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The 2025 Community Health Assessment is Here!

Community Health Report 2025

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT COALITION

Residents hear details of housing proposal

By Dave Gill
NEENAH NEWS

The city-owned former Harn's Barn property at 1311 South Commercial St. in Neenah will become a 50-60-unit mixed-use development property by summer 2028 if a proposal from a Madison-based developer becomes a reality.

At a neighborhood meeting Tuesday in the Community Room at the Neenah Police Department, Eminent Development

Corporation President Julian Walters presented the proposal to local residents and business owners who attended the meeting.

Dubbed The Exchange, the current proposal calls for the construction of a four-story, 32-unit apartment building with retail space facing Commercial Street as well as a four-unit townhouse structure and a 14-unit stacked flats facility. Access to the property is planned to be from both

Commercial Street and Peckham Street.

Both Walters and Neenah Director of Community Development and Assessment Kelly Nieforth indicated at the meeting that the 32-unit apartment complex that is planned to be closest to Commercial Street will have underground parking for its residents.

Key to the financing plan for the devel-

SEE **Housing proposal** ON PAGE 7

INSIDE



Rockets roll

Big second half carries Neenah to FVA win

Page 11

Renovation time

Work on glass museum begins

Page 5



Photo by David Hall

New venue

Student actors brought Finegan Kruckemeyer's whimsical and adventurous play "The Snow" to life during last weekend's Rocket Players performances at Neenah High School. Utilizing the school's brand-new Black Box Theater, the production highlighted the venue's unique ability to transform into an intimate, immersive space. Unlike a traditional stage, this "black box" setting strips away the distance between the cast and the community, placing the audience right in the heart of the storytelling.

Young artist donates proceeds to support animal rescue

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

Patrick Bates sat down about three years ago and began drawing an animal using a charcoal pen.

The results blew his family away. And the now 13-year-old kept drawing.

"I've always liked animals and decided to draw them," said Bates, who taught himself how to draw by watching YouTube videos. He now has a teacher, Nathan Brandner, at the Richeson School of Art & Gallery in Kimberly.

"I really like the texture of working with feathers and the eyes," said Patrick, who uses charcoal pencil, charcoal powder and white charcoal pencil in his drawings.

When his parents, Ian and Heidi, shared the drawings with families and

friends, they were encouraged to start selling prints and cards of Patrick's original work. They began selling them under the name P. Bates Creates.

"Patrick received a lot of encouragement about his work from a lot of people," Heidi Bates said.

When he started selling prints of his work, Patrick decided to put some of his earnings to support animals at J&R Aquatic Animal Rescue in Neenah. The Bates family previously volunteered at the rescue.

"It's a great place and we'd volunteered there before and I thought it would be a good place to help out," Patrick said.

J&R Aquatic Animal Rescue allows the public to sponsor animals for different



Submitted photo

Patrick Bates and tortoise Big Dude from J&R Aquatic Animal Rescue sometimes go to the same community events.

SEE **Bates' art** ON PAGE 10



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Advertising deadline is noon Friday for the following Friday. The classified line ads deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday for Friday.

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Corrections

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

About the newspaper

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Neenah News adds new staff reporters

Neenah News

The Winnebago Media Group has added three new reporters to its staff at the Neenah News.

MaryBeth Matzek, Dave Gill and Eric Endres have all been contributors for the Neenah News. In addition, each will be contributing to the other newspapers that are part of the Winnebago Media Group, including the Oshkosh Herald and Winneconne News.

Matzek has been a journalist for 30 years working as a reporter and editor at The Post-Crescent and Insight on Business magazine, where she won a national business writing award. Most recently, she was a freelance writer for statewide and trade publications.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, MaryBeth and her husband, Joe, (a sports freelancer for the Winnebago Media Group) have two adult children. She's a volunteer with St. Vincent de Paul, Community Clothes Closet, Orphaned Animal Rescue & Sanctuary (OARS) and Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin.

Gill has lived in the Fox Valley area for nearly 40 years, including in Appleton, Neenah and now Oshkosh for the past 30 years. He and his wife, Marie, are recent empty nesters, and he's looking forward to covering the local communities.

"Having been a software developer for more than three decades, I'm returning to my roots in retirement as a journalist - having started out as a staff writer out of college for a daily newspaper in Mar-

quette, Mich., back in the late 1980s," Gill said. "Community journalism is an integral part of healthy and vibrant communities, and I look forward to being a conduit of news and information that matters to the communities and residents we serve."

Endres has been writing since his elementary school days, when he'd fill his notebooks with tales of horror and adventure. While his professional writing career has taken him mostly to the digital marketing and freelance worlds over the past decade, he's still hammering out screenplays, short stories and novels on his own time, with sincere efforts and plans to get them out there to entertain audiences and readers everywhere.

Since he's an avid movie, TV and pop culture fan, anyone who might think of challenging Endres to a game of trivia is encouraged to brush up on their knowledge beforehand for a fair competition.

When he's not watching a movie or reading a book, Endres can also be found on his recliner on a fall Sunday afternoon watching football - probably the Packers, but they're his No. 2 team. He'll mention his number one team if asked nicely but wants to ensure Packer backers that it doesn't conflict with the Green and Gold... Usually.

To send the staff a news tip, email submit@neenahnews.com.



Gill



Endres



Matzek

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Calendar of events

Friday, Feb. 6

First Friday Concert: Cat Plan, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Saturday, Feb. 7

Author Kimberly Barrett, Ph.D. "Re-thinking Race: A Memoir," 1 p.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Paint and Peck: Great Goblin, 2 p.m., Rooster Dreams Visual Arts, Downtown Neenah Marketplace, 124 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Wednesday, Feb. 11

Fox Valley Women's Connection Luncheon and Program, noon, DoubleTree Hotel Neenah

Friday, Feb. 13

A Beary Special Night, 5:30 p.m., Fox Crossing Community Center, 1000 Valley Road

Saturday, Feb. 14

Future Neenah Warm Your Heart, 11 a.m., Downtown Neenah

"All You Need is Love" Beatles Play or Sing Along, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Monday, Feb. 16

Broadway on Ice featuring Kimberly Akimbo, 11 a.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee

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

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.

Correction

Jan. 30, Page 1: Vinnie's Pantry was misidentified in a headline.

JOSE MORALES
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With 20 years in the real estate industry, I have been exposed to nearly every aspect of this business. If you're thinking of buying or selling, contact me. Let's work together to position your property for a speedy sale at top dollar or find your next dream home.

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Dragon boat club seeks to add to breast cancer survivor team

By Anya Kelley
NEENAH NEWS

The Fox Valley Dragon Boat Club (FVDB) is looking to grow its breast cancer survivor (BCS) team for the upcoming season.

The FVDB Club was founded by Rob Halbleib and Amy Rolph in September after they noticed a lack of representation for the sport in the greater Fox Valley area.

The BCS team, led by Stefanie Tyler, will compete in the BCS division at events around the state. Competitions give survivors a chance to show their strength and resilience while meeting others who have gone through or are going through similar challenges.

“It is so moving, it’s unreal,” Halbleib said.

Tyler became interested in dragon boat races after attending one in Oshkosh a few years ago. At the time, there were no local teams. In February, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and joined a support group that was advertising a BCS team.

“It’s like the skies opened,” she said. “For me, going through the process of treatment with having the breast cancer, it was a lot for you to show up, you do what you’re supposed to do. Yes, there’s this finish line, but just that whole process is just a lot of mundane showing up for things and the treatment has its side effects. But with this, seeking that finish line has a different sort of feel[ing] to me and the strength, the mental component of it that is going to be beneficial.”

After going through chemotherapy, Tyler said she lost most of her strength and stamina. Joining the BCS team will give her the opportunity to regain strength both physically and mentally after finish-



Photo by Michael Cooney

Sasha and Justin Smith (front) play in a pickleball tournament Saturday with Ken and Ann Levine to support the Fox Valley Dragon Boat Club at Pickle and Bags Oshkosh.

ing her treatment in October.

“It gives you something to be excited about, and it’s not to say I don’t have other joys in my life, but this is different,” Tyler said. “The power, [that’s] a word that’s probably going to be used a lot, but I just think it’s the best term to describe what this looks like. [Dragon boating is] this powerful sort of tool that we’re able to use to show people that we got through this over here, and that’s exciting.”

In 1996, Don McKenzie, a professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver wanted to challenge the idea that women with breast cancer should avoid all forms of upper body exercise. As part

of his research, he created a dragon boat paddling team of breast cancer volunteers that proved exercise didn’t cause any complications with treatment and helped the women feel happier and healthier outside of the hospital.

The FVDB Club’s BCS team currently has six members and they’re looking to get to at least 40 before the season begins in the spring.

In total, the club currently has 44 members. In addition to the BCS team, it is recruiting members for a youth team and a competitive team.

