.

Jacobitz grabbed the rebound, was fouled and hit one of two free throws, and the Rockets couldn't get off a shot before the buzzer sounded.

When Rabas settled on a small lineup

for much of the second half, it gave the 6-foot-5 Jacobitz chances near the basket, and he capitalized by scoring 15 of his 20 points after halftime.

Schaeferkoetter took advantage of some openings in the lane to score 10 of his 13 points in the second half as Fond du Lac (7-15, 7-9) stayed in the game by making three three-point plays.

"The bottom line was we kept letting them get to the basket," Rabas said.

Both teams struggled to find openings offensively at times during the game, making for some long possessions. Neenah led 22-19 at the half.

Neenah made just 2-of-13 three-point attempts and only 5-of-10 free throws, but was 19-of-28 from inside the arc. Charles paced Neenah with 13 points, Schultz had 11 and Kolton Fleege scored eight.

Fond du Lac hit just 2-of-10 shots from distance, but made up for it by going 18-

of-23 on two-point shots.

The Rockets' loss followed two difficult games the previous weekend, a 64-51 loss to FVA leader Kaukauna and a 74-70 nonconference win over Wisconsin Rapids (4-16). Rabas said he was at a loss to figure out why the Rockets are struggling this late in the season.

Neenah plays at Kimberly on Friday, three days after the Papermakers won 64-57 at Kaukauna. The Rockets host the FVA's second-place team, Appleton North, next Thursday to end the regular season.

But regardless of their opponents, the Rockets will use those games to keep searching for a useful lineup, not just refining their game or making minor changes.

"Probably a full retool," Rabas said. "We'll retool for these last two games and give some other guys opportunities."

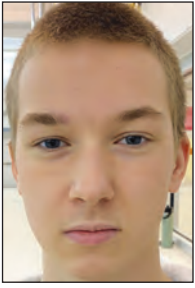
Wendell continues Neenah tradition of reaching state meet

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

Burke Wendell was pretty confident after last Saturday's WIAA Division 1 sectional swimming meet that he would be advancing onto state.

He just wasn't sure how many times he would have to get into the pool for the season's final event.

Wendell ended up qualifying in both the 100-yard breaststroke and 200-yard individual medley for Saturday's Division 1 races at the Waukesha South High School Natatorium and will continue Neenah's long-standing tradition of being represented at the state meet.



Wendell

"It was really important that we got at least one person to state," Wendell said before a practice earlier this week. "We had to keep that ball rolling."

Wendell will be the only Neenah swimmer at this year's event after the Rockets had competitors in five events total and two with multiple entrants.

Wendell was among that group last year, too, swimming on the 200-yard medley relay which finished fourth as well as joining the 200-yard freestyle relay which placed fifth.

Having that experience from last year will be a benefit for Wendell although it will be his first state meet as an individual.

"Coming off of going in two relays to going in two individual events it definitely feels a lot better," Wendell said. "I will have

a good feeling of what the pool is like and the atmosphere is nothing new where it's going to knock me off my feet and throw me off. It will be nice to have the experience backing me up and I will be able to go in knowing what's going to happen."

Wendell is seeded 10th in the 100-yard breaststroke after posting a time of 58.85 seconds at the sectional meet and will swim in one of the middle lanes of the second heat. He is less than a second out of being among the top six qualifiers.

It is the fifth straight year that Neenah has had a state qualifier and last year's swimmers in the event – Drew Gaerthofner took second and Tanner Trustem was eighth – definitely had an impact on Wendell.

"Watching how they swam and applying techniques from what they did to me, I feel like that helped a lot," Wendell said. "There were some direct tips but there wasn't a lot compared to just watching how they would swim."

Entering the sectional meet, Wendell was confident he could advance in the 100-yard breaststroke and raced to a second-place finish in the event.

He ended up taking fifth in the 200-yard individual medley earlier in the day and wasn't sure if that place and his time would be enough to move on to state.

"Coming off the 200 IM I was just thinking I was going to be right on the border of making it or not making it," Wendell said. "I had a feeling I was going to make. I was going through all of the (results from) other sectionals around the state and saw I was about 20th. Then the heat sheets came out for state and I saw I was in."

Wendell, who finished with a time of 2:00.77 at sectionals, hopes to come in below the two-minute mark and improve on his 20th seed at the state meet.

