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## New mayor's journey leads to city hall

By Patti Lee  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

It's a wet and rainy Sunday but Neenah Mayor-Elect Brian Borchart's demeanor is definitely sunny.

Borchart was chosen in the April 7 spring election by a resounding margin over Scott Becher. While gratified with the results, Borchart is quick to underscore what has been his consistent message.

"I knew the campaign I wanted to run," he said. "And 75% means the message I had was resonating."

"But that other 25% is a part of this community, and I will be doing all I can to hear their needs," Borchart continued. "They're all our 'customers' in a way. And

that's super important. We take their tax money and try to give them great services, but sometimes we miss things and we need to listen."



Borchart

Borchart has had a life journey dedicated to service. As a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, he took part in an alternative spring break sponsored by the Newman Center. The group spent their break drywalling, pouring foundations and repairing impoverished homes in the Appalachian region of Kentucky.

He has spent the past 18 years teaching at Neenah High School in the alternative education program, which supports at-risk students while also serving on the Neenah Common Council since 2020, with the past three years as president.

Borchart had been weighing the emotional decision whether or not to leave teaching since his first mayoral run in 2022. When Jane Lang won that election, Borchart pretty much gave up on the idea.

"I always just said it wasn't on my bingo card, right?" he said.

When Borchart was elected council

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## INSIDE



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Reach Counseling aids sexual assault survivors  
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Rockets' LeClair make move to defense  
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Photo by Jonathan Kim

## Champion musician

Neenah High School sophomore violinist Malina Zhang won the Audrey G. Baird Stars of Tomorrow Competition Sunday while performing with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra at the Bradley Symphony Center. The event showcased standout concerto performances featuring a depth of talent from around the state. Jenny Wang was an honorable mention for the concerto competition and performed with symphony side by side for the second half pieces on the program.

## New school board members share their visions ahead of terms

By Eric Endres  
NEENAH NEWS

Voters recently elected three new members to the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education.

New board members Christian (Chris) Blanton, Becky Heidke Kwiatkowski and Samuel M. Roth shared their visions about what lies ahead for the district. Incumbents Lindsay Clark, Michelle Swardenski and Deborah Watry did not seek reelection.

The new members have several items they hope to accomplish as their term

with the board begins. The board met with the outgoing members for the last time Tuesday. The board's next meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. May 5.

"I'm interested in learning how current policies function in practice, identifying where updates may be needed to reflect today's realities and recognizing where we may need to recommit to policies that are already in place," Blanton said. "I also approach this position with confidence in the board. I believe in working collaboratively, even when perspectives differ,

and I see those moments as opportunities to find common ground and move forward in ways that best serve our students and community."

Heidke Kwiatkowski said her first priority is to do her homework.

"I want to read policies and procedures to shore up my understanding of the district and its needs," she said. "While I've been regularly attending board and committee meetings, I know there's still a lot to learn. I want to maximize my people resources to help me clarify what I read

or hear from the community. My ultimate goal is to develop the tools to make the best decisions for our students and teachers."

Roth said the first thing he wants to do is learn — how the district operates, where the real leverage points are and where a board member can be most useful thinking long-term rather than just reacting.

"I don't want to arrive with a fixed agen-

SEE **School board** ON PAGE 7

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

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# New county board meets for first time

By MaryBeth Matzek  
NEENAH NEWS

Carl Schulze was not sure what to expect for his first Winnebago County Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday evening.

The newly elected supervisor in District 27, Schulze spoke with several current county supervisors in advance to learn what to expect in his new role, but nothing makes up for real-life experience.

Tuesday's meeting was an orientation when Schulze and the rest of the county board received an overview about the county's priorities and strategic goals along with basics like how to vote and the rules governing county board proceedings. Next week, there's an organizational meeting followed by the first full county board meeting on April 28.

The orientation meeting featured quick summaries from county department leaders, a presentation from Corporation Counsel Mary Anne Mueller on ethics and a brief overview from County Executive Gordon Hintz of the county's capital improvement plan and strategic improvement plan. Board members also learned about the technology available to them and the electronic voting process.

"I'm excited to see what the county's long-term vision will be this year and how I can help implement their goals," Schulze said. "Hopefully, I make some meaningful connections along the way."

Last summer, Schulze, a disability advocate and quadriplegic, drove his wheelchair more than 90 miles from his Neenah apartment to downtown Madison to shine a spotlight on the lack of home health care workers, which he said stems from the low compensation for care workers. The journey took three weeks.

"My background as a disability advocate will be very beneficial (in my new role) because I have experience working with different branches of government to identify issues, collaborating with others to strategize potential solutions and draft legislation," Schulze said.

The 36-member board includes 13 new members following last week's spring election.

The new board will have a full slate of issues to work through in the coming months. The future of the 43-acre Winnebago Fox campus – the former University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh site in Menasha – continues to loom. When the campus closed in July, Winnebago County became its sole owner after buying out Outagamie County for \$1. Faith Technologies Inc. initially expressed interest in the property as a possible training location but earlier this year declined to move ahead.

Currently, the Menasha School District operates a child care facility on-site while the county operates the Barlow Planetarium. The county is preparing to open the Communications Arts Center and fieldhouse for rental use while looking at other options for the rest of the site.

Housing affordability and availability remain important issues in the county. The board created a \$3.5 million revolving loan fund (RLF) from Spirit Funds last December. In its strategic plan, the county set a goal to "ensure housing for all" and to build strong community support for the policies and investments to make that happen. The RLF would establish low-interest gap financing for housing development; the county would work with municipalities to help projects move forward

efficiently.

Winnebago County has a capital improvement plan to address the county's aging collection of buildings. At its meeting last month, the county board agreed to spend \$2.6 million from the Spirit Fund on a design and engineering plan to expand the county's highway building and relocate the facilities department to the same campus.

The new county board would need to include how to pay for the project in its next budget. The total cost of the project is an estimated \$32,104,800, with \$17,065,000 for expanding the highway department and \$15,039,800 for moving the facilities department.

The facilities department is currently located in downtown Oshkosh.

## Calendar of events

### Saturday, April 18

Fox Crossing Electronics Recycling Event, 8 a.m., 2000 Municipal Drive  
Volunteer Tree Planting, 8 a.m., Carpenter Preserve

### Sunday, April 19

Fox Crossing Fire Association Drive Thru Pancake Breakfast, 8 a.m., 1326 Cold Spring Road

Larsen-Winchester Lions Pancake Breakfast, 8 a.m., Winchester Elementary School

Lawrence University Student Jazz Quartet: Spring Sessions, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

### Tuesday, April 21

Fox Valley Memory Project Annual Fundraiser and Celebration, 5 p.m., Bridgewood Resort Hotel and Conference Center

### Thursday, April 23

Doty Cabin Museum presents We The People of Neenah and Menasha: Governor Doty's Home by Tom Vanlieshout, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

NHS Spring Show - Clue: High School Edition, 7 p.m., NHS Black Box Theater

### Friday, April 24

NHS Spring Show - Clue: High School Edition, 7 p.m., NHS Black Box Theater

### Saturday, April 25

Bioblitz, 9:30 a.m., WILD Center, 2285 W. Butte des Morts Beach Road  
Spring Wine Walk, noon, Downtown Neenah

NHS Spring Show - Clue: High School Edition, 7 p.m., NHS Black Box Theater

### Sunday, April 26

Lawrence University Student Jazz Quartet: Spring Sessions, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

NHS Spring Show - Clue: High School Edition, 2 p.m., NHS Black Box Theater

### Tuesday, April 28

High School Orchestra Concert, 7:30 p.m., NHS Performing Arts Center

### Thursday, April 30

High School Band Concert, 7:30 p.m., NHS Performing Arts Center

### Friday, May 1

First Friday Concert Series: Beginner Line Dancing, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

## Entries sought for Memorial Day parade

Neenah News

Organizers are accepting entries for the Neenah-Menasha Memorial Day Parade on May 25.

The parade starts at 9 a.m. in Menasha

and goes to Neenah. The last day for entries for the parade is April 30.

Anyone who would like to be in the parade can call Mike Taylor at 920-725-5380 or Dave Mix at 920-851-2306.



Photo from Neenah Historical Society

## Empty Boehm's Meat Market

The vacant interior of Boehm's Meat Market at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Church Street is shown in 1983.

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# Theatre department presents murder mystery performances

By Pamela Hart  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Neenah High School theater students are bringing the classic board game Clue to life.

“Clue: High School Edition” takes place on a dark and stormy night, and the characters have been invited to a very unusual dinner party. Each of the guests has an alias, the butler offers a variety of weapons and the host is, well, dead. So whodunit?

The iconic oddballs known as Scarlet, Plum, White, Green, Peacock and Mustard will race to find the murderer in Boddy Manor before the body count stacks up. The madcap comedy is said to keep the audience guessing until the final twist.

The theater department selected Clue since they have not done a murder mystery in years and the directors felt it was the right time to do so. Clue is a fast-paced and complex play that demands a lot from the cast, crew and design teams. The directors loved the idea of a play that audience members have a connection through the film or board game.

The spring play is the last theatrical production each year at Neenah High School. Thus, it is the last opportunity for seniors to participate before they graduate. This

production has many seniors in both cast and crew positions.

