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Neenah News

Singing in the rain

A brief downpour followed by a rainbow added to the fun Aug. 26 during the Future Neenah Boogie Back to School celebration in downtown Neenah. Boogie and the Yo-yoz had downtown Neenah rocking, the Neenah Joint School District brought all kinds of games and activities and the Ferris wheel was spinning.

Library offers art supply exchange

By Matthew Hoyman
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

The Community Art Exchange was installed in late July in front of the Neenah Public Library offering a new way to trade pieces of art such as crafts, paintings, drawings, necklaces and more.

Library Adults Services Manager Meh-ta Hess teamed up to start the project with local artists Signa Meyers and Stephanie Berton, who previously designed Curbside Canvas.

Meyers presented at the Neenah Arts Council and Hess and the library came to her with the idea to have something made. The Neenah High School woodshop department made the Curbside Canvas for Meyers and so they made the Art Exchange, too. Meyers' husband 3D printed the logo. Meyers and Berton made 100 pieces of art to start the Community Art Exchange, already putting 50 of their pieces inside the box.

The library also set up art classes for adults to attend for free and are designed to be fun and will be taught by Meyers or Berton.

"The Community Art Exchange, along with the Open Art Studio and Creative Art Studio for Adults programs, will occur monthly and give adults a fabulous opportunity to create and share," Hess said. "Creative Art Studio requires registration, while Open Art Studio does not require registration and will be a lot like Powered by Yarn, our knitting and crochet group: people are encouraged to bring their own projects and

SEE Art supplies ON PAGE 11

New book features holiday charm based on local area

By Pamela Hart
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

The buzz around town about Hallmark naming Neenah as a Top 25 finalist for their 2026 Merriest Christmas Town contest has an added twist.

A book with the potential to become a Hallmark Christmas movie "A Very Chapel Falls Christmas" written by Amanda Lauer, a Fox Valley resident, is based on the charm of the city and is the perfect story for a Hallmark rom-com.

It all began with a common love for Hallmark movies between Lauer and former Mayor Jane Lang.

Their friendship formed in 2014 when Lang invited Lauer to speak at the Neenah Historical Society about her historical fiction books which have been her passion as a writer. They soon discovered that their

conversations drifted from history to romantic comedy.

"She called me up on December 7 of 2023 and wanted me to meet her at Oak Hill Cemetery," Lauer said. "She said the Bergstrom family had refurbished the old chapel. We met later that day. It was a beautiful snowy day. I shot a bunch of pictures and saw how gorgeous it was inside and out."

As they talked about the history of the chapel, Hallmark was brought up in the conversation and both women quickly realized that Neenah would be the perfect setting for one of the channel's heart-warming movies.

Filled with excitement about the possibility of a book about Neenah, Lang

SEE New book ON PAGE 3



Submitted photo

Amanda Lauer wrote "A Very Chapel Falls Christmas" featuring the charm of Neenah during the holidays.

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Publisher
Karen Schneider, 920-858-6407
karen@winnebagomediagroup.com

Editor
Chris Lusvardi, 920-508-0027
editor@winnebagomediagroup.com

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Labor Day activities include parade, festival

Neenah News

The Fox Valley Labor Day Parade and 43rd Annual Labor Fest take place on Monday.

Festivities will start with a 10 a.m. parade from Menasha’s Curtis Reed Square through downtown Neenah. The parade will end at Church and Main streets. The lineup begins at 9 a.m. on Broad Street in Menasha.

Labor Fest will follow the parade from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Neenah Labor Temple, 157 S. Green Bay Road in Neenah.

Festival activities include traditional corn roast, burgers and brats, beverage tents and refreshments, live music, children’s activities and entertainment, in-

door rummage sale and inside/outside snack stands and all-day paddle wheel games and raffles.

Live music will be from noon to 5 p.m. by the Time Machine Band.

Admission is free to the public.

There will be Secured Donation Boxes for Fox Valley Tornado Relief efforts. Only cash and gift cards will be accepted. They will be located inside the Beverage Tent and at the Retiree’s Food Sales Counter inside the Labor Temple.