Neenah head coach Carrie Raeth believes that is possible since Wendell is still relatively new to the event.

"We were trying to figure out a second event and the 200 IM we thought would be a great race for him. He has room to improve in that one for sure," Raeth said. "It's a known fact that the (individual medley) is a breaststrokes race. No matter how far ahead you get in the backstroke and butterfly, some breaststrokes can catch up. But at state, there are a lot of great swimmers."

Wendell nearly had some company at the state meet as a pair of Rocket relays had strong races but came up just short of advancing.

The 400-yard freestyle relay team of Wendell, Gideon Benner, Ryker Zarda and Jack Kippa finished fifth in the race at sectional, but were a little more than six-

tenths of a second from grabbing the final qualifying spot for the state meet.

In the 200-yard freestyle relay, the foursome of Kippa, Wendell, Zarda and Gage Jensen were fifth at sectionals and less than two seconds away from qualifying.

Benner posted a fourth-place finish in the 100-yard freestyle and added a sixth place in the 200-yard freestyle, while Zarda placed fifth in the 100-yard backstroke and sixth in the 50-yard freestyle.

Phenix Yarh also finished fifth in the diving competition.

Neenah edged out Green Bay United by one point to take third place in the team standings at the sectional meet and finished 13 points behind the Appleton West co-op team. Bay Port easily won the team title, finishing about 150 points ahead of the rest of the field

The WIAA Division 1 state meet will be held on Saturday at Waukesha South with the diving competition starting at 9:30 a.m. followed by the swimming competition at 2:30 p.m.

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Prep sports roundup

BOYS WRESTLING

Four Rockets punch tickets to state meet

Neenah advanced four individuals to the WIAA State Wrestling meet and qualified for the team sectional tournament at last Saturday's Division 1 individual sectional tournament held at Green Bay Preble.

Landen Sheppard and Declan Koch earned their return to Madison by winning sectional titles, while Broden Butzke and Kaden Roth wrestled their way to their first trips to state by finishing second.

Koch will be making his fourth trip to the state meet after winning the 157-pound title in convincing fashion. After receiving a bye, Koch – who is 45-0 on the season – pinned Hortonville's Kyle Agnew in the quarterfinals and then topped Ryan Schmidt in a 17-1 technical fall.

In the title match, Koch handed De Pere's Olin Neuville just his second loss of the season with an 8-3 victory.

Sheppard, who will be making his second appearance at the state meet, also went 3-0 on the day in winning the 150-pound division. He beat Hortonville's Kysen Brown in a 17-2 technical fall in the quarterfinals before stopping Luxemburg-Casco's Linken Bastien in a 9-2 decision.

Sheppard then outdueled Kaukauna's Jaksyn Thorpe, 4-0, in the finals to claim the sectional title.

Butzke had to work for his runner-up finish at 113 pounds, posting a 16-second pin and a technical fall in his first two matches before losing in the semifinals to top-seeded Jack Falk of Pulaski. Butzke then pinned Bay Port's Oliver Shefchik in 3:38 before blanking Hortonville's Lane Konrad, 7-0, to earn a wrestleback for second place.

In that match, he pinned Kaukauna's Trenton Van Schnydel in 2:45 to take second and earn the trip to the state meet.

Roth also earned his trip to state by win-

ning a wrestleback, but first reached the finals of the 190-pound division with a 21-5 technical fall win over Devlin Vele of Bay Port and a 11-1 major decision win over Luxemburg-Casco's Calvin Henderson.

Roth lost a close decision to Kaukauna's Brady Spranger in the title match, but bounced back to pin Hortonville's Brock Schmidt to secure his trip to state. Roth was leading Schmidt 14-0 when he pinned him with seven seconds left in the match.

Jaxon Ennis came within one win of advancing to state, losing a wrestleback for second place to finish third at 132 pounds. Ennis had three technical fall wins – outscoring his opponents by a combined 56-9 – and a 43-second pin in his four wins on the day.

Heavyweight Willy Brucks added a fifth place and Garrett Nedens was sixth at 126 pounds.

Neenah finished fourth in the final team standings to earn a spot in the six-team tournament to be held in Neenah on Saturday to determine the team state qualifiers.

The Rockets will face Bay Port in one of two quarterfinals with the winner advancing to face top-seeded Kaukauna. Hortonville, Luxemburg-Casco and Pulaski are the other teams in the sectional, which begins at 10 a.m.