The Fox Valley Dragon Boat Club will have an informational table set up at the

Northeast Wisconsin Chinese Association spring Bazaar for Chinese New Year from 3 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 28 at Neenah High School. Anyone interested in learning about the dragon boating Breast Cancer Survivor, youth or competitive teams can find out more information during the spring festival.

The FVDB Club holds an informational gathering 30 minutes before the start of their regular meeting and it’s open to the public. Meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. every second Tuesday of the month in the Winneconne Public Library. For more information about the club or questions, email foxvalleydragonboatclub@gmail.com.



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County boat launch permits now available

Neenah News

Winnebago County Boat Launch Use Permits for 2026 are now available for purchase online and in-person at the Parks Department Office, 625 E. County Road Y Suite 500 in Oshkosh.

Permits can be mailed by purchasing online at secure.recl.com/WI/winnebago-county-wi/catalog.

All users launching a boat (motor boats, jet skis, canoes, kayaks) at a county-owned boat landing are required to pay the launch use fee.

Winnebago County boat landings include Asylum Point, Black Wolf, Boom Bay, Lake Butte des Morts, Eureka, Grundman and Poygan.

Broadway on Ice comes to Neenah

Neenah News

Broadway will be coming to the ice rink as a way to celebrate the rest of the Kimberly-Clark Broadway Across America Fox Cities Season.

The skating event featuring Kimberly Akimbo will be from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Feb. 16 at The Plaza and Globe Coffee.

Discounted skating for \$5 and rentals for \$3 will be available while listening to Broadway tunes. Kimberly Akimbo will be at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center from March 3-7.



Photo by David Hall

Ice fishing underway

After two weeks of single-digit temperatures locked in thick, reliable ice, ice fishing season is officially underway. Anglers have returned to Lake Winnebago in force, drilling holes, setting shanties and taking advantage of prime winter conditions that signal one of the region's most anticipated outdoor traditions. Sturgeon spearing season starts Feb. 14.

Winnebago ice report

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

The main north-south crack 0.4 miles off our landing has healed up.

We pulled the two truck bridges and the ATV bridge off it this afternoon. We put a truck bridge on the east-west crack north of our treeline roughly a mile.

The bridge is located just east of Haystack Reef. It is marked with four Christmas trees. We also have a truck bridge at 3.1 miles out on the main road on our treeline.

The crack runs southeast to north-northwest. It is roughly 10" wide. We still have the truck bridge on the crack that runs

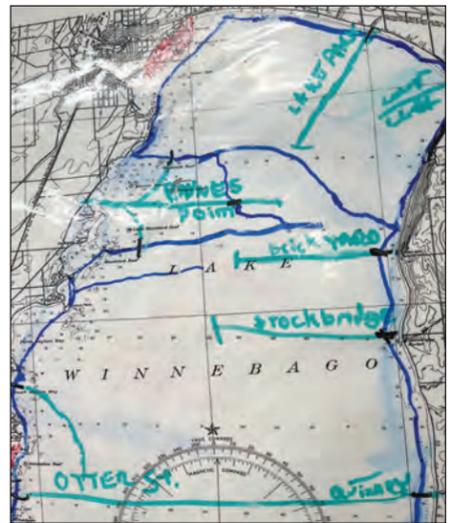
east off of Blackbird Island roughly a half mile west of the island.

There was a new crack that started Saturday south of it about 3/4 of a mile that runs east also. It dies out about two miles out in the lake.

With the drastic temperature changes and little snow, I suspect the lake will keep cracking in random spots for the foreseeable future so pay extra attention while you're traveling on the ice.

We are seeing 18-21" of ice in most areas. Also thanks to the fella that helped us by drilling the holes that marked our bridge on the crack north of the treeline Sunday.

Don't forget to support your local fishing clubs and remember the ice is never 100% safe.



Submitted photo

The lake map is a "best of my knowledge" current bridge tree line/road/cracks in the north half of Lake Winnebago as of Sunday.



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Photo by David Hall

The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass has launched its “Our Time to Shine” renovation project, designed to enhance the overall visitor experience for more than 32,500 guests each year.



Image from Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

A rendering of the new Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass Welcome Center by Gries Architectural Group, Inc.

Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass renovation project begins

Neenah News

The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass announces its embarkation on a renovation project that will enhance its mission, engagement, accessibility and visitor experience for more than 32,500 annual visitors and glass enthusiasts.

The transformational renovation will maintain the museum’s historical importance, vintage character and charm, while integrating modern enhancements focused on technology, accessibility and elevating visitors’ experience.

To achieve the goals of moderniza-

tion and enhancement, the museum has launched a capital campaign named, “Our Time to Shine.” Total investment for the project is \$784,891.

Approximately 85% of this amount has already been secured. Thanks to the contributions of community philanthropists, a lead grant of \$250,000 from the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, and \$90,300 from the Fox Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau, \$125,000 remains to be raised.

“This campaign is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to make a true and lasting impact

on the day-to-day operations of your museum,” Executive Director Amy Moorefield said. “These thoughtfully planned improvements are long overdue — neither the museum’s galleries nor its accessibility have been updated in nearly 35 years.”

The museum is encouraging donations by offering limited edition glass Museum Medallions formed and imprinted on-site, collectible hand-blown ornaments featuring “Our Time to Shine” campaign charms, recognition on a commemorative donor wall and naming opportunities for galleries.

The renovations will occur in three phases.

The first phase focusing on the Kimberly-Clark gallery will be finished this month. Improvements include refreshed galleries with energy-efficient LED lighting, expanded accessibility features, new interactive displays showcasing paperweight-making demonstrations and upgraded technology to support larger exhibitions and increase program capacity by 50%.

Construction is scheduled for completion by mid-June. The museum will remain open during the remodeling.

For more information, visit bmmglass.com/our-time-to-shine.

Tickets available as Crystal Ball fundraiser returns

Neenah News

Plans for the Crystal Ball fundraiser presented by Miron Construction for the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass are set.

The gala is slated for 7 to 10 p.m. Feb. 28 at The Ballroom at The Reserve, 116 S. Commercial St. Organizers said the evening will feature glassy merriment, marvelous morsels

and music by Kate Voss & The Hot Sauce.

Other features of the event include dancing, delectables, live and silent auctions, artful cocktail attire and amusements.

Individual tickets include heavy hors d’oeuvres, signature cocktail or mocktail, and entertainment. More information is available at bmmglass.com.

Nominations sought for Heroes of Neenah award

Neenah News

The Neenah High School Fusion Academy is seeking nominations for its 2026 Heroes of Neenah award.

These heroes are generally unsung; they don’t have their names on buildings or have trophies or awards named after them. They are people who go out of their way to make the community better without re-

gard to personal accolades.

To date, heroes have included people with such varied backgrounds as a World War II veteran, nurse, firefighter, inventor and philanthropist. Nominations can be submitted at docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSeW4PwDwmHBGb.../view-form by March 15.

The awards will be presented in May.



DISCOVER WHAT'S NEXT

Evergreen Fox Crossing continues to take shape! With new updates to share, now is the perfect time to explore the possibilities of senior living reimagined.



We hope to see you!

OSHKOSH

- Wednesday, February 4 at 1:00 p.m.
- Monday, February 16 at 10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, February 25 at 1:00 p.m.

Location: Evergreen Worship & Performing Arts Center
1130 North Westfield Street, Oshkosh, WI 54902

NEENAH

- Thursday, February 12 at 10:00 a.m.
- Thursday, February 12 at 2:00 p.m.

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton Neenah
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Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Jack DeMenter and Jack Henry qualified for the VEX World Robotics Championships in April.

Neenah students qualify for world robotics championships

Neenah News

Neenah High School seniors Jack DeMenter and Jack Henry qualified for the VEX World Robotics Championships in April in St. Louis after winning the team Excellence Award at the Northeast Wisconsin Showdown at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

DeMenter and Henry placed fourth in the competition and received the Excellence Award, which is the highest honor in VEX Robotics competitions. The award is presented to the team that best demonstrates comprehensive, high-quality per-

formance across all judged and on-field categories.

It recognizes a team that excels in design, engineering, teamwork and professionalism, acting as a model for others.

The pair was also named the Robotics Skills Champion for having the highest combined driving and autonomous programming score at the competition.

Their robotics skills score currently ranks 23rd in the world among the over 5,600 active high school teams that have competed in skills from all over the globe.

Fundraiser pays homage to era of the past

Neenah News

A “Night at the Old Valley Inn” event is a fundraiser for the Neenah Historical Society.

The fundraiser will begin at 6 p.m. Feb. 21 at the DoubleTree by Hilton, 123 E. Wisconsin Ave. in Neenah. Tickets include food, beverage, entertainment and a silent auction.