One senior told director Kaitie Bergmann that this is his favorite play, so he is excited to finish out his high school productions playing one of his dream roles. A few of the students, in collaboration with the school’s art department, are painting the floor to resemble the board game, which helps make the staging feel even more immersive.

“It is such a pleasure to work with these students,” Bergmann said. “They bring energy, dedication, humor and focus to each rehearsal. The cast consists of freshman through senior students. A good mix of students have been involved in four years of Neenah High School productions and some students are in a play for the first time in their lives. I feel honored to work with students who are passionate, curious, and dedicated to bring the fun of this story to life.”

“Clue: High School Edition” will be presented at Neenah High School in its Black Box theater, at 7 p.m. April 23-25 and at 2 p.m. April 26. The Black Box theater is a smaller theatrical venue, which allows audience members to sit close to all of the action as it unfolds. Seating is limited. Tickets are on sale at rocketplayers.com.



Submitted  
Cast members prepare for upcoming performances of “Clue: High School Edition” at Neenah High School.

## Business news roundup



Berfiend

Harold Berfiend, MBA, has been named as the chief financial officer for the **Froedtert ThedaCare** health care system. In this role, Berfiend will oversee all financial operations for the system, including financial strategy, budgeting, revenue cycle and long-term financial planning. He will lead teams that support the organization’s ability to continue providing comprehensive care and expanding access across Wisconsin and be-

yond. Berfiend will oversee several teams in his new role including, Finance, Facilities, Revenue Cycle, Supply Chain and Managed Care. As Berfiend steps into the new role, Mark Thompson, MBA, CPA, chief transformational investments and value integration officer for Froedtert ThedaCare, who has also been serving as interim chief financial officer, will be retiring on July 3. Berfiend will officially begin in his new role at Froedtert

ThedaCare on May 11.

Longtime Executive Chef Marcos Ramirez has become a co-owner of **Town Council Kitchen and Bar** at 133 W. Wisconsin Ave. The other co-owner is another longtime employee, Alex Fehrenbach. The restaurant was founded in 2016 by Jonathan Horan.

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# Counseling agency extends help, hope to assault survivors

By MaryBeth Matzek  
NEENAH NEWS

Started as a nonprofit to offer advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault, Reach Counseling has grown over the last 50 years to provide long-term, outpatient clinical counseling services, prevention education and offender treatment programs along with its advocacy services.

"We've created a systemic approach of prevention, response and treatment in our community," said Marianne Radley Welhouse, Reach's director of community relations and special events. "We hit the issue of sexual violence head-on from several angles."

Headquartered in Neenah, Reach covered Winnebago County from its founding until 2022 when it received a federal grant to also become the designated the sexual assault service provider in Calumet and Outagamie counties.

Reach Counseling is in a period of transition. The organization recently announced a new CEO — Missy Pickett. She comes to Reach from Lakeland Care Plus where she most recently served as vice president of consulting.

Reach's previous CEO, Kristin Trimberger, will move into a new role, chief consulting officer. She will lead the launch of Reach Forward, the organization's capacity-building and consulting initiative designed to strengthen other nonprofits and community-based organizations. This new initiative will help diversify the organization's revenue, which has been affected by significant federal funding cuts.

Reach was founded as the Winnebago County Sexual Assault Response Team in 1976 before going through a name change in the 1990s. Last year in Winnebago

County, Reach made 87 advocate visits to area hospitals, had 209 counseling clients, served 33 sexual offender treatment patients and made 426 presentations to 5,993 students.

"People don't understand realize the scope of sexual violence in our community so it's important to talk about these issues," said Welhouse, adding that April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

When a victim arrives at a local hospital after being sexually assaulted, the hospital contacts Reach, who sends an advocate to walk with the victim through dealing with the aftermath, including crisis counseling and dealing with law enforcement and the judicial system if the victim decides to pursue charges, Welhouse said. Advocacy services are offered free of cost and provide safe planning, skill building and culturally specific services.

Reach partners with local hospitals, such as Aurora Medical Center in Oshkosh, which has Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) who work with victims after they arrive at the hospital. Brenda Doolittle, the forensic nursing department manager at Aurora Medical Center, said when a victim comes in, they contact Reach.

"We explain to them that Reach is here as an advocate for them, and I would say patients welcome their help about 98% of the time," Doolittle said. "They appreciate having someone there, helping to answer questions."

Doolittle said the nurse examiners collect evidence and take photographs, which can be used in court — if the victim decides to report the crime. The only time the victim does not have a choice is if they are 17 and under.

"We are mandatory reporters, so we



Submitted photo

Neenah-based Reach Counseling provides sexual assault support services throughout Winnebago County.

have to contact the police in those cases," she said, adding assault victims are cared for in a special treatment area in the hospital's emergency department.

Welhouse said Reach's in-house therapy team is a differentiator.

"We've put together an integrated system of care," she said. "One aspect that really sets us apart is offering mental health therapy to assault victims to aid them in their healing and their recovery."

Welhouse said Reach provides individual therapy and child and adolescent therapy to victims of sexual assault to help them through the recovery process. Support groups are available for culturally specific groups including the Latinx community, the Asian community and people with disabilities; for youth and teens; for students at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and Lawrence University; and survivors of human trafficking.

Reach is active in area schools providing age-appropriate presentations from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Welhouse said.

"We start out in kindergarten talking about good and bad touches and having a trusted adult and then by the time we're in high school, we're talking about healthy relationships," she said.

The nonprofit also provides sexual offender treatment, which provides voluntary and court-mandated treatment for individuals who have committed sexual offenses. By using evidence-based group and individual therapy to promote accountability, empathy and healthier behaviors, Welhouse said recidivism rates can be lowered to less than the national average (7% vs. 31%).

Due to deep funding cuts to the Victims of Crime Act, Reach lost more than \$400,000 in funding in 2025 and was forced to cut some staff members. Welhouse said Reach is now looking for more volunteers to help as advocates.

"We want to provide 24-7 coverage at the hospitals, and we provide the training that the volunteers need," she said.

For more on Reach, visit reachcounseling.com.

## C-pod opening stresses jail OT budget

By MaryBeth Matzek  
NEENAH NEWS

It is only April, and the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office is already feeling a "crunch" in its overtime budget, according to Sheriff John Matz.

As of the first week in April, 42% of the jail overtime budget has been spent for the year, he said.

The main reason is C-pod, which has not been in regular use at the Winnebago County Jail since 2021, remains open due to high overall jail counts, said Matz, who made his comments about the overtime budget April 6 during the Judiciary & Public Safety Committee meeting.

The jail began opening C-pod in 2025 at times to deal with rising prisoner numbers. The original plan was to reopen the pod permanently this July once six new deputies are hired but it has been open full-time since February.

For the two weeks prior to the April 6 meeting, the average jail count was above 270 daily.

C-pod remains open because the jail

continues to see an increase in the number of inmate bookings. In 2025, the jail saw 4,823 bookings. At its current pace, Matz said the 2026 number could top 5,800.

"We're hoping with the new positions we can help make up for some of the OT, but we'll have vacations to cover," he said. "This is an FYI at what we're looking at for the fall and the upcoming budget for next year."

With C-pod remaining open, Matz said he planned to ask for four more deputies in next year's county budget. With the six deputies starting this year and if the jail gets four more next year, that will equal the 10 who were laid off in 2021 when C-pod was originally closed due to a declining jail population.

Matz said there have been years when the department has come close to exceeding its overtime budget but has managed to stay under. He said he hopes that's the same this year.

"We hope we can get the six deputies hired on to start on July 1," Matz said. "Recruiting isn't always easy, but we hope to begin starting interviews next week."

## Museum history featured during presentation

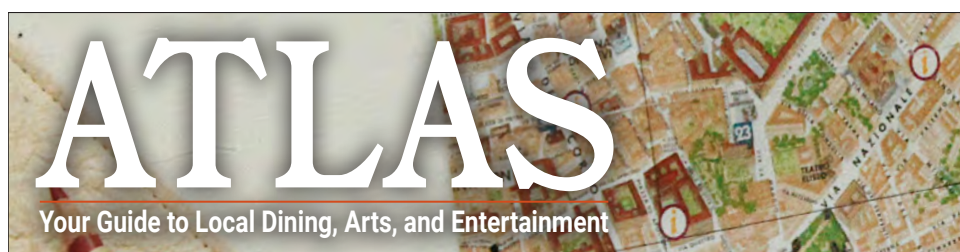
Neenah News

Tom VanLieshout, with the help of a few City of Neenah employees, will present the history of the Doty Cabin Museum.

Traveling Museum: Governor Doty's home will be held at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Neenah Public Library Shattuck Com-

munity Room.

Attendees will learn about the people impacted by Governor Doty's influence and how The Grand Loggery was the host for many pioneers. The museum will have objects on hand owned by the Doty Family as well as other influential early settlers who interacted with the Doty Family.



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Photo from Future Neenah

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Shoppers lined up Saturday outside the Future Neenah office for their chance to win gift certificates and prizes from merchants at the annual Love Local Saturday. The first 125 shoppers received a Love Local tote bag filled with coupons to shop at their favorite downtown stores.

## Area unemployment rate increases to 3.3%

Neenah News

The Oshkosh-Neenah metropolitan area (MSA) and Winnebago County saw their unemployment rate increase to 3.3% in January, up from 2.7% in December 2025 and 2.9% a year ago, according to preliminary data from the state Department of Workforce Development.