All cash and gift card donations will support established tornado recovery relief programs with St. Joseph’s Food Pantry and Volunteer Fox Cities.

Riverside Players presents ‘Rumors: A Farce’

Neenah News

The Riverside Players’ presentation of Neil Simon’s “Rumors: A Farce” — a fast-paced, quick-witted comedy directed by Laura Frelich is coming up next week.

The show features four couples that stumble into an anniversary party gone hilariously wrong. With twists, misunderstandings

and mayhem at every turn, this farce is considered the perfect night out for anyone who loves big laughs and sharp humor.

Showtimes are 7 p.m. Sept. 10 through Sept. 13 at Riverside Park.

Ticket information can be found at webtrac.ci.neenah.wi.us/webtrac/web/search.html.



Photo from Neenah Historical Society

Labor Day Parade

Neenah has had a long-standing tradition of Labor Day parades. Here is the Labor Day parade on Sept. 7, 1987, looking east on Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Neenah.

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Calendar of events

- Saturday, Sept. 5**
Future Neenah Farmers Market, 8 a.m., Shattuck Park
- Monday, Sept. 7**
Neenah-Menasha Labor Day Parade, 10 a.m.
Labor Fest, 11 a.m., Neenah Labor Temple, 157 S. Green Bay Road
- Wednesday, Sept. 9**
Small Steps for Brain Health, 3:30 p.m., Valley VNA Senior Care, 1535 Lyon Drive
Lighthouse Preservation Project Groundbreaking, 4:30 p.m., Kimberly Point Lighthouse
- Thursday, Sept. 10**
Riverside Players Theatre in the Park presents Neil Simon’s Rumors: A Farce, 7 p.m., Riverside Park
- Friday, Sept. 11**
Riverside Players Theatre in the Park presents Neil Simon’s Rumors: A Farce, 7 p.m., Riverside Park
- Saturday, Sept. 12**
Future Neenah Farmers Market, 8 a.m., Shattuck Park
Fox Crossing Fire Department Open House, 10 a.m., Station 40, 1326 Cold Spring Road
Author Tammy Borden of “The Harvest Keeper” Meet and Greet, 10:30 a.m., 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Neenah-Menasha InterTribal Pow Wow, 2 p.m., Shattuck Park
Riverside Players Theatre in the Park presents Neil Simon’s Rumors: A Farce, 7 p.m., Riverside Park
- Sunday, Sept. 13**
Riverside Players Theatre in the Park presents Neil Simon’s Rumors: A Farce, 7 p.m., Riverside Park
- Tuesday, Sept. 15**
Fox Crossing Grandparents and Me Craft Night, 5:30 p.m., Fox Crossing Municipal Complex, 2000 Municipal Drive
- Thursday, Sept. 17**
Neenah Historical Society presents History of the Neenah-Menasha YMCA, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

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City panel to consider Flock contract next week

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

Neenah’s Public Service and Safety Committee will consider a resolution to cancel the city’s contract with Flock Safety at its meeting on Tuesday.

Police Chief Aaron Olson announced at the committee’s Aug. 25 meeting that he would recommend the city cancel its contract with the license plate reader technology company.

He said that recommendation will move through the appropriate City Council process.

“To ensure that this matter is handled transparently and without influencing or complicating the Council’s deliberations, I will not be accepting media interviews related to Flock Safety at this time,” Olson said Tuesday in a statement. “This deci-



Olson

sion is intended to keep the process clean, orderly and respectful of the Council’s role.”

If the Public Service and Safety Committee passes the resolution, the Neenah Common Council will vote on it at its Sept. 16 meeting.

The Neenah Police Department has 12 Flock cameras. Under its contract, which expires in the fall of 2028, Neenah pays Flock \$30,000 annually.

Earlier this summer, dozens of city residents spoke at the committee and Common Council meetings against Flock cameras. Most expressed concern that the license plate reader invaded their privacy by tracking their movements and that the information it collected was not secure.

Neighboring communities Appleton, Oshkosh, Kaukauna and Grand Chute have recently ended their contracts with Flock cameras. Menasha Mayor Austin Hammond ordered Flock cameras in the city to be bagged as of Tuesday.