Attendees are encouraged to dress in the style of the 1920’s-1960’s to pay hom-

age to the era of the original Valley Inn.

Tickets (\$100/person) can be purchased at shorturl.at/xscnB.

For over 75 years, the Neenah Historical Society has been providing free or low-cost programming throughout the community.

The annual fundraiser is one of its largest sources of revenue. Money raised at this event goes directly toward the organization’s operating costs.

Free tax preparation assistance resources available

Neenah News

The Fox Cities AARP Foundation is offering free basic tax return preparation assistance at various locations, including the Neenah Public Library.

The services are available for low-to-moderate income individuals and families, older adults and limited English-speaking taxpayers. Services are available by appointment only until April

10.

Taxpayers seeking assistance are asked to obtain the pre-appointment packet, follow instructions, complete the required forms and gather tax documents prior to the appointment.

Call 920-215-1040 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday to schedule. The filing deadline for individuals is April 15.

Organizations awarded technical assistance grants

Neenah News

The Basic Needs Giving Partnership recently announced its final two rounds of grants for 2025 totaling \$1.7 million. This brings the total 2025 grantmaking to \$4.8 million with the previous multi-year and first round of technical assistance grants.

The group is investing \$1.5 million in one-year grants to 23 organizations that are planning or building capacity for collaborative systems change initiatives. These awards focus in one or more of the priority areas for this cycle: Early Care and Education (ages birth to 5), Housing Access, Mental Health, and Substance Use.

Organizations across the region are eager to address the root causes of the most pressing needs in the community by transforming policies, practices, mindsets and decision-making processes. The single year grants provide funding support to dive deeper into understanding the root cause of an issue, develop relationships and foster collaboration, engage community and explore the feasibility of a solution with potential partners.

The group also granted additional technical assistance grants totaling \$206,500 to 22 organizations. These grants — up

to \$10,000 each — are designed to help organizations strengthen their internal capacity through short-term technical assistance. From strategic planning and fundraising to governance and financial management, the support is tailored to help nonprofits grow stronger and more effective in advancing their mission.

The grants are part of the Basic Needs Giving Partnership’s commitment to advancing equity and economic well-being across Northeast Wisconsin. Grants are focused on efforts that are addressing the root causes of poverty in rural, urban and suburban communities across the 10-county region.

Funding is generated by the annual U.S. Venture Open, the nation’s single largest one-day charitable event dedicated to ending poverty. The 2025 event raised \$5.2 million for the Basic Needs Giving Partnership and 100% of every dollar donated goes to end poverty. In the 40-year history of the U.S. Venture Open, \$63 million has been granted to regional nonprofits.

A grantmaking match of \$600,000 from the J. J. Keller Foundation, \$200,000 from Oshkosh Corporation, ThedaCare and the Thrivent Foundation help lead this effort.



Photo from Neenah Joint School District

Rehearsal time

Nearly 600 student musicians from all grade levels in the Neenah Joint School District took part in Monday’s biannual Stringfest in the Neenah High School Competition Gym. Some of the musicians are pictured finishing up their final rehearsal after school last week in the middle school cafeteria.

Love Lives On



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Neenah News

Julian Walters, president of Eminent Development Corporation, leads a presentation Tuesday.

Housing proposal

FROM PAGE 1

opment is the approval of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, which serve as a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal income taxes for housing developers whose tenants have incomes at or below 60 percent of the county's median income.

According to Walters, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) is expected to make that decision by spring of this year.

"Not having those tax credits would be a showstopper," Nieforth said. "But the city knew this site would be very competitive for these funds."

The City of Neenah will provide the former Harn's property to Eminent Development Corporation for a \$1 land donation. Nieforth said the city acquired the property in foreclosure for around \$200,000 several years ago.

"We are in the process of revitalizing South Commercial Street," Nieforth said. "And this project is an important part of that."

Leading up to Tuesday's neighborhood meeting, the City of Neenah released Request for Proposals (RFP) last fall to redevelop this two-acre site along the South Commercial Street corridor.

Scholarship program brings awareness to county government

Neenah News

High school seniors who reside in Winnebago County that plan to attend a post-secondary educational institution are eligible to receive one of nine Winnebago County Board \$2,100 scholarships.

The program was developed to promote an awareness and understanding of county government.

Interested students need to complete and submit an application form and write a 500 to 800 word essay addressing the question: "If I were to run for any Winnebago County elected position, which one would I run for and why?"

Elected positions include county board supervisor, county executive, judges of circuit court, district attorney, sheriff, clerk of courts, county clerk, treasurer and register of deeds.

All application requirements must be followed to be considered. The deadline to apply is March 31.

If interested, go to winnebago-countywi.gov/759/Winnebago-County-Board-Scholarship-Progr.

Fire department adds assistant chief of training

Neenah News

Alexander Rodriguez has joined Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue as assistant chief of training.



Rodriguez

Rodriguez joins NMFR following a 20-year career in the United States Air Force, where he served in multiple senior fire service leadership roles, including superintendent, assistant chief of operations, assis-

tant chief of training, battalion chief and instructor.

Throughout his career, he led teams of military and civilian personnel, managed large-scale Department of Defense fire operations and coordinated thousands of hours of training across multiple fire stations and military installations.

Rodriguez brings instructional experience, having developed curriculum, coordinated multi-agency exercises and taught live-fire training, technical rescue, fire inspector coursework and advanced officer development.

Firefighters respond to house fire

Neenah News

The Fox Crossing Fire Department along with auto-aid units were dispatched at 12:05 p.m. Jan. 28 to the 1200 block of Home Ave. for the report of a structure fire.

Fox Crossing CAR241 (Division Chief) arrived on scene and found a single-family home that had fire showing from the rear deck of the home and smoke coming out of the eaves.

Occupants were evacuated by fire department personnel upon arrival.

Fox Crossing firefighters stretched a single hose line to the rear of the home to extinguish the fire that was on the exterior and then went inside to search for fire in the walls and attic. Fire had extended into the attic area. A crew went onto the garage roof to open the attic space and extinguish any fire. Overhaul of the walls, ceiling and

attic were completed to ensure the fire was extinguished.

The fire was brought under control within 20 minutes. None of the residents or firefighters suffered any injuries during the operation.

The fire was determined to have started by the careless use of smoking materials and there was no immediate damage estimate. The family was being assisted by the Red Cross.

Grand Chute Fire Department, Town of Neenah Fire Department, Gold Cross Ambulance, WE Energies and Fox Crossing Police Department assisted at the scene.

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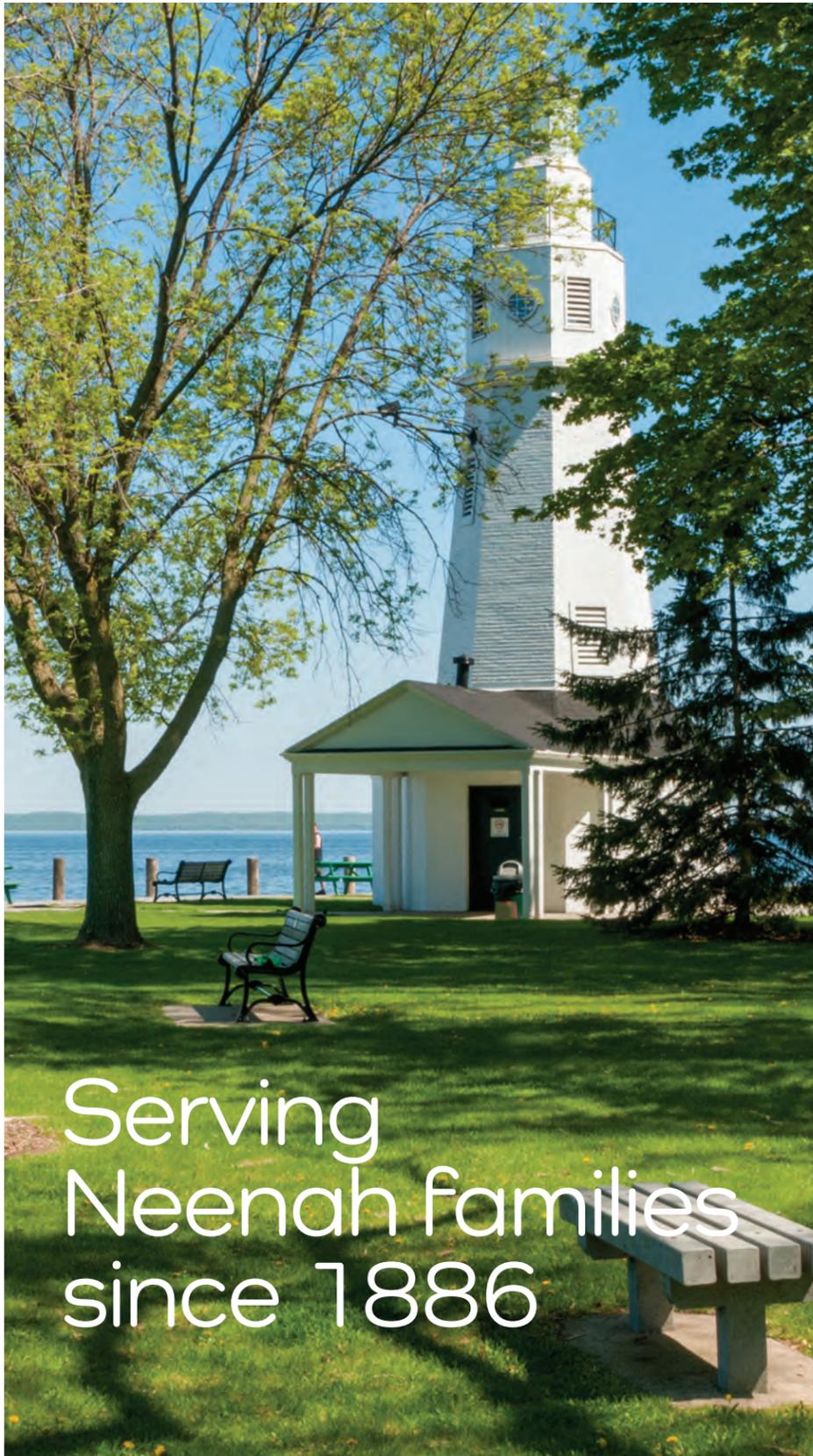
Business news roundup