The preliminary January unemployment rates increased in all 13 metropolitan areas over the month. Rates increased in all 13 metropolitan areas over the year.

Preliminary January 2026 unemploy-

ment rates increased in all of Wisconsin's 35 largest cities over the month. Unemployment rates decreased in two cities over the year. Rates increased in 32 cities over the year and stayed the same in the one remaining city.

Preliminary January 2026 unemployment rates increased in all 72 counties over the month. Unemployment rates decreased in seven counties over the year. Rates increased in 61 counties over the year and stayed the same in the four remaining counties.

## Library announces volunteer of the year

Neenah News

Lori Lohry has been named The Friends of the Neenah Public Library 2025 Volunteer of the Year.

Lohry has been a volunteer at the Neenah Public Library for two and a half years, shelving materials, serving summer lunches, assisting at the annual book sale and assisting the youth department with their many projects.

When asked why she enjoys volunteering at the library, she responded, "I have always liked being in libraries since I was a kid. It is comfortable, a natural fit and I feel useful. I know that I am doing something beneficial for the kids and the staff."

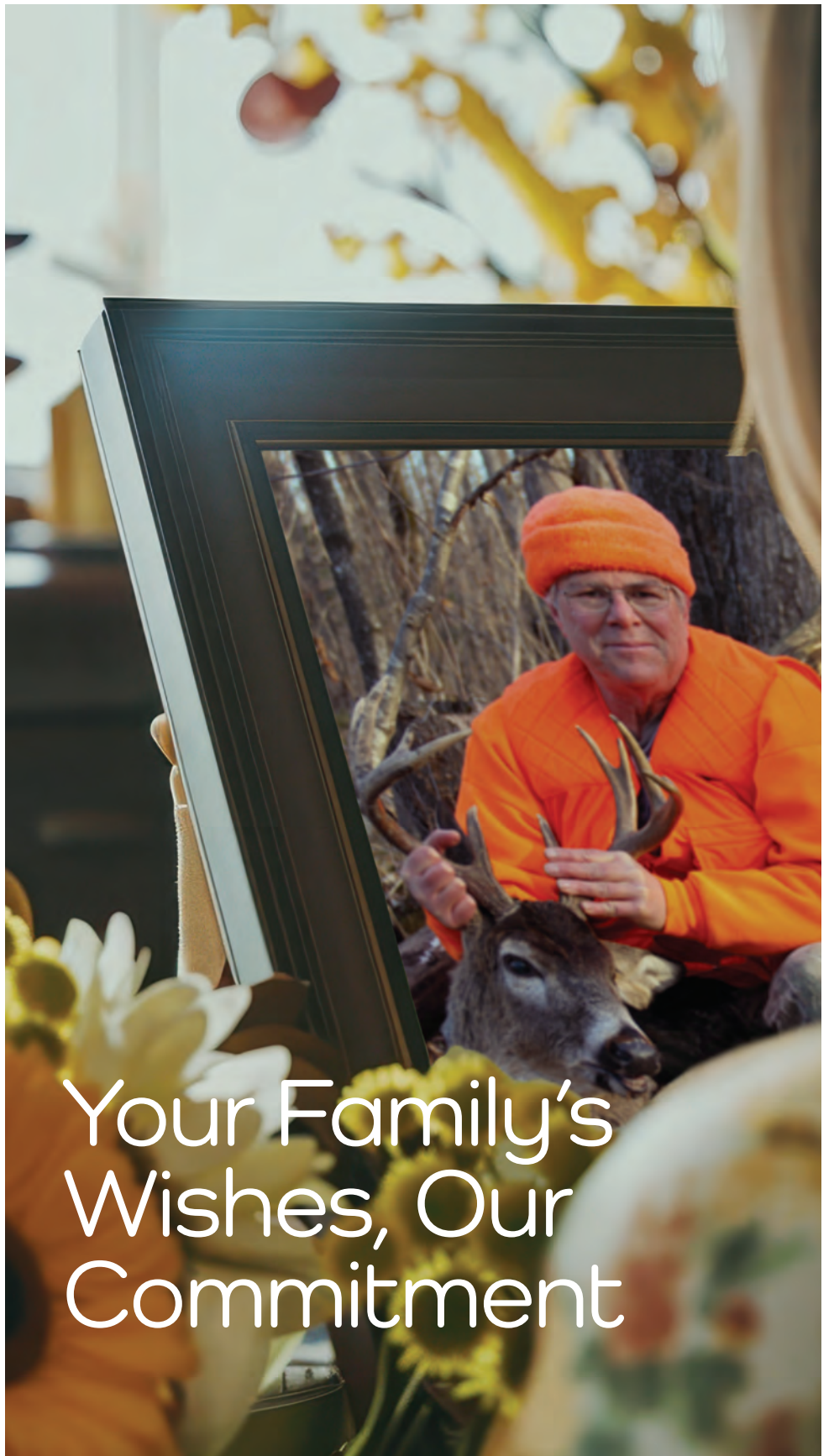
In addition to helping at the library,

Lohry also volunteers at her church as a member of the church council, a reader and an usher. In the past, Lohry volunteered her time at Feeding America.

Lohry has been a Neenah resident for 43 years and was a special education teacher for 38 of those years. When Lohry's grandchildren come to visit, she enjoys bringing them to the library for fun activities like playing in Nina's cafe, completing the outside obstacle course and taking home craft kits.

"We appreciate all the time and energy Lori has given to the library," volunteer coordinator Lisa Laux-Robak said. "We look forward to many more years as your volunteer home."

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# Spring highlights importance of severe weather awareness

By MaryBeth Matzek  
NEENAH NEWS

While the weather is still making up its mind if it's spring, the calendar clearly indicates that spring has sprung and with it, comes reminders about severe weather conditions and how to prepare for it.

Spring and summer severe weather can range from thunderstorms and tornados to flash floods, hails and high winds. Being prepared and informed about changing weather conditions are important, said Winnebago County Emergency Management Director Eric Rasmussen.

"People need to have a way to get information about the weather. There are multiple ways — notifications on your phone, a NOAA Weather Radio — and the sirens, if you're outside," he said. "The sirens are designed to alert people who are outside that severe weather is on its way and take action. It's not something you're meant to hear in your house."

This week is designated as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin and Rasmussen said it is a good time to remind people about severe weather basics.

The county began testing its sirens in late March at noon on Saturdays and will continue testing them through mid-October, Rasmussen said. He said the sirens are not tested the Saturday before EAA AirVenture begins (July 18) and the Saturday during EAA AirVenture (July 25).

With a tornado watch, the conditions are favorable for severe weather and the development of tornados in your area. If a watch is issued, pay extra attention to the weather conditions and notifications. If a tornado warning is issued, it means a tornado has been sited or indicated by radar and you should immediately take shelter in the basement or in a windowless room interior room on the lowest level.

"Knowing how to act whether a warning or watch is issued is important," said

Rasmussen, adding having an emergency kit is key part of the preparation.

An emergency kit should include the following items:

- Three days' worth of nonperishable food and water.
- First-aid supplies, three days' worth of prescription medication and any necessary medical supplies.
- Safety items such as flashlights, batteries, a battery-powered or hand-cranked radio, whistles for signaling and a battery-powered charger for your phone.
- Copies of personal documents such as insurance documents and identification in waterproof containers. Also include a copy of important phone numbers in case your mobile phone with its stored numbers is not working.
- Clothing and blankets to protect you against cold or wet conditions.
- Necessary supplies for pets.
- Special needs items for babies or elderly family members.

Store the kit in a waterproof container in a convenient location that everyone can reach in an emergency. Rasmussen said it may seem like a lot to put an emergency kit together but if something happens and you need to leave your home or lose electricity, you'll be grateful the kit is pulled together.

People should also put together an emergency kit for their car in case they become stranded due to weather, Rasmussen said. This kit should include water, nonperishable, high-energy foods, rain poncho, portable phone charger, flashlight with extra batteries, basic first aid kit and blanket.

Rasmussen said some people purchase generators to provide some power to their homes in case they lose electricity as another way to prepare for emergencies.

"Severe weather can happen at any time, anywhere so it's good to always be prepared," he said.



Photo from City of Neenah Police Department

Neenah police officer Bryce Moeller made his way to a storm sewer drain to clear debris out of the way earlier this week in the area of Smith Street and Isabella Street.

## Heavy rain leads to flooding issues throughout city

Neenah News

With large amounts of rain saturating the area this week, some areas of Neenah were experiencing flooding-related issues.

The City of Neenah Public Works said a sanitary sewer overflow occurred Tuesday at Henry Street and Langley Street.

According to Public Works, a high amount of clear water inflow was experienced due to large amounts of rain and saturated soils. Public Works personnel responded to, monitored and managed the incidents to limit harm to the public, residential property and the environment.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has been notified.

The City of Neenah said it continues to make improvements to the sanitary sewer system to reduce the potential for these

incidents. Residents are also reminded to make sure that sump pumps are not connected to the sanitary sewer system. This will assist in reducing the clear water flow into the sanitary sewer system, thereby reducing the potential for these incidents.

The heavy rainfall earlier this week also was causing flooding on roadways in Neenah.