GIRLS WRESTLING

Neenah dominates regional tournament

The Rockets cruised to the WIAA regional title last Friday in Hortonville finishing first in the 10-team field by nearly 50 points and advancing a handful of wrestlers to sectional competition.

Neenah will travel to Waupaca on Friday for the sectional tournament to determine which individuals advance to state.

Three Neenah wrestlers advanced after finishing first at their respective weights, including a pair who are looking to return to the state meet in Kylee Kurszewski and Amari Richard.

Kurszewski pinned both of her op-

ponents in the first period to win the 126-pound regional title. She stopped Shiocton's Lilli Griesbach in 1:00 in her first match and then topped Waupaca's Kylie Stichman on 1:37 in the finals.

Richard needed to only post one win to advance, pinned Appleton West's Annaleah Jacobson in 1:48 to claim the 132-pound title.

Rounding out Neenah's regional champions was Joelle Reay who earned the 114-pound title with a pair of wins. Reay pinned New London's Brooklyn Hull-Rigg in 3:11 in her first match and then won a 9-2 decision over Xavier's Vivian Erickson in the title match.

Rayleigh Pearson (120) and Lluvia Carrilo (185) advanced to sectionals with second-place finishes at the tournament. Both wrestlers went 1-1 on the day with Pearson earning her victory with a pin.

Neenah had a handful of third-place finishes at the meet with Greenlee Ennis (107), Ava Armatti (138), Mackenzie Kujawa (145), Janet Sorto (152) and Xiomara Liriano-Rueda (235), while Maya Ives (100) and Jenson Kurszewski (165) were each fourth.

BOYS HOCKEY

Rockets fall in regular-season finale

Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha took a 2-1 lead early in the second period but couldn't hold off Wausau West in a 4-3 loss in the Rockets' regular-season finale last week.

Cartyr Simonson, Preston Liedke and Mark Sutton each scored goals for the Rockets, with Simonson, Clay Laabs and Drew Drach notching assists in the game.

Matthew Nelson made 17 saves in goal for Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha, which outshot Wausau West 48-21 in the game.

Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha was scheduled to host West Bend West in a WIAA Division 1 regional final on Thursday. A win by the Rockets in that game would mean they would host a sectional semifinal on Tuesday night at the Cham-

pions Center in Appleton on Tuesday.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Rockets notch back-to-back wins

Rowan Klesmit scored 25 points to lead three players in double figures as Neenah held off Kaukauna, 65-60, in a Fox Valley Association game last Friday.

Ellie Buss added 19 points, including four 3-pointers, with Carli Baltus chipping in 12 points for the Rockets. Sydney Michalkiewicz led the team with eight rebounds.

Neenah finished 17-of-20 at the free-throw line to help seal the win. Kaukauna was 17-of-30 at the foul line.

Last week, the Rockets posted a dominant 76-38 win over Fond du Lac with Klesmit and Buss each scoring 22 points in the game. Buss finished with six 3-pointers and also led the team with eight assists.

Michalkiewicz added 13 points with Izzy Malloy chipping in eight points off the bench.

Zephyrs rack up easy triumph

St. Mary Catholic built a 22-point halftime lead and then held Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah to just 13 points in the second half in posting a 78-36 win at home last week.

Autumn Crowe finished with 20 points to lead the Zephyrs, who had 10 different players score in the game.

Luci Nackers added 12 points, while Bitsy McCauley, Gabby Guerrero and Mina Jackson each finished with nine. Guerrero also totaled a team-high seven steals in the game.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Rockets roll to nonconference victory

Twelve players scored and Neenah pulled away in the second half to collect

SEE Prep roundup ON PAGE 14

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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 14

a 74-40 win over Wisconsin Rapids in a nonconference game on Saturday.

Three players finished with 10 points to lead the Rockets' balanced attack. Kolton Fleege, Xavier Bezares and Jacob Jung-wirth all shared the scoring lead for the team, while Chase Nitz added nine points.

A total of 43 of the Rockets' 74 points came from reserves in the game.

Neenah was coming off a 64-51 loss to Kaukauna the night before as the Rockets outscored the Ghosts in the second half but couldn't overcome a 14-point halftime deficit.