Kimberly-Clark and Kenvue shareholders voted to approve all of the proposals necessary for Kimberly-Clark to complete its acquisition of Kenvue at their respective Special Meetings of Stockholders held last week. Leaders from both businesses said the vote helps them move closer to creating a large, combined company focused on health and wellness. The transaction is expected to close in the second half of 2026, subject to the receipt of regulatory approvals and satisfaction of other customary closing conditions.

McMahon Associates has named new associates, including Spencer Kocken, structural designer, and Amy Springer, controller and finance manager. At McMahon, this designation is given to em-

ployees who exemplify leadership and demonstrate expertise in their fields. Kocken has served as a structural designer in McMahon's Neenah office for 11 years. Springer has served as controller and finance manager in the company's Neenah office for six years.

Fox Communities Credit Union has promoted Sara Peterson to vice president of financial planning and data analysis. Peterson joined Fox in 2019 as a financial analyst and advanced to senior financial analyst in 2022. In 2023, she was promoted to AVP of financial planning and analysis. The vice president of financial planning and data analysis provides strategic leadership across the financial planning and data analytics functions.



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Health coalition releases community health report

Neenah News

The Tri-County Community Health Improvement Coalition has released the first-ever unified Community Health Needs Assessment (CHA/CHNA) for Winnebago, Calumet and Outagamie counties.

The coalition brings together four area health systems; Ascension, Aurora Health Care, Children's Wisconsin and The daCare; five local public health agencies; City of Appleton Department of Public Health, City of Menasha Health Department, Calumet County Public Health, Outagamie County Public Health and Winnebago County Public Health; and more than a dozen nonprofit community organizations serving the tri-county region.

United Way Fox Cities is serving as the backbone entity to house the coalition and its efforts.

"Nearly 500,000 people live in the tri-county region, and many cross county lines daily," said Beth Clay, Vice President of Community Impact of United Way Fox Cities. "Community needs and challenges do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries,

and our response shouldn't either."

The report reinforces that health and well-being are primarily shaped by community conditions, not solely by medical care or individual choices. Key findings from the assessment demonstrate how wealth consistently correlates with the vital conditions for health and well-being. Vital conditions include physical necessities like food, water, and humane housing, as well as things that are harder to quantify, like a sense of belonging and civic muscle.

Working collectively, partners are now using the data to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). This effort represents a shift toward a shared framework and shared decision-making across sectors. By aligning priorities and initiatives, the coalition aims to reduce duplication of effort, develop a common understanding of the region's most pressing health needs, and maximize collective impact to help ensure that all residents of Winnebago, Calumet and Outagamie counties have the opportunity to thrive.

For the full report, please visit unitedwayfoxcities.org/communityhealthreport.

UWO graduates

The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh 61st midyear commencement Dec. 13 at Kolf Sports Center recognized the accomplishments of about 600 students who earned associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees completed during the summer and fall terms.

The new graduates added their names to a UW-Oshkosh alumni community of more than 100,000.

The following graduates are from Neenah.

Mansimran Balli, Bachelor of Science in nursing

Kaden Barber, Bachelor of Science, environmental public health

Edward Dwyer, Master of Business Administration

Morgan Feltz, Bachelor of Professional Studies, leadership and organizational development

Jodi Gagliardi, Bachelor of science, psychology

Emily Gast, Bachelor of Science in nursing

Josh Jackels, Master of Business Administration

Shaylee Klenke, Bachelor of Science in education, middle and high school English

Thad Kraus, Master of Science, information technology management

Courtney Kufahl, Bachelor of Business Administration, finance

Benjamin LaSelle, Bachelor of Science, computer science (software engineering)

Kevin McMullen, Master of Business Administration

Hayden Nagy, Associate of Arts and Science

Aber Qureshi, Bachelor of Arts, multimedia journalism

Samuel Ramaeker, Bachelor of Science in education, history

Samuel Ramaeker, Bachelor of Science in education, middle and high school social science

Eric Rhoda, Bachelor of Science, psychology

Alexis Robak, Associate of Arts and Science

Megan Talaga, Bachelor of Science in nursing

Aislinn Verhage, Bachelor of Science in education, early childhood special education

Cody Williams, Bachelor of Business Administration, marketing

Skyler Wills, Bachelor of Arts, communication studies



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Community voices opposition to ICE operations

By Jonathan Richie
NEENAH NEWS

There are currently no U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents or taskforces in Winnebago County, but residents voiced their concern about ICE agents earlier this week.

In a packed meeting room during the Judiciary and Public Safety committee meeting Monday, residents spoke out against ongoing ICE operations in Minneapolis and feared the operations could come to this community.

Over a dozen citizens requested the sheriff's department end the 287(g) agreement with ICE as they are concerned with the lack of transparency and constitutional issues following the agency's recent actions in Minneapolis and across the country.

"I am a resident of Winnebago County and do not want any of our county budget spent to support ICE in any way," Mary McPhee said. "I want the sheriff to withdraw from the 287(g) agreement he has signed. I'd like to emphasize for all the reasons already stated, but I also want to

emphasize the trust aspect and that I currently trust our law enforcement and I don't want that to go away."

Sheriff John Matz said WCSO participates in the 287(g) program through the Warrant Service Officer model, which authorizes deputies to serve federal immigration detainees and administrative warrants on noncitizens already in custody after local charges or sentences have been resolved. Under the program, officers identify and process removable noncitizens in custody.

If ICE determines individuals should be held, they are put on a 48-hour administrative hold, giving federal officials 48 hours to pick them up from the jail. The sheriff's office entered the agreement recently along with over a dozen other Wisconsin counties.

News reports this year have highlighted two recent killings by ICE agents in Minneapolis. Winnebago County residents voiced their concerns that this could be coming here soon.

"We want what's best for the people in our community – this isn't it," Michael Krueger said.

Supervisor Kristl Laux spoke during the meeting and pointed out that what happens in the county jail is the responsibility of the county and county board of supervisors. She said that Hennepin County will likely be sued by the ACLU for its role in recent events.

"(It's) not just the sheriff's office – it affects our county," Laux said.

Matz gave a presentation to the committee and explained that 17 people had an ICE detainer placed on them with 10 people turned over to ICE in 2025. Last month there were a total of 407 bookings into the Winnebago County Jail. During that time, 13 notifications were made to ICE and three people have had an ICE detainer placed on them.

There are currently six people in the county jail under the ICE detainer. Matz had reported the 2025 statistics in January and was just providing another update this week. There was no discussion or vote on ending the 287(g) agreement.

WCSO also participates in the federal State Criminal Alien Assistance Program

(SCAAP), which reimburses states and local governments for certain incarceration costs related to undocumented individuals with qualifying criminal convictions.

WCSO Captain of Corrections Amber Rozek said WCSO has participated in the program for more than 25 years.

SCAAP funds are deposited into the county's jail assessment fund and are used for inmate-related expenses such as hygiene products, clothing, linens and recreational items. The sheriff's office reported an average annual SCAAP award of about \$20,196 per year over the past five years.

Matz stated there are no ICE operations in the county and his officers are not going around rounding up people. He said the 287(g) agreement is only for people who are facing criminal charges that have been brought to the jail.