Neenah police said many vehicles were disabled attempting to drive through high water throughout the city.

Police cautioned driving through high water is extremely dangerous and should be avoided whenever possible. Do not attempt to proceed if the water is more than 6 inches deep (reaches the bottom of most cars) or above the center of the wheels on a vehicle.



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# Schildt Park improvement project slated to start in July

Neenah News

The date to start a planned construction project at Schildt Park in Fox Crossing has been pushed back to July.

Schildt Park will undergo a series of improvements, designed to enhance its recreational offerings. The village awarded a contract to MCC, Inc. to complete the work.

MCC anticipates starting the project in early July. Once the project begins, the majority of the park will be closed for construction.

Due to the renovation project begin-

ning later than originally anticipated, the Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department said the pavilion will now be available for rentals from May 2 to June 21. Anyone looking for space to hold an event can contact the Parks and Recreation office for availability.

Planned updates at the park include pickleball courts, full-size basketball court, playground replacement, walking trails, sledding hill, pavilion improvements, remove granary building, re-pave parking lot and trails and adding a regional stormwater pond.



Photo from Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department

## Prescribed burn

The Fox Crossing Fire Department performed controlled burns around the village last week, including the prairies at O’Hauser Park and Schildt Park. According to the Fox Crossing Parks and Recreation Department, this helps remove dead plant material, which enables prairie grass seeds to more easily find their way down to the soil. It also eliminates competition from other invasive species that might take nutrients and resources from the prairie grasses.

## School board

FROM PAGE 1

da before I understand the landscape,” Roth said. “That said, I have a clear direction. Educational outcomes and financial stability tend to move together when you get the conditions right. A district with a strong reputation draws families who choose to open enroll here, and that enrollment has direct budget implications. A district on solid financial footing can sustain the programs and staffing that built the reputation in the first place. My first goal is to understand the district well enough to find where those two things pull in the same direction — and push there.”

The new board members would like to see several more things from the board overall.

“One example that really stood out to me was when district leadership stepped into the community in a hands-on, visible way — serving as crossing guards while also dressing up in costume for Halloween and the holiday season,” Blanton said. “That level of involvement lifted the spirit of the entire community.”

“I believe strong leadership comes from showing up, staying engaged and remaining grounded in the day-to-day experiences of the district. For me, this role is not about politics — it’s about responsibility. I would like to see continued focus on student outcomes, accountability and making sure every child has access to the support and opportunities they need.”

Heidke Kwiatkowski said the existing board members have been good at asking substantive questions.

“I would put a lot of effort into continuing the trend,” Heidke Kwiatkowski said. I want us to have community engagement whenever possible, but the board must be careful to follow open meetings laws. It’s a fine line between supporting a district event and appearing to ‘gather’ in what could be construed as a quorum. I also know that I cannot speak on behalf of or imply that I am speaking for the district. I would like to see us be more engaged with the community as much as possible while still following the rules.”

Roth would like to see the board reach further into the community — particularly to residents and employers who don’t have direct ties to the district.

“Understanding how they see us, and what they think we could be doing for them, matters,” Roth said. “Everyone has a stake in our public schools. That means a few concrete things. I want to know whether local employers see our graduates as their first choice — and if not, why not. I want people to have a genuine understanding of how school funding

works — enough context to understand what the tradeoffs mean for students, staff and the community. And I want the district to be the kind of institution people feel connected to before something goes wrong.”

The new board members have several priorities they hope to accomplish over the next year or two.

“I hope to continue strengthening the connection between our schools, families and the broader community so all students feel supported, represented and engaged in their learning environments,” Blanton said. “One example that shaped my perspective was helping bring Afro-fusion dancers into a school setting. That experience reinforced something important to me — sometimes the connection families are looking for is closer than they think.”

Heidke Kwiatkowski hopes to foster collaboration between the district and the community as well as increase the connections between the city and school district.

“I’m happy to say that I’ve seen this engagement improve over the past year or two,” she said. “I want to see the district and board members keep this momentum. I’m also hoping to encourage the community to engage with their state leaders in advocating for much needed help with school district funding.”

In the near term, Roth would like to see real movement on ELA (English Language Arts) achievement.

“The state report card gives us a standardized scoreboard, and we should be using it more deliberately,” Roth said. “Our strategic plan already names closing gaps between student groups as a goal, and there’s room to go further in how we set those targets. One thing I’m hoping to bring to that conversation is a closer look at how we benchmark ourselves — not just against our own prior years, but against nearby districts and socioeconomically similar districts across demographic dimensions. That tells us where we stand relative to the districts families are choosing between, and it gives our goal-setting a more competitive foundation.”

# District looks for different ways to close budget deficit

In January, I shared with our district staff that the Neenah Joint School District is facing a projected \$1.7 million budget deficit for the 2026-27 school year.

Like many school systems across Wisconsin, we are navigating a financial landscape shaped by rising costs, enrollment shifts, and limited revenue growth. While this \$1.7 million challenge is significant, it is solvable. Doing so, however, requires thoughtful planning and difficult decisions to ensure a sustainable path forward.

From the outset, our work to close the deficit has been guided by five key questions. First, does a decision prioritize classroom teaching positions to the greatest extent possible? Second, does it strengthen our systems rather than reinforce silos? Third, does it improve efficiency with the resources entrusted



**Dr. Steve Harrison**  
NJSJ Superintendent

to us by taxpayers? Fourth, how does it impact equitable access to resources for all students? And finally, does it provide a long-term solution rather than a short-term fix?

Over the past several months, many hours have been devoted to analyzing options, modeling scenarios and weighing tradeoffs. The goal behind every recommendation has been consistent: preserve as many jobs as possible while protecting the quality of education in our schools and responsibly addressing the

\$1.7 million shortfall without going to an operational referendum.

Following the recent approval of the 2026-27 budget framework and staffing plan by the Board of Education, I want our community to understand several key points. First, we are moving forward with the elimination of several central office positions in order to avoid reductions at the school level. This was not a decision made lightly. However, by restructuring administrative services, we can continue supporting our schools while minimizing the impact on students and classrooms. This approach demonstrates our commitment to protecting teaching and learning first.

Because of this approach and careful long-term planning, we are not making reductions to teaching positions as part of this budget reconciliation process. Across Wisconsin, headlines have highlighted significant classroom staffing cuts in other communities. At this time, our planning has prevented that outcome in Neenah, even in the face of a \$1.7 million deficit.

It's also important to recognize how our ongoing district practices have positioned us more favorably than some neighboring districts. For many years, we've intentionally aligned staffing levels

with student enrollment. As enrollment changes, we adjust sections and staffing accordingly. This consistent approach has helped us remain fiscally responsible and avoid more significant structural deficits.

Attracting and retaining high-quality staff remains a top priority. As part of the 2026-27 staff contracts proposal, I have recommended a 3% salary increase for all non-administrative staff.

This prioritizes the majority of our workforce while maintaining fiscal responsibility until we have finalized enrollment data this fall. At that time, we will reevaluate whether similar adjustments can be extended to administrative positions. The proposed administrative freeze includes my own position, as leadership requires sharing in the sacrifices we ask of others.

Throughout my first 22 months in Neenah, staff and community members alike have emphasized the importance of understanding the "why" behind decisions. I hope this update provides clarity. Tough times do not last, but strong districts do. Every decision we are making is rooted in long-term sustainability and a steadfast commitment to our students, staff, and community.

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Photo from Neenah Joint School District

## Celebrity chef

Neenah High School students were served a Korean-style lunch last week with an appearance by Celebrity Chef Angel Barreto (center) of Anju restaurant in Washington, D.C. Students were able to sample beef bulgogi tacos, Korean potato salad and Korean corn with mozzarella prepared by Barreto and his staff at all three lunches. The event was part of the Chartwells Global Eats program that brings food and cooking styles from different cultures to schools across the country.

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Submitted photo

Players between the ages of 8 and 17 will be participating in the Fox Cities Esports Championship April 25 at the Neenah-Menasha YMCA.

# Neenah-Menasha YMCA hosting Esports competition

By George Halas  
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

An expected 100-plus competitors will converge on the Neenah-Menasha YMCA on April 25 for the 2026 Fox Cities Esports Championship.

Doors open at 3:15 p.m., competition begins at 5 p.m. and will conclude at 9 p.m.

The championship is a joint venture between the YMCA of The Fox Cities, Lifest and Edge Arcade VR and sponsors include the Appleton School of Rock, Press Start Games, Wisconsin Entertainment Group and Blind Tiger Games.

The participants will include players from ages 8 to 17 and the evening will include a 120 player Fortnite Solos tournament played on PlayStation PSS's, access to the Edge VR Virtual Reality Arena, unlimited entries in the Renewal by Andersen Geometry Dash Competition, and the opportunity to play "lots of other exciting games" in the Plexus Tech Lab and G3 Lair.

The action can be viewed on a massive 16-foot video wall and will be accompanied by live commentary from Lifest main stage host and emcees, Lem Fillyaw and Lucas Tuttle.

"We were approached by Lifest to expand the competition. We want to expand Esports and bring the community together around Esports," said Jensen Hinton, Sports and Recreation Director for the Neenah-Menasha YMCA. "Last year, the competition included 90 participants and our goal this year is 120."