Lighthouse groundbreaking celebration set for Sept. 9

Neenah News

The City of Neenah will officially kick off the Kimberly Point Lighthouse Preservation Project with a groundbreaking ceremony from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the 81-year-old lighthouse.

The Neenah Parks and Recreation Department will celebrate the start of the perseveration project and the completion of the project’s successful fundraising campaign. The event will start with a traditional groundbreaking ceremony followed

by food, music and fun activities.

As part of the project, the Kimberly Point Lighthouse will have structural improvements completed, which are intended to extend its useful life and protect its integrity. The project will also repair and restore the lighthouse’s interior and make it ADA accessible.

The city set aside \$575,000 for the project, with \$300,000 coming from fundraising.

Miron Construction has been selected as the project’s general contractor.

New book

FROM PAGE 1

shared some sweet stories from past experiences in the city.

Lauer looked at her and said, “You just literally gave me the outline for the book.”

Though not her area of expertise, Lauer was up for the challenge to write a contemporary rom-com.

Her book was published in 2024, which Lauer felt was a miracle that it came out in less than a year by a publisher who has published a million books.

Fortunately, she knew the right person at the right time: a writer in Chicago who she had pitched another book to but was rejected.

He writes nonfiction but the saving grace is he loves Hallmark Christmas movies. His publisher read the first three chapters and within three months the book was in print.

“It was such a neat experience and has really proved to be my best seller so far, be-

cause the people here are so generous and supportive,” Lauer said. “They’re so proud of their city.”

Readers will recognize several names of businesses in the book, such as Red Door Mercantile, J. Anthony Jewelers, Cannova’s and Strong Chiropractic, along with prominent families under fictional names. But they know who they are.

Will “A Very Chapel Falls Christmas” be the next Hallmark Christmas movie based in our beloved city?

“I always wanted it to be a movie, but who knows how to get it into the business?” said Lauer. “I guess it’s a matter of knowing somebody who knows somebody.”

Thanks to Future Neenah, the book is in the hands of Hallmark executives who could decide that Neenah is the Merriest Christmas Town.

Neenah officially is one of Hallmark’s Top 25 finalists for America’s Merriest Christmas Town.

Voting can be done at merriestchristmastownscontest.hallmarkchannel.com.

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Emergency Management shares storm update with Board

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

It's been a busy year for the Winnebago County Emergency Management. The department led the response to three major weather events this year — the mid-March snowstorm that dumped more than two feet of snow on the county, the April flooding of the Wolf River and the July 27 EF-3 tornado that struck northern Winnebago County. Emergency Management Director Eric Rasmussen discussed what the county did in each disaster during Tuesday's County Board of Supervisors special orders meet-

ing. The presentation from Rasmussen, who spoke for about 90 minutes, was the agenda's main item. "Emergency managers are the first responders. Although we're not physically entering a burning structure, we are activated at the start of the incident and are integral to the immediate response framework," Rasmussen said. Emergency Management provides structure when an incident occurs, he added. For example, when the tornado happened, the county opened an emergency operations center, which became a central point where different agencies, such as the cities

of Neenah and Menasha, the village of Fox Crossing, law enforcement, different Winnebago County departments, such as Solid Waste Management and Planning and Zoning, gathered, shared information and plotted plans going forward. Communication with the public was a big part of the tornado response, Rasmussen said. The county used social media to share information about the initial boil water order, where tornado victims could go for emergency supplies, how people could help and more. The county also launched a website with information, which had 30,000 hits.