Jackson Rindt led the Rockets with 13 points but was the only Neenah player to reach double figures. Nick Schultz added eight and Bezares finished with seven.

St. Mary Catholic drops heartbreaker

The Zephyrs couldn't maintain an eight-point halftime lead as Cedar Grove-Belgium pulled out a 73-72 win on its home-court on Tuesday night.

Mason Uhlenbrauck finished with 20 points, including 13 in the second half, to lead the Zephyrs, while Dylan Brenn added 18 and Luke Fairweather and Mason Wagner each scored 12.

St. Mary Catholic was coming off an 88-74 win over Elkhart-Lake Glenbeulah in which the Zephyrs had five players in double figures led by 20 points from Fairweather,

Wagner finished with 17 points, followed by Brenn with 14 and 10 apiece from Uhlenbrauck and Max Vosters. Vosters also led the team with 12 rebounds.



Neenah News

St. Mary Catholic's Autumn Crowe drives to the basket against Winnepesaukee on Tuesday night.

SMC girls

FROM PAGE 12

The Zephyrs never got closer than 19 points the rest of the way.

Crowe finished with 18 points to lead the Zephyrs, while Guerrero tossed in 17 points and Nackers had 15.

One bright spot in the loss is that, following a second half of the season stocked with injuries and illnesses, St. Mary Catholic was back at full strength for practice to

start the week.

That will be important as the Zephyrs turn their attention to the WIAA Tournament where the team received the No. 1 seed in their sectional and will begin the postseason run at home next Friday against either Marion/Tigerton or Iola-Scandinavia.

"With the sickness and injuries we have had people step up which has been great," Crowe said. "We had a full practice lineup (on Monday) and that will be helpful for us."

Obituaries

Tina Marie Luebke

It's with a very heavy heart that I share the passing of Tina Marie Luebke, who died on Feb. 6, 2026, at age 70, surrounded by family and friends who were family. Tina was the kind of person who could grow flowers in cement because she had a gift for taking what was ordinary and making it magical. Her drawer of trade show pens was legendary and she loved to say she'd never need to buy another pen (and she was right). She was a friend, an honorary grandma to my daughters, and one

of my favorite people in the entire world. She could see beauty in a bull thistle and I miss her deeply. Service will be March 14, 2026 at 1:30 p.m. at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Neenah. Visitation to follow. Please send flowers ahead of time to 937 Bridgewood Dr., Neenah, WI 54956 (72-24 hours before the memorial). Full obituary online at www.westgor-funeralhomes.com/obituaries.

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Private party ads deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday. \$15 for first 20 words

For Sale

2011 FORD E-150 Cargo Van. Runs good. Good Tires. All service records since new. \$3,000 cash. Call 920-707-4217

Jacuzzi Bath Remodel can install a new, custom bath or shower in as little as one day. For a limited time, waiving ALL installation costs! (Additional terms apply. Subject to change and vary by dealer. Offer ends 12/27/26.) Call 1-844-260-2934

Pomeranian Puppies For Sale! Dewormed, shots and vet checked very social. \$500. Call 715-654-5149

Prepare for power outages today with a Generac Home Standby Generator. Act now to receive a FREE 5-Year warranty with qualifying purchase. Call 1-888-355-6955 today to schedule a free quote. It's not just a generator. It's a power move.

Employment

Winnebago Media Group, Inc. is seeking Sales Assists/Admins for the Oshkosh Herald and Neenah News. Sales Assists support our advertising executives with scheduling, submitting ad elements for production, answering phones, processing subscriptions and other items in providing outstanding customer

service. Hours are Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm. Hourly pay is \$13-\$15/hr DOE. Interested candidates submit resume to Karen@oshkoshherald.com

Miscellaneous

YMT Vacations. Over 50 guided tours available. Affordable, social and stress-free travel designed for mature travelers. Our tours include accommodations, transportation, baggage handling, sightseeing, entrance fees, a professional Tour Director and select meals. For a limited time SAVE \$250 on all tours. Call YMT today. 1-888-351-2630

Reimer Jewelers has a Full-Service Watchmaker on Staff. 11 Waugoo Avenue, Oshkosh

Do you love the Neenah News?
Looking for ways to support the work we do?
It's easy!
Take a look around and support the local businesses that support local journalism!
Let them know you saw their ad in the Neenah News.