"We don't conduct a traffic stop and ask 'what country' or if they are here illegally," he said. "We don't go out and look for individuals or any places of business. That's not happening. There's no intent for that to happen."

Area unemployment rate rises in December

Winneconne News

The Oshkosh-Neenah metropolitan area (MSA) and Winnebago County saw their unemployment rate increase to 2.7% in December from 2.5% in November and at the same time last year, according to preliminary data from the state Department of Workforce Development.

The preliminary December unemployment rate increased in all 13 metropolitan areas over the month. Rates increased in all 13 metropolitan areas over the year.

Unemployment rates increased in 33

of Wisconsin's 35 largest cities over the month. Rates stayed the same in the two remaining cities.

Unemployment rates decreased in three cities over the year. Rates increased in 25 cities over the year and stayed the same in the seven remaining cities.

Unemployment rates increased in all 72 counties over the month. Unemployment rates decreased in eight counties over the year. Rates increased in 58 counties over the year and stayed the same in the six remaining counties.



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Photo from St. Mary Catholic Schools

Student performances

Students performed last weekend during the Z Cabaret at the Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center. Proceeds from the Fine Arts fundraiser will benefit K-12 visual and performing arts programs at St. Mary Catholic Schools.

Speaker set for CEO breakfast series

Neenah News

Co-founder and publisher emeritus of Insight on Business magazine Brian Rasmussen will be the featured speaker at the next CEO Breakfast Series session hosted by St. Norbert College at Miron Construction in Neenah.

Rasmussen will discuss how his transition to retirement is going, and then take a deeper dive into leadership lessons he will

share from the last 17 years of running a regional publication. Rasmussen will also explore themes from his book, "Today You Will," that shows how strong leaders consistently choose better – in decisions, relationships, resilience and personal growth.

The breakfast will be from 7:30 to 9 a.m. Feb. 17 at Miron Construction, 1471 McMahon Drive. Registration information is at shorturl.at/FTHTD.



Submitted photo

Patrick Bates draws animals using a charcoal pen after learning how to draw by watching YouTube videos.

Bates' art

FROM PAGE 1

amounts. Patrick's first goal was to sponsor a tiger salamander. After he achieved that goal, he set his sights higher — to sponsor Big Dude, a red-footed tortoise for \$1,000.

"I was amazed when I hit that goal," Patrick said. "I was very excited."

John Moyles, director of J&R Aquatic Animal Rescue, knew Patrick from when he volunteered and felt honored to receive donations from the artwork he sold.

"Patrick is such an artistic talent, and he loved caring for the animals here," he said. "It takes a village to make this place run, and it means a lot that he takes his time and effort to help out and be involved."

Patrick sells his artwork at numerous art shows, including Appleton's Art in the Park where he won the 2025 Youth Artist Award, the Children's Market at the Appleton's Farmers Market, events at Sunnyview Expo in Oshkosh and the Green Lake Art Show, and some smaller events like the Menasha Fall Festival. He also sells products on Redbubble, an online marketplace for artists.

Patrick estimated he spends anywhere from two to 40 hours on his drawings, depending on the level of detail.

Town of Neenah seeks recreation user input

Neenah News

The Town of Neenah, in cooperation with Cedar Corporation consultants, is in the process of preparing its 2027-2031 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (or CORP), an update to its current plan which was last prepared and adopted in 2015.

An online survey was initiated in early January for Town of Neenah residents and other park users to gather input and opinions on the conditions and future needs for existing parks and trails. The survey closes on Feb. 13, and the town is encouraging residents and other park users to



Submitted photo

Patrick Bates presents John Moyles of J&R Aquatic Animal Rescue a check to support tortoise Big Dude's enclosure.

"Those are the drawings that can take longer, especially if there are feathers involved," he said, adding he often looks at pictures of animals in nature for inspiration."

participate so a wide variety of feedback can be obtained and considered for integration into the updated plan.

The online survey will take about 10-12 minutes to complete and can be accessed from the home page of the Town of Neenah's website (townofneenah.com) or from the dedicated Project Hub which can be accessed at townofneenah-cedarcorp.hub.arcgis.com.

For more information about this effort, contact Ellen Skerke, Town of Neenah Administrator-Clerk-Treasurer at eskerke@tn.neenah.wi.gov or 920-725-0916.

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Schultz helps fuel strong second half for Rockets

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

After a rough first half in which he was saddled with two quick fouls and didn't score a point, Nick Schultz wanted to come out and get back to the way he normally plays basketball for the Neenah Rockets.

The senior did that and then some.

Schultz scored all 24 of his points in the second half and helped Neenah hold off Oshkosh West, 69-63, in a Fox Valley Association boys basketball game on Tuesday night in Oshkosh.

"I knew I had a bad start in the first half," Schultz said. "Second half I came out and just tried to get downhill, try to draw fouls, draw guys on me and create like I normally do. Just so happened that it was me knocking down shots tonight."

The Rockets scored the final four points of the first half to take a 25-20 lead and then turned things over to Schultz and fellow senior Roan Koeper.

Schultz converted a drive and then hit two free throws coming out of the locker room, while Koeper hit back-to-back 3-pointers in a 10-2 run to open the half. The duo combined for 33 of the team's first 35 points of the second half – two free throws from Chase Nitz were the remaining points – with Schultz scoring 12 of 14 Rocket points in one stretch.

"Obviously (making shots) sends my confidence through the roof," Schultz said. "Knocking down shots, getting guys open helps on offense but it also feels really good to go down and get stops on defense."

Koeper's lay in and a basket from Kolton Fleege off a Schultz assist gave the Rock-



Neenah News

Nick Schultz gets fouled by Oshkosh West's Billy Berg on a drive to the basket in the second half on Tuesday night.

ets their biggest lead of the night at 60-42 with just over five minutes left to play.

But then things got a little rough for the Rockets.

West knocked down three 3-pointers and registered a three-point play in a two-minute span to trim Neenah's lead to 64-56 before two free throws from Schultz pushed the lead back to double digits.

But the Rockets went just 3-of-8 from the free-throw line in the final 1:02 but were able to produce enough stops to thwart the Wildcats' hope of a comeback. West's Brayden Kufel hit a 3-pointer in the final seconds to narrow the final margin.

Still, the way Neenah finished wasn't the way head coach Lee Rabas wanted it to go.

"I'm happy we won but we didn't finish the game the way we liked so I'm disappointed in that," Rabas said. "Defensively we had to be better (in the second half) and we were until the last five minutes of the game and we were having all kinds of issues. We didn't play real well the last five minutes."

Koeper finished with 14 points – 12 in the second half – and eight rebounds for the Rockets. Xavier Bezars hit three 3-pointers in the first half and finished with nine points, while Fleege chipped in eight points for the win.

It was the fifth straight win for the Rockets after the team dropped five of six games in late December and early January.

"After that rough stretch we had, I think we all kind of knew what was at stake," Schultz said. "We really wanted to get after these games and win out the season and try to get those home games in March when it comes to regionals."

The Rockets will look to keep things rolling on Friday at home against Appleton East as Neenah plays just one team with a winning record – at Kaukauna on-

See **Rockets win** ON PAGE 13



Neenah News

Chase Nitz drives to the basket against an Oshkosh West defender in the second half on Tuesday.

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Rockets rally after halftime to collect win over Wildcats

By Joe Matzek
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Although Neenah led Oshkosh West at halftime of their girls' basketball game Tuesday night, the performance was less than satisfying for the Rockets.

Neenah responded with better ball movement, more energy and a 58-48 home victory.

The Rockets allowed the last seven points of the first half and led just 21-19. The problem, Neenah coach Andy Braunel said, was a reliance on perimeter shooting and not enough action in the paint.

"We knew we didn't do that in the first half," Braunel said. "We were very perimeter-oriented with our passing, which we fall into at times. We have a bunch of phenomenal three-point shooters, so it's very easy to fall in love with that part of the game. Our percentage from three goes up immensely off of kick-outs or getting lane touches."

Neenah (15-5 overall, 11-3 Fox Valley Association) surged with a 10-2 run to open the second half, capped by three-pointers from Rowan Klesmit and Ellie Buss.

The Wildcats (9-10, 5-8) didn't go away easily, cutting the Rockets' lead to 41-35. But Neenah came back by scoring the next nine points, including five from Klesmit, to take a commanding 50-35 lead.

The Rockets shot 14-of-30 for 47 percent after halftime, compared with 8-of-26 (31 percent) in the first half.

Klesmit said the Rockets played with more energy in the second half.

"When we get stops on defense, that's what fuels us," the senior guard said. "We did a pretty good job of that in the first half, but we just kind of stuck with it in the second half and we were breaking them down."

Neenah's defense was solid throughout, and the Rockets did it without two injured starters and excellent defenders, Celia Gentile and Elissa Ebel, Braunel said. They got solid minutes from several players, holding West to 17-of-50 shooting (34 percent).