One struggle we had was the lack of power and internet so we came up with the idea of putting up sign boards to communicate with those who couldn't see what we were posting online," Rasmussen said, adding it was a struggle to find translators so information could be shared with non-English speakers. GIS mapping played an essential role after the tornado since it allowed the county and other partners to determine road closures, damage assessments and locations where to hand out resources, Rasmussen said. Rasmussen said the county met the criteria for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to receive a federal disaster declaration for the tornado, but that does not mean an order will be declared. As for what's next, he said the county faces a long-term recovery, which will be led by the Winnebago County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD). The virtual Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) will continue, and organizations will continue to help those dealing with the emotional impacts of the storm. **Flooding update:** The April floods received FEMA federal disaster declaration, Rasmussen said. He said it was a long process, with the funds finally released in July. In Winnebago County, there were 127 valid registrations and 122 inspections were completed. A total of \$555,979 was awarded, with an average of \$4,378. The Town of Wolf River was the only county municipality to qualify for funds from the Wisconsin Disaster Fund. The emergency government management department has three employees — an increase of .5 over 2025. "We have an incredibly talented staff, and that third full-time position has made a big difference for us," Rasmussen said.

Fund to hand out \$1M to tornado victims

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

Families affected by the July 27 tornado will have access to \$1 million in direct assistance through the Community Response Fund within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region. Fund leaders have committed to raising another \$1 million to address future direct assistance needs based on what nonprofits learn in the next weeks and months. The fund is splitting \$1 million between two local nonprofits, LEAVEN and People of Progression. Both organizations will provide direct financial assistance for families. LEAVEN will help families with essential basic needs including housing, transportation, childcare, utilities and more. People of Progression will help with basic needs and one-on-one individual support for those that need help navigating recovery assistance. There is no standard amount available to households because every family has

been affected differently. LEAVEN and People of Progression officials will talk with individuals and families about what happened to their household, what they need help with immediately and how difficult it is for the household to recover on its own. Assistance will be based on the household's current needs, not the total volume of what was damaged or lost. Both organizations use the same guidelines to determine how much assistance a household may receive. Families can work with either organization. LEAVEN can be reached through its website at leavenfoxcities.org or 920-738-9635. People of Progression can be reached at peopleofprogression.com or 920-815-9487. The Community Response Fund is managed by the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, and the tornado relief and recovery is in collaboration with United Way Fox Cities and the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation.

One struggle we had was the lack of power and internet so we came up with the idea of putting up sign boards to communicate with those who couldn't see what we were posting online," Rasmussen said, adding it was a struggle to find translators so information could be shared with non-English speakers. GIS mapping played an essential role after the tornado since it allowed the county and other partners to determine road closures, damage assessments and locations where to hand out resources, Rasmussen said. Rasmussen said the county met the cri-

July tornado caused \$13.3M in damage

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

The July 27 tornado caused nearly \$13.3 million in damage, according to Gov. Tony Evers' official aid request to the federal government. Evers sent in a formal request Aug. 26 to President Donald Trump asking for disaster declaration assistance. "The combination of powerful winds and a strong EF3 tornado caused extensive damage across multiple counties, leaving families without homes and businesses unable to operate," Evers wrote. Evers' letter covers Outagamie and Winnebago counties where the tornado hit as well as Forest and Vilas counties, which also experienced storm damage on July 27. A total of 2,346 residential structures were reviewed. In the four counties:

- 84 structures were destroyed
- 412 structures had major damage
- 1,331 structures had minor damage
- 519 structures others were affected

The total structure damage cost was es-

timated at \$8.2 million. In Menasha, 663 homes were damaged, 140 of which were hit hard enough to be deemed unsafe. Three single-family homes were destroyed in Fox Crossing while 79 suffered major damage, 261 suffered minor damage and another 25 structures listed as "affected." In Outagamie and Winnebago counties, an estimated \$13,861,378.38 was reported in public sector damage. The damage in private and public sector in just Winnebago County totaled \$13.3 million. In his letter, Evers pointed out that Winnebago County was impacted by severe flooding in April. "The same governmental personnel, emergency-management systems, public works resources, community organizations, equipment and financial reserves are now being called upon to respond to a second major disaster in a short period," Evers said in the letter. "This cumulative burden has significantly reduced the communities' ability to finance and manage recovery through ordinary means."

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Photo from St. Mary Catholic Schools

School year starts

Students were welcomed back Aug. 25 for the start of the St. Mary Catholic Schools school year. Students spent the week meeting their teachers, learning their schedules and exploring their classrooms, among other activities.