Neenah News
Serving Neenah & Fox Crossing

Neenah News
Serving Neenah & Fox Crossing

We have an opportunity for an **ADMIN/SALES ASSISTANT**
To join our award-winning team!

Our next team member has computer experience and is comfortable working with Word and Excel. The candidate is detail-oriented and deadline focused. Creative/design skills is a plus.

Responsibilities include:

- Working well within a team environment
- Working with SmartSheets (similar to excel)
- Inputting directions/uploading images to be sent to production in SmartSheets
- Following ad from inception through approval process
- Answering phones
- Take classified ads and payments over phone or from walk-ins
- Other duties as assigned

The position is part-time (30ish hours per week). **Starting pay is \$13-\$15 DOE.** Experience is not required. We will train.

If interested please email resume or qualifications to Karen@oshkoshherald.com

Kid Scoop

THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE

Get puzzle answers, recipes and more at www.kidscoop.com

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The Science of the Olympics

GOLD MEDAL DICTIONARY

Fall Line: _____

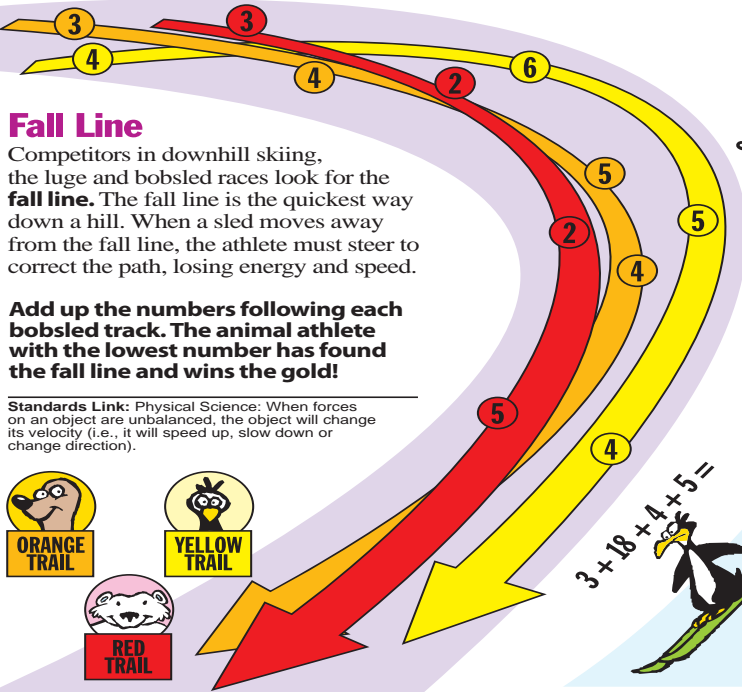
Friction: _____

Drag: _____

The people who compete in the Winter Olympics are more than great athletes. They are also masters of science. Gold Medal athletes know about the science of a **fall line**, **drag** and **friction**.

Find the definition of each of these words on the page. Write the definition in the Gold Medal Dictionary.

Standards Link: Vocabulary Development: Use a dictionary or context clues to find the meaning of words.

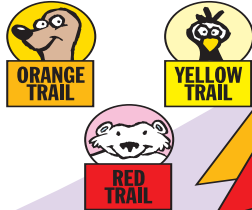


Fall Line

Competitors in downhill skiing, the luge and bobsled races look for the **fall line**. The fall line is the quickest way down a hill. When a sled moves away from the fall line, the athlete must steer to correct the path, losing energy and speed.

Add up the numbers following each bobsled track. The animal athlete with the lowest number has found the fall line and wins the gold!

Standards Link: Physical Science: When forces on an object are unbalanced, the object will change its velocity (i.e., it will speed up, slow down or change direction).



Cutting Down on Drag

While we don't always feel air, we are always moving against it. The faster we move, the more we can feel the air rushing past us. Air is actually slowing down our motion. This is called **drag**.



Downhill skiers crouch with their chests to their knees. They try to be very small, so that only a little of their body is in contact with the air. This lessens the drag. Skiers who have the least amount of drag will ski faster.

Drag Racers

Look at the three skiers. They are all skiing down the fall line. The one with the least drag will win. Circle the skier you think will win.

To find out each skier's time, add up the numbers above each skier. The skier with the fastest time wins the gold!

Standards Link: Number Sense: Calculate sums to 30.