McKenna Freier and Izzy Malloy got expanded playing time off the bench, and JB Kennedy and Libby Jahnke also saw action.

"We changed our rotation and we're really pleased with how the girls responded," Braunel said.

Klesmit, who entered with a 21.5-point average, led Neenah with 25, including 16 in the second half. Buss scored 12.

Kamryn Stauffacher led West with 12 points, followed by Kinslee Nelson with 11 and Samantha Panske with 10.

Neenah will travel to Appleton East for a 7:15 p.m. game Friday evening in a battle for second place in the FVA standings. The Patriots beat the Rockets 81-71 in December.

"I think the biggest thing is just playing our basketball and staying disciplined and staying together," Klesmit said about playing the Patriots. "They're a great team and they're going to go on runs, but basketball is a game of runs, so we've just got to push a little harder, and we're excited for it."

Prep sports roundup

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Zephyrs rack up easy win over Brillion

St. Mary Catholic improved to 18-1 on the season with a 69-39 rout of Brillion on Monday night.

Luci Nackers scored 20 points to lead the way for the Zephyrs, who are the top-ranked team in Division 4 by gobound.com.

Gabby Guerrero added 15 points and six steals, while Autumn Crowe tallied 14 points to give St. Mary Catholic three players in double figures in the win. Amelia Virlee chipped in eight points off the bench in the win.

Last Friday, the Zephyrs secured a hard-earned 59-51 win over Howards Grove, handing the Tigers just their fourth loss of the season.

Crowe had a huge night in the win, totaling a career-high 40 points to go along with five steals and six blocks. She finished 14-of-18 from the floor and 10-of-13 from the free-throw line, while also knocking down two of her three 3-point attempts.

Guerrero chipped in eight points in the win.

Rockets roll in second half to top Spartans

Rowan Klesmit and Ellie Buss combined to hit 10 of Neenah's 13 3-pointers as the Rockets pulled away in the second half to beat Oshkosh North last Friday, 85-66.

Klesmit led the team with 27 points, finishing 5-of-9 from 3-point range. She also finished with seven assists in the contest.

Farah Danforth finished 6-of-6 from the free-throw line in totaling 18 points in the win, while Buss chipped in 17 points. Sydney Michalkiewicz came off the bench to total 11 points and nine rebounds for the Rockets.

Neenah finished with 23 assists on 30 made field goals in the game, with Buss and Alissa Ebel each contributing four.

BOYS BASKETBALL

St. Mary Catholic extends winning streak

The Zephyrs played three games in six days and won all three contests to stretch their current run to four straight victories.

St. Mary Catholic capped the busy stretch with a 61-47 win over rival Manitowoc Lutheran on Tuesday night as the Zephyrs took a seven-point lead at halftime and pulled away in the second half.

Luke Fairweather scored 16 points to lead four players in double figures in the win over the Lancers.

Max Vosters finished with 11 points, while Mason Uhlenbrauck and Dylan Brenn each added 10. Five different players hit 3-pointers in the win for the Zephyrs.

On Saturday, St. Mary Catholic picked up a nonconference 76-68 win over Mil-

waukee Academy of Science behind a 26-point effort from Uhlenbrauck, who hit five 3-pointers in the game.

Mason Wagner added a career-high 22 points and also had nine rebounds, while Alex Klinkhammer chipped in 10 points. Fairweather led the team with 10 rebounds and nine assists in the win.

The Zephyrs also knocked off state-ranked Howards Grove, 75-63 last Thursday with Brenn scoring 24 points and Uhlenbrauck adding 22 points. Vosters also reached double figures with 11 points.

Balanced attack carries Rockets past Spartans

Six players reached double figures and the Rockets topped 90 points for the second straight game last Friday in a 91-77 win over Oshkosh North.

Kolton Fleege led the Rockets with 18 points but Neenah was able to spread the points around to beat the Spartans.

Xavier Bezares hit three of Neenah's 15 3-pointers in the game and finished with 12 points with Nick Schultz, Chase Nitz and Cal Juckem all posting 11 points. Schultz also led the team with six assists.

Roan Koeper added 10 points, while Jackson Rindt chipped in nine points for Neenah.

GIRLS WRESTLING

Neenah tops Hartford in home dual meet

The Rockets racked up five pins and built a big lead en route to collecting a 42-29 dual meet victory over Hartford last Thursday.

Neenah notched four straight pins in the light weights to seize control of the dual meet.

Greenlee Ennis started the stretch with a pin at 107 pounds, with Cassidy Steinberg (114), Joelle Reay (120) and Kylee Kurszewski (126) following suit. Steinberg and Reay earned their pins in less than a minute.

Ava Armatti also picked up a pin at 138 pounds with Janet Sorto (145) and Jenson Kurszewski (152) rounding out Neenah's points with forfeit wins.

Rockets take second at Shawano invite

Kylee Kurszewski and Amari Richard each won individual titles in the gold brackets as Neenah finished second to Bay Port at the fourth annual Shawano Girls Invitational.

Kurszewski was dominant in winning the 126-pound title, posting two pins and a 19-4 technical fall victory at the tournament. She pinned Bay Port's Anna Behling in 3:10 in the title match.

Richard also notched two pins in her three victories at the tournament – including a 38-second win in her first – while also earning a major decision. Richard

SEE **Prep roundup** ON PAGE 13



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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 12

pinned Southern Door's Portia Hah in 4:58 to claim the 132-pound title.

Joelle Reay (114) and Ava Armatti (138) each finished in third place in their respective divisions, while Greenlee Ennis (107) and Lluvia Carrillo (185) were each fifth.

BOYS WRESTLING

Neenah topples Appleton North in dual meet

The Rockets posted wins at the final nine weight classes and rolled to a 66-10 win over Appleton North in a Fox Valley Association dual meet last Thursday.

Eight of the final nine wins came by pin and was started by Declan Koch in the 165-pound match. Ledger Lewis (175), Kaden Roth (190), Brayden Milbrodt (215) and Willy Brucks (285) also earned pins before Carson Finch (106), Broden Butzke (120) and Marcus Peterson (120) finished off the streak.

Lewis had the quickest pin of the bunch, needing just 43 seconds to secure the win over Manveer Sungh.

Garrett Nedens wrapped up the win with a 9-0 major decision at 126 pounds.

Cashtin Tiedt (132) and Jaxon Ennis (138) started the match with back-to-back technical fall wins for the Rockets, while Joaquin Quinonez added a major decision win at 150 pounds.

SWIMMING

Wendell leads Rockets at Middleton invite

Burke Wendell placed third in the 100-yard breaststroke to post the top finish for Neenah at the Middleton Invitational last Saturday.

Wendell's finish was one of three in the top

10 at the 11-team meet.

The Rockets also finished eighth in the 200-yard freestyle relay with a foursome of Wendell, Ryker Zarda, Gideon Benner and Gage Jensen, while Benner picked up a ninth-place finish in the 200-yard freestyle.

Neenah also had a strong showing in the 100-yard backstroke with Jack Kippa and Zarda, placing 11th and 12th, respectively.

Neenah finished eighth overall at the meet.

BOYS HOCKEY

Rockets roll in Badgerland tourney

Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha cruised to an 11-0 win over Appleton United in the first game of the Badgerland Conference tournament on Tuesday night.

The Rockets were coming off a 2-0 victory over De Pere last Thursday with Mark Sutton picking up both goals in the game.

Vinny Scholl and Clay Laabs assisted on Sutton's first goal, which came just 31 seconds into the game. The Rockets didn't score again until late in the third period with Preston Liedke and Cartyr Simonson providing the helpers on Sutton's power play goal.

Matthew Nelson stopped all 21 shots he faced to earn the shutout.

GIRLS HOCKEY

Marsh, Drach help boost Stars' victory

Neenah High School athletes Ellery Marsh and Emmaree Drach helped the Fox Cities Stars collect a 9-1 win over the Brookfield Glaciers last week.

Marsh scored a second-period goal for Fox Cities, while Drach picked up a pair of assists in the win – one of them coming on Marsh's goal.

It was Marsh's first goal of the season, while Drach has seven assists on the year.

UConn's Ziebell named Player of the Week in the Big East

Neenah News

Former Neenah High School stand-out Allie Ziebell was named the Big East Player of the Week for women's basketball following an historic performance for the University of Connecticut.

In a 97-39 win over Xavier on Jan. 28, Ziebell scored a career-high 34 points while going 10-of-14 from 3-point range in the game. The 34 points in a game was a school record for a UConn reserve, while the 10 3-pointers tied the program record.

Ziebell also had three assists and two steals in the game.

On Sunday, the sophomore finished with 10 points and two rebounds in a 96-66 win over Tennessee.