"The Y and Lifest are very much aligned

in terms of values and as non-profits working together to benefit the community," he continued. "We want to bring kids of similar interests together in a safe and controlled environment where relationships can be created through a lot of communication and teamwork."

"We are not trying to add to time spent playing Esports but to replace it with high-quality time and interaction," he added. "One of the biggest benefits is kids interacting with other kids."

One of the objectives is to create a "big event feel" that includes spectators in bleachers.

"We have a golf simulator, there is a VR Arena where competitors wear headsets and play games like laser tag and there will be sponsor groups with information on their businesses," Hinton said.

"You have to be here in-person to appreciate the energy," he added.

The competitors are not divided into age groups.

"It's a level playing field," Hinton said. "You'd be really surprised at how good the younger kids are at playing video games. It's more thinking and hand-eye coordination and not dependent on physical skills. It's really cool to have eight-year-olds teaching 17-year-olds."

The championship has benefitted significantly from contributions from Lifest's McGyver Barnes and Press Start will provide a Nintendo Switch 2 as the grand prize.

For further information, go to [ymcafoxcities.org/esports](http://ymcafoxcities.org/esports).

## Youth organization receives national recognition

Neenah News

Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin has been recognized as a Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) Growth Award Winner for program excellence in 2025.

Every year, the BBBSA Nationwide Leadership Council, made up of local agency leaders and board members, selects agencies for excellence in the organization's signature one-to-one youth mentoring program.

Out of more than 230 agencies in the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin is one of 60 organizations to receive this top honor. They have received this honor for the third year in a row.

"I am incredibly proud of our board and staff for their dedication to expand-

ing mentorship opportunities for young people across Calumet, Outagamie, Winnebago and Waupaca counties," said Jaime Kriewaldt, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin. "Their commitment to growing our matches ensures that even more children have access to life-changing relationships. This achievement reflects the power of mentorship and the impact we can create together in building a brighter future for our community."

The Growth Award recognizes agencies that have demonstrated strategic growth in the number of mentors ("Bigs") and youth ("Littles") matched through the program, year over year. In the past year, Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin served 466 youth in 2025 and increased its local services by 9%.

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# New mayor

FROM PAGE 1

president in 2023, he said, "I told her I would support her no matter what."

Then in December Lang decided not to run for a second term. Suddenly the 'am I ready to leave teaching' question loomed large for Borchardt.

"The reason I ran in the first place was how much I loved the City of Neenah, the high school and the students," Borchardt said. "But it's so hard when you have feet in both ends, you know?"

When Borchardt decided to jump into this year's mayoral race, he notified everyone from superintendent to colleagues to students. They bandied about the contingency plans so the kids in the program wouldn't suffer.

"There's so much that hinges on these relationships to get them over the hump, that connection on how your actions today impact tomorrow," Borchardt said.

He felt the support from everyone was clear with the most gratifying responses coming from the students themselves. When he asked 'what do you think I should do' one student tossed the question back at him.

"What would you tell me to do," she asked.

"I'd tell you to start your life and do something new," Borchardt responded. Asked and answered. Another student told him, "You've done more for this school than anyone I can think of. If I don't graduate, that's on me."

"In the end, everyone's replaceable," Borchardt said. "So it was the emotions, the feelings and the relationships. But I have so many students who live in this community who now voted for the first

time because they knew and trusted someone.

"So now I get to do this at a city level," he continues. "And I lead with kindness. I lead with serving others because I believe that's what we should do."

Borchardt believes that attitude has been obscured in the public sphere, which is why he would never consider anything but local politics. He's not interested in declaring a party or taking part in partisan arguments. He is, however, very clear that kindness should never be construed with weakness. There's too much work to be done.

"I've been involved in leadership my whole life and my philosophy is that anyone can be a leader," Borchardt said. "But that's just influence over others. I think my strength is that when it's time to make the tough decisions, I'm not trying to make friends. I'm transitioning this philosophy over to a huge team of people with whom I've built relationships for the last six years. That steady belief in service to others is super important."

"I will treat them with dignity and respect every step of the way because I know the work they do," he continued. "There's a lot that I know and a lot that I need to learn. But I also guide myself with facts and not feelings. And there will be conversations about that."

"There will be projects that people want to push forward...it's their baby and they want it to go this year," he explained. "I'd rather be tight and frugal with the money now so that we're not burdening others down the road. We have to row this boat together."

As for initiatives, Borchardt is passionate about expanding communications with Neenah's citizens. From a YouTube channel, internet videos, shorter video clips to engage the younger voters to "invite the mayor" opportunities, he wants to take part.

"I have to be at city hall for certain things, but it's really important to be out there," Borchardt said. "I'm not going to be the 'guy behind the desk.' We've got a lot of cool things going on in Neenah and I want to celebrate it. Because when you don't there's a void and that void can be filled with the negative. I want to be there to emphasize the positive."

Borchardt said the communication initiatives are vital to the community because many folks think the mayor can wave a magic wand and make things happen. But



Neenah News

Mayor-Elect Brian Borchardt is preparing to step into the role leading Neenah after winning the spring election.

he said it's the council that decides where the money goes. And he added the money isn't as much as people think it is; it's 42% of the collected tax revenue.

"So sometimes a road that was scheduled to be fixed this year has to wait in order for the main or the sewer lines to be done right," Borchardt said. "Those are things that happen. But I know we can do a better job of communicating with people when they do. I think because we deal with things daily, we forget that some people are hearing it for the first time. So we need to reach out on many platforms and explain things thoroughly."

Borchardt admits that when you get down to process and determining how to go about it is not particularly exciting. But he wants the council to get more engaged

in doling out more information to their districts in smaller chunks. In a way it's teaching constituents about how things get done from "how we do roads" to "how we do budgets." And he wants to remain available by continuing the open door policy he had with Mayor Lang.

"If people want to be involved, I want to find ways to get them involved," Borchardt said. "Jane started this. And just like with her, my door will be open to every council member. Jane was wonderful. Any issue, any question for her, she was like, 'come on in.'"

Borchardt knows there are a lot unknowns in his future.

"I may get in two weeks and I'll be like, 'What the heck did I do? Why did I do this,'" he said with a laugh. "But that's where this super staff of people comes in. I'm a firm believer in allowing others to shine. I couldn't reach every kid and I'm not going to reach every citizen. But there may be someone on the council or in a department who can. I don't need a statue of me out there. Our success will be the result of aligned goals between the council, city hall and the citizens of Neenah."

"I feel pretty confident that I will be able to continue doing what I'm doing the way I want to do it," Borchardt said. "People are relying on me to lead. So this is who I am and this is who I'm going to be. And we hope, right? We hope."

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# Prep sports roundup

## TRACK AND FIELD

### Neenah girls dominate home meet

The Rockets rolled to a plethora of wins and top finishes as they hosted a four-team meet last week.

Neenah was especially dominant in the distance races posting the top eight and 10 of the top 12 finishes in the 1,600 meters and grabbing the top six places in the 3,200 meters. Sam Zilm, Izzy Malloy and Lizzy LaPlant finished 1-2-3, respectively, in the 1,600 meters with Natalie Schultz, Elise Braaten and Elsa Gruber sweeping the top three places in the 3,200 meters.

Neenah also swept the top three places in the 200 meters with Celia Gentile, Molly Snider and Kobi Meyer grabbing the first three spots, respectively, while Gentile teamed with Brynn Fox for a 1-2 finish in the 100 meters and Meyer was first with Kate Lenninger taking third in the 400 meters.

Malloy added a win in the 800 meters with LaPlant taking third.

Also on the track, Aubrey Strosahl took second in both the 100-meter and 300-meter hurdles with Abigail Hirschi adding a third place in the 300-meter hurdles.

In the field events, Emma Severson won both of the throwing events for Neenah, with Lexi Davis taking second in the shot put and Brooklyn Kohlbeck finishing second in the discus.

Mirella Taschner and Aubrey Murwar were first and second, respectively, in the high jump, while Gentile added another win in the long jump. Resa Goethel placed second in the pole vault and Brynn Jaeckels was second in the triple jump.

Highlighting the boys' finishes was a 1-2-3 finish in the shot put with Nate Kramp, Dawson Oberer and William Kirkman grabbing the top three spots. Oberer also added a second in the discus with Liam Neubauer taking third.

Owen Fox won the 110-meter hurdles and took second in the 300-meter hurdles with Spencer Schiedermayer adding third places in both races. Fox also picked up a third place in the long jump

Elijah Kaul in the 100 meters, Arlo Ferguson in the 400 meters, Elliott Drake in the 800 meters and Gideon Benner in the 1,600 meters each scored second places, with Connor Schott in the 800 meters and Daemen Logterman in the triple jump each taking third.

### Zephyr girls take second at Big East meet

Marissa Hahn won both throwing events to lead the St. Mary Catholic girls to a second-place finish at a Big East division meet at Mishicot last week.

Hahn finished first in the shot put and first in the discus and was the only multi-event winner for the Zephyrs.

Claire Higgins in the 400 meters and Ellie Davel in the 100-meter hurdles also added first-place finishes for St. Mary Catholic.

Lucy Norville was second in the high jump and Madeline Weninger tied for second in the pole vault, while Moorea Steckling in the 100-meter hurdles and Halle Jensen in the long jump were each third.