What is Friction?

Friction is the rubbing of one object or surface against another.



Place your two palms together with your palms only lightly touching each other. Slide your palms back and forth against each other. There is only a little friction and your hands move easily. Push your palms tightly together and

try to move them back and forth. It will be harder to move your palms because there is a lot of friction and that slows the motion.

Now put soap and water on your hands. This will reduce the friction and your hands should move together faster. Athletes wax skis, boards and runners to lower friction and help them go faster.

Standards Link: Science: Identify forces that can act on an object, including friction.

SNOWBOARD CHALLENGE

The athlete who did the best job waxing their board will win this race. (The lowest number is the fastest time.)

11 6 + 5	10 2 + 1	12 3 + 5

Extra! Extra!

Faster, Higher, Stronger

Look through the newspaper to find pictures and words that represent the above words. Make a Spirit of the Olympics poster with your findings.

Standards Link: Visual Arts: Understand and apply media techniques and processes.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Each of these animal athletes won an event on this page. Draw a line from each gold medal to its winner.

Standards Link: Life Science: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

Double Double Word Search

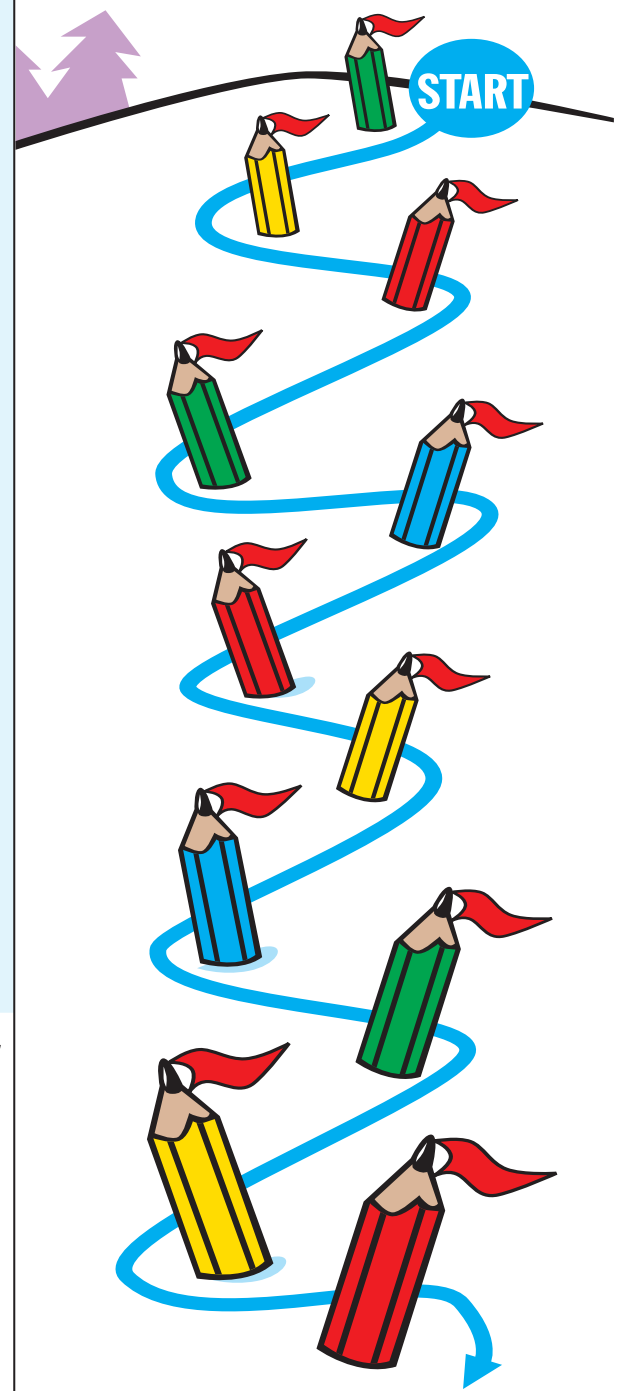
Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards, sideways and diagonally.

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

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

Kid Scoop Together: Slalom Racers

Place a pencil on START. Close your eyes. Trace the curving path down the slalom run. Score 1 point for each slalom flag cleared. Now have a friend try. Who scored highest?



Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

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Write On! My Olympic Achievement

Write about a time you achieved something that made you very proud.

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