Ziebell earned the conference honors for the first time in her career and joins Shea Ralph as the only UConn



Ziebell

reserves to be named the conference player of the week. Teammates Sarah Strong (six times) and Azzi Fudd (twice) have also garnered the honor this season.

Ziebell's previous career-high of 17 points came last season against Xavier when she played a season-high 18 minutes. Ziebell scored 16 points against Xavier earlier this season, which stood as her season-high until last Wednesday.

She has reached double figures six times this year, including in each of her last three games.

In her second season with the Huskies, Ziebell is one of five players who have played in all 23 games and is averaging about 17 minutes per contest. She is averaging 7.6 points per contest and is shooting a team-best 47.7 percent from 3-point range (42-of-88).

Ziebell averaged 2.8 points per game while playing about eight minutes a game in UConn's journey to the national title.

Rockets win

FROM PAGE 11

Feb. 13 – over its next four contests.

Neenah then closes the season at Kimberly and home against Appleton North, two teams the Rockets have lost to this season.

Rabas hopes the Rockets can keep improving because he believes this

team has yet to play its best level of basketball.

"We have a ceiling and we are about 60 or 65 percent of the way there and it's up to us coaches to get that final 35 or 40 percent on them by the end of the year," Rabas said. "There's a lot more room for improvement. We have the potential for a lot of real good basketball because we are not where we need to be."

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

Armatti feels at home battling opponents on the mat

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

Outside of the Neenah High School wrestling room, Ava Armatti appears to be just a run-of-the-mill high school senior.

She will greet you with a warm smile and converse in a polite, soft-spoken manner.

Once those doors close behind her, a different side of Armatti is unleashed.

“(The combat sports) all comes more natural to me. Just getting on a mat and just fighting. I love it,” Armatti said before a recent Rocket practice. “I tried many other sports and most of them weren’t really for me. I’m really big on physical sports and combat sports ever since I was a kid.”

Armatti is a returning state qualifying wrestler for the Rockets after having posted a 33-13 record a year ago.

She nearly qualified for state in her sophomore season when she took second at sectionals, but runner-ups did not automatically advance. Armatti came back last season and won the sectional title – pinning all three of her opponents in a total of just more than four minutes of mat time – to earn the trip to the Kohl Center.

“Being able to make it junior year was a very big goal that I succeeded in which was pretty cool,” said Armatti, who posted one win in her first trip to state. “It was a great experience even though I didn’t make it too far.”

Armatti is on pace for another 30-plus win season with the state series of tournaments to start next Friday with regionals at Hortonville.

This is the part of the season Armatti has been looking forward to and she has her sights set on another trip to Madison. This time with a different finish.

“My goal is definitely to place at sectionals to go to state and then possibly place at state. I think with the mental drive I can do that. If I put the will to it, it’s possible,” Armatti said. “Just keep training hard on



the mat and truly believing in myself and just staying confident and keep doing what I’m doing. I just want to get better every day.”

Armatti didn’t start wrestling until her eighth-grade year, however, she was no stranger to being on a mat.

She started doing judo as a youth and also got into jiu-jitsu before scaling those back to take on wrestling.

“Judo got me used to stepping on the mat and going up against another opponent,” Armatti said. “Judo was the stepping stone for me loving combat sports which brought me to wrestling.”

Armatti admits that her Judo has carried over into her wrestling, even if some of her teammates are wary of her using it on them.

“I think I get away with throwing so much in wrestling is because of judo,” Armatti said. “When me and (wrestling (partner) Janet (Sorto) are going live, if I start a throw she will be like, ‘Nope. No Thank you.’”

Armatti had another influence in wrestling that she said helped her in the sport.

Her older brother, Eli, was a two-time sectional qualifier for the Neenah boys program and also competed in judo with his sister growing up.

“Growing up together we were in judo together and just loved the combat sports. He was a big influence on my wrestling,” Armatti said. “Once in a while we will still (compete against each other).”

And who wins?

“Eli wins,” Armatti said without hesi-

SEE **Senior Standout** ON PAGE 15



Neenah News

With a background in judo and jiu-jitsu, Neenah senior Ava Armatti has developed into a fierce wrestler and looks to return to the state tournament this winter.

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Submitted photo

Jack Brucks (second from right) will become one of the youngest riders in the professional field as he competes this season.

Neenah teen signs contract with professional flat track racing team

Neenah News

Jack Brucks of Neenah has signed with 1st Impressions Race Team to compete professionally in the 2026 American Flat Track season, with an objective of contending for Rookie of the Year honors in his debut professional campaign.

As he turns 16, Brucks enters the 2026 season as one of the youngest riders in the professional field, yet his recent results reflect the pace, consistency and racecraft required to compete immediately at the top level. He thinks his ability to qualify well, advance through competitive brackets and maintain top finishes throughout race weekends has positioned him as a legitimate Rookie of the Year contender.

“Signing with 1st Impressions Race Team puts me in the best possible position to fight for Rookie of the Year,” said Brucks. “The team has the experience,

equipment and belief needed to run up front. I’m ready to put in the work, learn every round and compete for results right away.”

1st Impressions Race Team has earned recognition for developing riders and fielding competitive motorcycles across the American Flat Track paddock. With a strong technical program and proven support structure, the team expects Brucks to be competitive from the opening round of the 2026 season.

The 2026 American Flat Track season will feature a national schedule with races broadcast on FOX Sports and covered across motorsports media outlets. Brucks and 1st Impressions Race Team will compete coast-to-coast.

Brucks began competing two years ago as an amateur rider for 1st Impressions, which is based out of Florida.

Senior Standout

FROM PAGE 14

tation. “Maybe when I was a kid I would win.”

Armatti sees her future leaning toward a return to judo and jiu-jitsu as the school she plans to attend next fall – UW-La Crosse – doesn’t offer women’s wrestling as an intercollegiate sport yet.

But first she will finish her senior season and continue to compete on the close-knit Rocket squad.

“I’m close with most of the girls on the team. It’s like being in a room filled with my friends,” said Armatti, who also competed for the Neenah swim team this fall. “I can

just be myself and give it all on the mat. That applies to me getting better each day.”

That’s something that has been at the foundation of her successful high school career and an accomplishment she takes pride in.

“I can tell after each tournament I’ve gotten better and I feel really proud of myself for that,” Armatti said. “I have definitely matured more this year. I have definitely gotten stronger mentally, for sure. Wrestling teaches you to have good self-confidence and that’s another reason why I really like the sport of wrestling.”

“Sports have taught me determination. As long as I can put a will onto what I want, I can get it. Just having confidence and knowing I’m capable of getting it.”

Obituaries

Denis Floyd

Heaven has gained another angel ... after a long illness Denis Floyd entered his heavenly home on January 22, 2026. Born on November 6, 1947, Denis was well-known and well-loved throughout the places he called home in the Fox Valley and Las Vegas.



Affectionately known as “Fonz” or “Cowboy,” Denis had a larger-than-life personality. His humor, infectious chuckle, and endless stories brought joy to everyone around him. He was a natural entertainer, always ready with a good joke or a tale that left his listeners smiling. He was a man of generous spirit and heart. For many years, Denis enjoyed supporting children’s causes especially those that collected gifts/bikes for less fortunate children.

Denis began his career in law enforcement with the Ripon Police Department, where he became the first Sergeant in the department’s history. Denis designed the department’s police patch and was recognized by President Nixon for his design. He later served as Chief of Police in Green Lake — a role that gave rise to one of his favorite stories: the time he and his team successfully fended off a biker gang that tried to storm into Green Lake after one of their members had been arrested. He proudly served 7 years with the National Guard which included being called in for the 1968 Milwaukee Riot.

After moving to Las Vegas, he worked security at the Flamingo Hilton and Dunes Oasis before his work at the Nevada Test Site as a Sensitive Assignment

Specialist. After returning to Wisconsin, Denis continued his work in security for Kimberly-Clark. A lifelong learner, he pursued continuing education and earned numerous certifications in law enforcement, private security, and investigative studies throughout his lifetime.

Denis enjoyed his yearly visits with his lifelong friend Jeffery “Monty”, a friendship that began while working together at the Nevada Test Site. Denis and Monty were brothers in spirit. A devoted Green Bay Packers fan, Denis also enjoyed boating and fishing and had a deep appreciation for Country and Western music and Western movies.

Denis is survived by, his daughter, Stephanie (David Curtis) Floyd of Hickory, Kentucky, and son, Chad (Kyrsten) Floyd of Tucson, Arizona along with grandchildren Sage (fiancé Katie Wyble) Floyd and Kaya Floyd, in addition to his brother, Roger (Barb) Floyd. He was preceded in death by his parents, Lawrence, Sr. and Berneice Floyd and siblings Eileen Floyd, Ruth Eiring, Ellen Sobralski, Lawrence, Jr. “Chuck” Floyd, Earl Floyd, Mary Jo Floyd, Jean (special brother-in-law Clarence “Salty”) Salzman, and Roy Floyd.