The Zephyrs also took second in the 800-meter and 1,600-meter relays and third in the 400-meter relay.

The boys collected a quartet of second-place finishes at the meet as they placed fifth overall.

Brenden Hueslbeck in the 100 meters,

Ethan Auer in the 800 meters, Isaiah Hennessy in the shot put and Sean Brennan in the discus were the runner-up in their respective events.

### Relays lead Neenah girls at FVA triangular

The Neenah girls won a pair of relays to highlight the performances at a weather-shortened Fox Valley Association triangular meet held at Appleton East on Monday.

The Rockets finished first in the 800-meter relay with a team of Kristin Manteufel, Kendall Freier, Mirella Taschner and Kate Lenninger, while the foursome of Elsa Gruber, Natalie Willes, Natalie Schultz and Sam Zilm won the 3,200-meter relay.

Manteufel and Lenninger finished second and third, respectively, in the 100 meters, while Schultz and Olivia Landrath were second and third, respectively, in the 1,600 meters. In the 400 meters, it was Anna Benthein taking second and Payton Schaefer coming in third for Neenah, while in the pole vault, Resa Goethel took second and Eve Marose was third.

Lexi Davis added a second place in the shot put with Kaitlyn Zarling tying for third in the high jump.

The Neenah boys were led by Elijah Kaul, who tied for first with the fastest time in the 100 meters. Owen Fox in the 110-meter hurdles and Nate Kramp in the shot put were each second with Finley Derks in the high jump and Jack Czechanski in the pole vault each taking third.

Neenah also took second in the 800-meter relay and 3,200-meter relay.

## SOCCER

### Zephyrs post shutout win over Omro

Bitsy McCauley finished with a goal and an assist to help St. Mary Catholic notch its first win of the season in a 2-0 victory over Omro last week.

Brecken Britzke picked up the other goal for St. Mary Catholic.

Olivia Nagel added an assist in the match for the Zephyrs.

### Rockets post win over Stevens Point

Neenah scored a 3-2 win over Stevens Point for its win of the season last Friday as part of a two-day tournament.

The Rockets also played to a 0-0 tie with Wausau West.

## GOLF

### Zephyrs secure team title at Lourdes invite

St. Mary Catholic had three golfers finish in the top eight and edged Division 1 Oshkosh North by four shots to win the Lourdes Invitational held at Lake Breeze Golf Course last week.

The Zephyrs finished with a team score of 331 to finish ahead of the Spartans. Wrightstown was third with 338.

Charlie Whaley led St. Mary Catholic with a 79 to finish third among the individuals, while Carter Pendergast finished fourth one shot behind his teammate. Brady DeLeeuw tied for eighth with an 83.

Mason Uhlenbrauck and Alex Klinkhammer rounded out the St. Mary Catholic scoring golfers at the invite with each shooting an 89.

### Seitz leads Neenah golfers at invite

Carson Seitz finished with a score of

162 to lead Neenah at the Washington County Invitational last week.

The tournament was played over two days at both the Hartford Golf Club and Washington County Golf Course.

Ryan Geery and Cartyr Simonson each shot 168s for the Rockets, while Jacob Maguire finished with a 172.

The Rockets finished 32<sup>nd</sup> among the 54-team field.

## SOFTBALL

### Zephyrs roll to easy victory over Shiocton

St. Mary Catholic grabbed the early lead and never looked back in an 11-1 win over Shiocton last week.

The Chiefs scored a run in the top of the first but the Zephyrs answered with four runs in the bottom of the inning and then added two more in the second to seize control. St. Mary Catholic ended the game early with a five-run fifth inning.

Gabby Guerrero finished 3-for-4 to pace the Zephyrs' 11-hit attack, while Paxtyn Trinkner added a pair of hits and drove in a team-high four runs in the game. Emily Weiss added two hits and two RBIs, while Samantha Weiss also chipped in two hits.

Ainslie Liddy finished with a pair of RBIs in the game for the Zephyrs.

Trinkner allowed just five hits and struck out one in five innings to earn the win in the circle.

Earlier in the week, St. Mary Catholic lost to Wittenberg-Birnamwood 11-5, despite three hits from Illa Moder and two hits – both doubles – and three RBIs from Trinkner.

### Papermakers stifle Rockets in FVA loss

Neenah was held to just two hits and dropped an 8-2 decision to Kimberly in a Fox Valley Association game last week.

Libby Jahnke belted a two-run home run in the bottom of the first to answer the Papermakers' three-run top of the first inning but that would be all the offense the Rockets could muster.

Taytum West had the only other hit in the game and also scored on Jahnke's home run.

West struck out four in four innings in the circle for Neenah with only three of the eight runs she allowed being earned. Kayleigh Johnson pitched three scoreless innings to close out the game.

## BASEBALL

### Rockets rack up pair of easy wins

Neenah cruised to a pair of Fox Valley Association wins in the past week, thumping Appleton West 17-5 last week while taking down Oshkosh North 11-1 on Tuesday.

Cal Juckem went 4-for-5 and drove in four runs to pace the win over the Terrors as Neenah scored seven runs in the first two innings and never trailed in the game.

Mack Krause finished 3-for-4 and scored four runs in the game, with Ethan Helligreen, Keegan Krueger, John Weiland and Landen Sheppard each adding two hits in the game. Helligreen added three RBIs with Krueger and Owen Pire each driving in two runs.

SEE **Prep roundup** ON PAGE 15

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# LeClair looking to be leader on young Rocket squad

By Steve Clark  
NEENAH NEWS

Ainsley LeClair had carved out a pretty comfortable niche in the midfield during the first three years of her high school lacrosse career at Neenah.

She helped anchor the group that drove the Rockets to a successful season and was one of only four double-digit goal scorers on the squad a year ago.

Yet, as comfortable and productive as LeClair was as a midfielder, she opted for a change entering her senior season with the Rockets.

## Senior Standout



“Last summer I switched from playing midfield to defense for my club team and I really enjoyed that,” LeClair said as the Rockets practiced early this week. “When I committed to college, I decided that defense is what I want to do and I think it’s what I do best. I get to see a different side of the game and play a different role.”

That doesn’t mean she has completely given up her offensive ways.

LeClair tallied a hat trick in a match against Superior and picked up her fourth goal of the year in a tie with Appleton on Tuesday.



Neenah News

Ainsley LeClair has made the move from midfield to defense this year as the Davenport University commit hopes to lead Neenah to a successful season.

In fact, as much as she enjoys her position switch to defense, she knows there is still something special about shooting one past a goalie and into the back of the net.

“Getting a stop on defense or scoring a goal are equally a rush,” LeClair said. “I love getting to stop a ball and get that defensive steal but I also really like shooting and hear my name over the announcements and see my video on the board.”

No matter which end of the field she is on, though, LeClair simply likes helping Neenah chalk up victories.

“With the midfield you are kind of expected to score and all of that, but on defense that’s not (the case),” LeClair said. “I was happy I could play a part on the offensive and defensive sides while not having a position on the offensive side.”

LeClair started playing lacrosse in elementary school when a flyer about tryouts landed in her possession along with some friendly peer pressure to give the sport a shot.

LeClair said Ellery Marsh – a standout for Neenah last year who is out this season with an injury – helped convince her

to take up the sport and she’s been playing ever since.

When she started, though, there was no team for the girls. So, when she took her steps in the sport, she was playing with and against the boys.

“Playing for the guys team, they absolutely cooked me back in the day,” LeClair said with a laugh.

LeClair made the transition to girls lacrosse in seventh grade and found the game to be a bit different than playing against boys.

However, she brought the experience from her early days with her to the field and it’s helped her succeed.

“It was a big transition because boys and girls play different but I think playing with the boys has helped me be more comfortable playing now and being the aggressive player that I am,” LeClair said. “Girls lacrosse just clicked for me.”

In addition to playing for the Neenah High School program, LeClair also plays club lacrosse with the Black Lax club team out of Milwaukee.

Last summer, she earned a spot on the national squad and traveled to tournaments in Maryland, Florida and Illinois.

“For one of the tournaments (in Maryland), my parents and I spent the whole week there,” LeClair said. “It was like a beach vacation with lacrosse mixed in on the weekend.”

Not only has LeClair been able to see different parts of the country through lacrosse, she’s also built a large base of friends.

“Playing for club teams I have made a lot of friends on different teams, especially in the Bay Valley (Conference),” LeClair said. “In the game, emotions can get pretty high, but at the end of the day it is a game and everybody is playing because they love the sport.”

“Lacrosse has really grown, especially in the recent years. I would love it to expand even more. It just makes me happy.”

LeClair plans on continuing her lacrosse career next year while attending NCAA Division II Davenport University in Iowa.

She is excited about the chance to continue playing at the next level.

“I’m ecstatic about it. I get to play with some of my club teammates, too,” said LeClair, who said she planned to go see the team play next week. “I kind of wanted to branch out. I think it’s going to be a big change from the girls I used to be playing with but I’m hoping I can play my game and stay true to yourself.”

Before she gets to that point, though, she still has another season with the Rockets to look forward to and is hoping to make it a special one.

“I think our intensity this year is awesome and all of the girls are trying really hard. I think it will be a good season,” LeClair said. “(What it means to be) a part of Neenah lacrosse is hard to put in words but it’s awesome. Both the girls and boys teams are so passionate.”