The family would like to give special thanks to Paula Jones for being Denis’ friend and helper once he returned to Ripon and to his personal care attendants, nurses, and doctors at Ascension Columbia St. Mary’s Hospital along with Compassus Hospice.

The family will hold a Celebration of Life at a later date.

Please visit www.ButzinMarchant.com to send online condolences.

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Lovebirds

Lovebirds are a playful and affectionate type of small parrot. They are only about five inches in length and are sometimes called pint-sized bundles of joy.

Lovebirds are little clowns and they love to play for hours at a time. They hang upside down, spin toys and dance on shoulders.

Put this sentence back together to find out why they're called lovebirds.

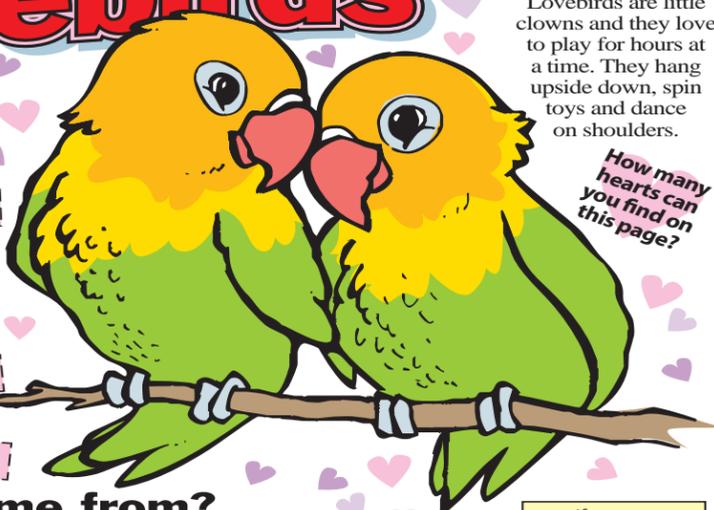
time snuggling close together when

These little African parrots are

pairs, they spend long periods of

sleeping or resting.

called lovebirds because, if kept in

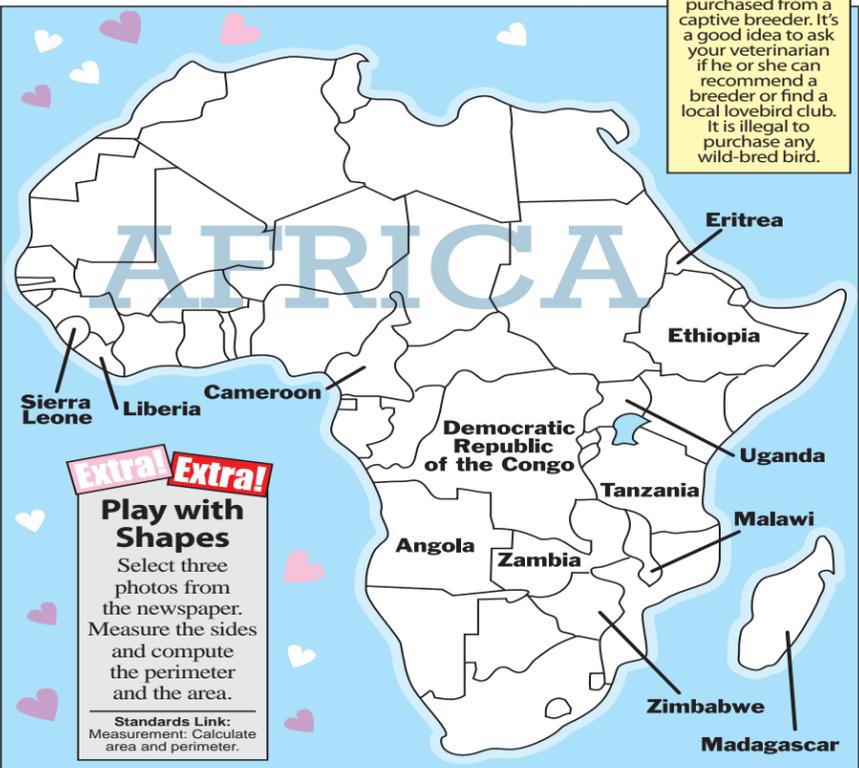


How many hearts can you find on this page?

Where do lovebirds come from?

Read about which parts of Africa are home to each of the nine varieties of lovebirds. Then use different colors to show where each kind can be found on the map of Africa.

- Madagascar Lovebird** is found on the island of Madagascar.
- Red-Faced Lovebird** is found in equatorial Africa, ranging from Sierra Leone to Uganda.
- Abyssinian Lovebird** is found in central and eastern Ethiopia and southern Eritrea.
- Swindern's Lovebird** is found in Liberia, Cameroon and Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Peach-Faced Lovebird** is found in Angola.
- Nyasa Lovebird** is found in parts of Zambia and Malawi.
- Black-Checked Lovebird** is found in Zimbabwe.
- Fischer's Lovebird** is found in northwestern Tanzania.
- Masked Lovebird** is found in northeastern Tanzania.



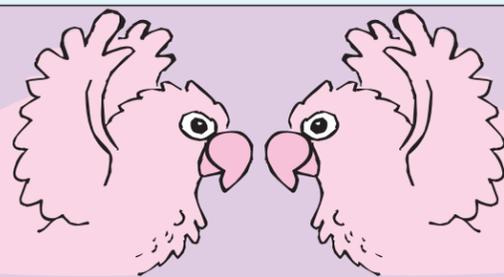
If you are considering lovebirds as pets, make sure they are purchased from a captive breeder. It's a good idea to ask your veterinarian if he or she can recommend a breeder or find a local lovebird club. It is illegal to purchase any wild-bred bird.

Extra! Extra!
Play with Shapes
 Select three photos from the newspaper. Measure the sides and compute the perimeter and the area.
 Standards Link: Measurement: Calculate area and perimeter.

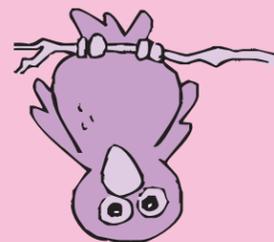
Standards Link: Geography: Use map skills to locate places.

Kid Scoop FIT & FUN

Play Like Lovebirds



Face a friend and pretend one of you is the mirror image of the other. Try to "mirror" each action your friend does.



Lovebirds often hang upside down. Find a large grassy area and try to stand on your head. Don't give up, it takes practice and balance.



Lovebirds love to chase each other from tree to tree. Play a game of tag with some friends. Choose a tree to be "base" where you can't be tagged IT.

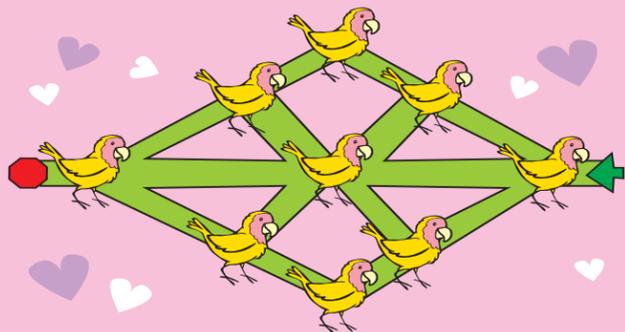


Lovebirds love to dance, too. Put on some of your favorite music and dance, dance, dance!

Standards Link: Physical Education: Use a variety of basic and advanced movement forms.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Draw a line through every lovebird without lifting your pencil or passing over the same bird twice!



Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

Double Double Word Search

- LOVEBIRDS
- PERIMETER
- PLAYFUL
- CLOWNS
- MASKED
- AFRICA
- PARROT
- ISLAND
- LITTLE
- PEACH
- NYASA
- DANCE
- CONGO
- HANG
- SPIN

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

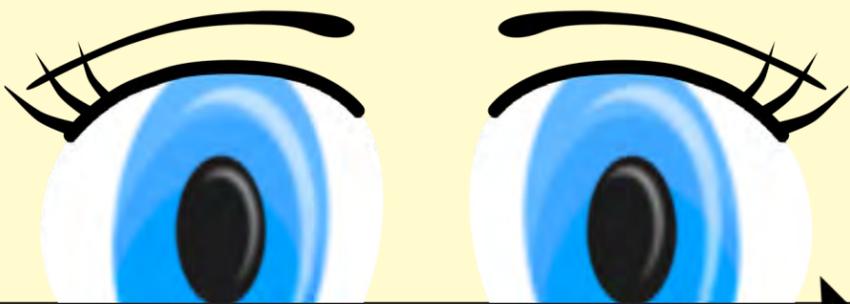


Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognize identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

Write On!

Why I Love Birds

Write a Valentine love note or poem to a bird.



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