“I think sometimes it shocks people when I play lacrosse. Not negative in any way but because it’s not something they usually hear.”

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# Neenah youth wrestlers turn in strong showing at state

Neenah News

The Neenah Youth and Middle School Wrestling programs competed at the Wisconsin Wrestling Federation State Championships recently and posted one of the strongest showings in the program's history.

A record 29 wrestlers from Neenah qualified for the state tournament after advancing through the WWF regional series.

Neenah had three wrestlers reach the finals including one champion in Drew Winters, who won the 135-pound title for wrestlers born in 2015-2016.

Brandon Stumpf (2015-2016, 100 pounds) and Stella Kittilson (2013-2014, 95, girls) were each the state runner-up in their respective divisions.

Other podium finishers for Neenah were: Eli Stuebs (2011-2012, 85), third place; Reina Ristow (2013-2014, 150, girls), third place; Jonah Stuebs (2013-2014, 82), fourth place; and Troy Lo (2011-2012, 110), fifth place.

Competing for Neenah in the girls division and their records at state were: Madi Reilly (2015-2016), 75 pounds, 4-2; Lindsay Wittig (2013-2014), 90, 4-2; Clara Tennessen (2013-2014), 135, 3-2; Serina Patridge (2013-2014), 110, 3-2; Jayde Keck (2013-2014), 125, 2-2; Callynn Jensen (2013-2014), 150, 1-2; Brelin Butzke (2013-2014), 95, 1-2.

Competing for Neenah in the boys division and their records at state were: Cole Cowlin (2017-2018), 48 pounds, 4-2; James Kinney (2017-2018), James Kinney, 72, 3-2; Isaiah Stuebs (2015-2016), 69, 1-2; Tyler Pierstorff (2013-2014), 120, 3-2; Oliver Hirschi (2013-2014), 70, 2-2; Rylan O'Brien (2013-2014), 91,

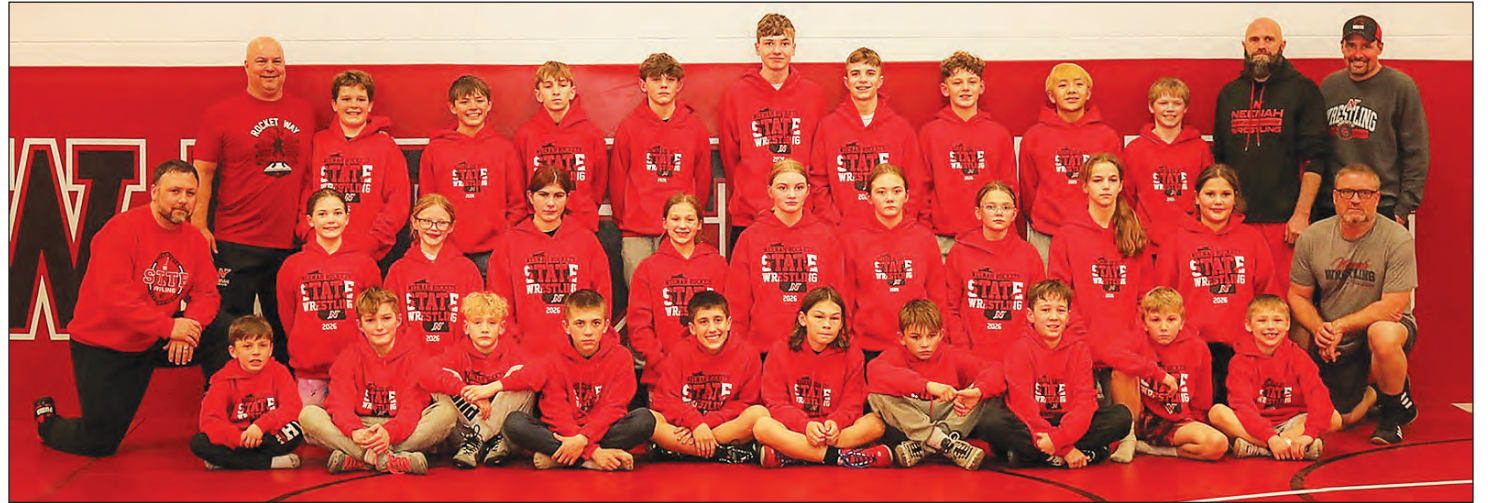


Photo by Kourtney Kositzke, KOKO Art Studio

The Neenah Youth and Middle School wrestling team recently capped its season with an impressive showing at the Wisconsin Wrestling Federation Youth State Championships

2-2; Isaac Farrell (2013-2014), 88, 2-2; Wyatt Wilson (2013-2014), 88, 1-2; Ty Thomson (2013-2014), 94, 0-2; Logan Goudreau (2011-2012), 105, 3-2; Jesse Kuehn (2011-2012), 100, 2-2; Zach Wittig (2011-2012), 85, 1-2; Aiden Ziolenka (2011-2012), 110, 1-2; Silas Boutwell (2011-2012), 135, 1-2; and Chris Jensen (2011-2012), 210, 1-2.

Middle School coach Josh Mueller said the season reflected the commitment of the athletes both on the mat and in the classroom.

"What an incredible season for Neenah Middle School Wrestling," Mueller said in a press release. "We closed the year on a high note with 71 athletes competing at the Northeast Valley Middle School Wrestling Conference Tournament — a true testament to the dedication, growth, and unity of our program. Many of these athletes have committed themselves to

wrestling throughout their entire athletic journey, and their passion showed every step of the way. Our success extended far beyond the mat. In the classroom, our student-athletes finished the season with a remarkable team GPA of 3.51, and 21 wrestlers earned a perfect 4.0. These achievements reflect the discipline, character, and pride our athletes bring to everything they do. We couldn't be more proud of this group and the example they

set. This season was one worth celebrating."

With record participation, strong state results, and continued development throughout the program, Neenah youth wrestling continues to build momentum for the future.

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# Zephyrs, Rockets bring talented lineups to the course

Neenah News

The St. Mary Catholic golf team could definitely be a group to watch this spring.

The Zephyrs return its entire lineup from last season and are coming off a campaign where the squad won a Division 3

## Golf PREVIEW

regional title and played competitively at the sectional meet.

“We are looking forward to an excellent season this year,” commented second-year head coach Chad Whaley. “With all of our top scorers returning, and the addition of an excellent new freshman, our hopes and expectations are high. ... We look to carry that momentum into this season and lean on the growth of our returning players during the offseason, and the talents of our new players, to make a run at going to State in 2026.”

The team's top two scorers last year were both freshman and having the year of varsity experience under their belts should be an asset this season.

Charlie Whaley led the Zephyrs and

was co-medalist at the regional meet last season, while Brady DeLeeuw also returns to give the Zephyrs a strong 1-2 punch on the course.

Chad Whaley said having a season of playing on their resumes should help the young players take a step forward this season.

“Last season was rife with learning opportunities,” Whaley commented. “Our two top scorers were both freshmen, and had to adjust to the experience of playing in the challenging weather conditions that come with spring golf in Wisconsin, but the entire team finished the season strong. Those experiences should help us to get off to a faster start.”

Rounding out the golfers who played at sectionals for the Zephyrs will be senior Mason Uhlenbrauck, junior Alex Klinkhammer and senior Wyatt Birling, who was recognized as the team's Most Improved Player a year ago and earned honorable mention honors in the Big East Conference.

In addition to the returning golfers, the Zephyrs will add freshmen Carter Pendergast into the varsity mix.

Chad Whaley also believes the addition of Jack Steinhoff as an assistant coach should help boost the Zephyrs' success this season. Steinhoff coached the girls team at St. Mary Catholic in the fall.

## Neenah

The Rockets return their top four players from last year's postseason lineup and are looking to build on the success of last season.

Neenah finished 6-3 in Fox Valley Association dual meets a year ago, but two of the losses were by two strokes or less, including one that went to a tiebreaker. The Rockets were also close to making it to state as a team, taking fourth at the sectional meet only seven shots out of advancing.

Headlining the group of returners will be junior Cartyr Simonson, who earned first-team all-conference honors in the FVA a year ago and earned a trip to the WIAA Division 1 state tournament.

“Cartyr is a great talent,” commented head coach Craig Geerts. “I love to work with him on his mental game and keep

him present and make sure he has his team thought about first. He can take his game to another level. He has the swing but most of all confidence in what he's doing.”

The Rockets also boast a pair of returners who earned honorable mention all-FVA honors in senior Mason Peitersen and junior Carson Seitz. That duo, along with junior Ryan Gearsy, joined Simonson on the team that finished fourth at both regionals and sectionals last year.

Also returning with varsity experience for the Rockets will be seniors Zach Schneider and Jacob Maguire who will add to the depth of the squad.

Geerts is also welcoming 15 new players to the team this season who could make a run at varsity spot as the season wears on.

“The (experience we have) should help greatly,” commented Geerts. “I love this group. It's taken time to shape them and have them understand what pressure is and how to control it. Bad shots will happen, but how they learn to rebound tells me a lot about this group. I would like to think we will compete for conference and play well in regionals and sectionals.”

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# Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 11

Juckem also struck out six in 5 1/3 innings to earn the win on the mound.

Against the Spartans, the Rockets broke a 1-1 tie with four runs in the second inning and two more in the third en route to the win.

Krause finished 3-for-4 for Neenah with Juckem and Sheppard each chipping in two hits. The Rockets also took advantage of five walks and six Spartan errors.

Gus Weinholzer allowed just one hit in the six-inning game and struck out seven to earn the win on the mound.

## Zephyrs rally in seventh to top Mustangs

St. Mary Catholic rallied for three runs in the bottom of the seventh after Little Chute had grabbed the lead in the top of the inning to pull out a 6-5 victory on Monday night in a nonconference game at home.

The Zephyrs didn't score until the sixth inning when they plated three runs to take a 3-2 lead only to have the Mustangs tally three runs in the top of the seventh to regain the lead.

Jacob Ernsting went 3-for-3 with a walk to lead the St. Mary Catholic offense, with Ethan Plutz collecting a pair of hits in the win. Plutz and Ben Kuffel each drove in a couple of runs.

Caleb Vogel got the final out of the top of the seventh inning to earn the win for the Zephyrs. He came in relief of Plutz, who allowed five hits in 6 2/3 innings.

The Zephyrs also split a pair of games in a home triangular on Saturday, beating Ozaukee 10-5 after falling to Waupaca, 11-8 in eight innings.

Vogel and Ernsting each had two hits in

the game against Ozaukee with Ernsting driving in three runs. Owen DeWitt and Vogel combined on a four-hitter in the win.

Against Waupaca, the Zephyrs got three hits from Vogel and two hits apiece from Kufel and Andrew Ernsting, while Mason Wagner and Jacob Ernsting each drove in two runs.

St. Mary started the busy stretch with an 8-1 loss to Luxemburg-Casco last week as the Zephyrs were held to just three hits in the game.

## BOYS LACROSSE

### Rockets rack up lopsided win over Stevens Point

Jude Marsh scored five goals and Jackson Herres added four as Neenah rolled to a 17-1 win over Stevens Point at home last week.

Lenny Coulman and Brayden Willes each added two goals with Simon Galvin, Tyler Resch, Reshawn Vaughn and Vincent Thiel each adding one for the Rockets.

Marsh also led the team with four assists to finish with nine points in the game, while Coulman picked up a pair of assists.

Isaac Scholl finished with four saves in goal in the win.

The Rockets dropped a 10-4 decision at Middleton on Saturday, with Marsh scoring three goals and Vaughn adding one. Herres finished with two assists in the game.

## GIRLS LACROSSE

### Neenah splits pair of games at home triangular

On Saturday, the Rockets split a pair of games in a home triangular, beating Superior 8-5, while falling to Kimberly 4-3 in double overtime.

Ainsley LeClair notched a hat trick in the win over Superior as the Rockets

scored three goals in the third quarter to break open a close game.

Bridget Blookhuff added two goals and an assist, while Josie Mroczkowski, Kaitlyn Burt and Ella Allred also scored in the game for the Rockets.

Bristol Bestcha made 12 saves in goal for Neenah, which held Superior to just one goal in the second half.

In the loss to Kimberly, Neenah outshot the Papermakers 24-12 but couldn't find the back of the net enough to earn the win.

Mroczkowski scored a pair of goals, while Lola Johnson and Izzy Bugge - who

had the game-winning goal in double overtime in the season-opening win - each had one. Betscha tallied five saves.

Neenah then played to a 5-5 tie with Appleton on Tuesday night in a game that ended in the fourth quarter because of weather.

The Rockets led 5-3 going into the final period, but Appleton scored two quick goals to even the match before it was halted.

Mroczkowski scored a pair of goals in the game, while Mara Dorow, Bloomhuff and LeClair each had one.

Bestcha made eight saves in the game.



Submitted photo

## Top finishers

Adel Schneider from St. Mary Catholic high school took second place in her weight class (56 kilograms) at the 2026 USA Powerlifting High School Nationals. Dominic Todd also participated at nationals and finished in 19<sup>th</sup> place. Schneider is also a two-time state champion tennis player winning the Division 2 doubles crown the last two years with partner Vivie Auth.

## Obituaries

### Susan Locke

Susan Locke, age 81, passed away on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026 at Oakridge Gardens in Menasha. She was born to the late William and Mae (Kirby) Fellner on April 29, 1944 in Menasha.



Susan attended Miami-Dade University. She worked at Jacksonville Memorial Hospital in Miami as an X-Ray Technician. Most recently she proudly served on the Winnebago County Board of Directors from 2008 - 2022. She served on many committees and was very active in the community. She volunteered for Volunteer Fox Cities and was awarded many times for her dedicated hours of ser-

vice.

Susan loved flowers and animals with a passion. She always had hundreds of plants and flowers at her apartment. She would always stop to pet a dog and a visit from a dog would brighten her day.

Susan is survived by her daughter, Debbie Jansen and granddaughter, Chelsea Jansen plus many cousins and friends.

In addition to her parents, Susan was preceded in death by husbands William Locke and Frederick Engel. She was also preceded in death by close friends Tom Schindler and William Perry plus many cousins, aunts, uncles and friends.

Per the wishes of Susan, a cremation has taken place.

**KONRAD-BEHLMAN**  
FUNERAL HOMES

### James Kasten

James "Jim" Kasten 65, passed away in Kaukauna on April 5, 2026.



Jim was born on April 2, 1961, to Lawrence and Josephine (Mischke) Kasten in Appleton. He graduated from Appleton West. He worked in maintenance at St. Edward and St. Pius X Churches, RR Donnelly, the Appleton Y and, most recently, Jack's Maintenance Service.

Jim enjoyed railroads, model trains and photography. He also enjoyed being in nature, canoeing, traveling, hiking or spending time with his pets.

Jim is survived by his sisters: Patricia

"Pat" Kasten and Mary Kasten; aunts: Carol Rowlands and Patricia Kasten; cousins and friends. Jim was preceded in death by his parents.

The funeral Mass for Jim was celebrated on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, at 11 a.m. at St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 1810 N. McDonald St., Appleton. A visitation and prayer vigil was held from 4 to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, at Valley Funeral Home, 2211 N. Richmond St., Appleton. Church visitation began at 9 a.m. on Wednesday at St. Thomas More. Inurnment was at Appleton Highland Memorial Park.

For online condolences, please visit valleyfh.com. In lieu of flowers, a memorial is being established in Jim's name.

Valley Funeral Home

# Classifieds

Call 920.486.1616 to place your ad

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

### For Sale

Audien Hearing. The world's first hearing aid with touchscreen controls. No tiny buttons, apps or prescriptions. 45-day risk free trial. Free shipping. Lifetime support. More than 1.5 million happy customers. Call Audien 1-855-943-6279

Cavalier-Bichon puppies! Born 1/30, shots, dewormed \$600 call 715-644-5726

Eliminate gutter cleaning forever! Leaf Filter, the most advanced debris-blocking gutter protection. Schedule a FREE Leaf Filter estimate today. 20% off Entire Purchase. Plus 10% Senior & Military Discounts. Call 1-877-920-3533

For Sale Round Hay Bales, good soft grass mix, no rain. Can Deliver 920-878-0005 No VM, Keep trying.

Replace your roof with the best looking and longest lasting material - steel from Erie Metal Roofs! Three styles and multiple colors available. Guaranteed to last a lifetime! Limited Time Offer - up to 50% off installation + Additional 10% off install (for military, health workers & 1st responders.) Call Erie Metal Roofs: 1-877-845-6606

### Garage/Estate Sales

UW Oshkosh - Polk Library  
**ART BOOK SALE**  
1000s of art books  
Tuesday April 21 7:45 AM through Friday April 24 3:00 PM  
\$1.00/item, \$5/bag of items

### Real Estate/Rental

For Sale: Zondlo's Bar & Ballroom. Located at W2407 State Hwy. 102, Rib Lake. 1.88 acres. Built in 1936. A must see 2 place to be. 414-254-6694.

### Legal Notice

**STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT WINNEBAGO COUNTY**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE NAME CHANGE OF: Ruby Lynn Rivera By (Petitioner) Heather Lynn Fremling**

**Notice and Order for Name Change Hearing Case No. 2026CV000300**

**NOTICE IS GIVEN:** A Petition was filed asking to change the name of the person listed above:

From:  
First - Ruby  
Middle - Lynn  
Last - Rivera  
To:  
First - Ruby  
Middle - Lynn  
Last - Fremling  
Birth Certificate:  
First - Ruby  
Middle - Lynn  
Last - Rivera

### IT IS ORDERED:

This Petition will be heard in the Circuit Court of Winnebago County, State of Wisconsin: Judge's Name: Michael D. Rust Place: Winnebago Courthouse, Rm 410 415 Jackson St. Oshkosh, WI 54901 Date: May 1, 2026 Time: 11:30 a.m.

If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call 920-236-4848 prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.

### NOTICE TO NEWSPAPER AND PETITIONER:

Notice of this hearing shall be given by publication as a Class 3 notice for three weeks in a row prior to the date of the hearing in the following newspaper Neenah News.

**BY THE COURT: DATE SIGNED:** March 27, 2026  
**Winnebago County Circuit Branch I**  
**Runs: April 3, 2026, April 10, 2026 and April 17, 2026.**