Habitat for Humanity launches program to repair homes damaged by storms

Neenah News

The Greater Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity launched a program this week to help 100 families affected by the July 27 tornado get back in their homes by Dec. 15. The Tornado Rock the Block 100 project will focus on replacing roofs, windows, doors and exterior damage to homes. Contractors will be brought in to complete the work. Habitat for Humanity will help families who make up to 120% of the area’s median income or \$133,800 for a family of four.

Help will be available to uninsured and underinsured homeowners. Residents of Menasha, Neenah, Fox Crossing and Appleton with significant tornado damage will be able to apply for the assistance. No interest is paid on the funds paid for the projects and people do not need to pay anything back until they sell their home or move out. Support is available on a first-come, first serve basis. To sign up for the program, visit foxcitieshabitat.org/tornadorecovery.

New school year chance to build on foundation

Building on strong foundation is district’s main goal for new school year
As summer wraps and our halls fill with energy once again, I want to welcome our students, families and staff to a brand-new school year. There’s nothing quite like the excitement of these first few weeks, and I am thrilled for what lies ahead.

Our main goal this year is simple: keep building on the strong foundation we’ve set over the last two years. We’ve been working hard to make sure we operate as one connected school district rather than a group of individual schools working in isolation. By creating more consistency across all our buildings, we ensure that every student in Neenah receives the exact same high level of support and learning opportunities, no matter which school they attend.

To stay on this path, we are entering the second year of implementing Continuous School Improvement Process (CSIP) plans in every building. These plans are our practical guides for improving learning and building strong, supportive school cultures every day. At the same time, we will continue to ground our work in our broader NJSD Plan for Success by maintaining a districtwide focus on engagement, collaboration, well-being, responsibility and student success.

We also have a big update for our

League of Women Voters hosting candidate forum

Neenah News

League of Women Voters of Winnebago County is hosting a candidate forum for Assembly District 53. The forum will take place at 6:30 p.m. Thursday in the City of Neenah Council Chambers, 211 Walnut St. The 53rd Assembly District includes the City of Neenah, most of Menasha, Fox Crossing east of the lake and part of Appleton’s south side. The three candidates hoping to take the seat currently held by Dean Kaufert, who is not running for reelection, have all been invited, and include David Daniels (Republican), Rachael Dowling (Independent) and Becky Nichols (Democrat).

High school goes on lockdown inadvertently

Neenah News

On the second day of the school year, Neenah High School went into a brief lockdown on Wednesday morning. “Neenah High School was placed in a secure school this morning due to a staff



Dr. Steve Harrison
NJSD Superintendent

elementary schools. Following a detailed review of our English Language Arts (ELA) program last year, we’re introducing updated instructional materials for grades SK through 5. These new resources align with the Science of Reading, giving our teachers fantastic, research-backed tools to help our young students become confident readers and writers. Finally, a school district is only as strong as its connection to the community. To keep our doors and lines of communication wide open, I will be hosting several community listening sessions throughout the school year. These casual get-togethers will give parents, neighbors and community members a chance to ask questions, share feedback and chat about our district’s future. Keep an eye on our district website for upcoming dates and locations. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and support. Together, let’s make this an incredible school year for Neenah’s kids.

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State prosecutors push back against Farmer appeal

Neenah News

State prosecutors are pushing back against a convicted drunk driver’s recent appeal in a Waupaca County case that resulted in the death of four siblings in 2023.

Scott Farmer of Neenah has filed an appeal in the case where he was found guilty of four counts of homicide by intoxicated use of vehicle and an operating while intoxicated – fifth offense. He pled no contest to the charges in August 2024.

Farmer was sentenced to 37 years in state prison in September 2024 and is currently serving that sentence at the Dodge Correctional Institute.

Farmer filed his appeal earlier this year claiming that a judge did not physically sign a warrant for a blood draw after the crash. Prosecutors argue that the appeal should not be heard.



Farmer

“The record is utterly devoid of evidence suggesting the warrant-issuing judge nefariously doctored the deputy’s affidavit to make it appear as though he swore to the document’s content before the warrant was issued when that wasn’t true,” Waupaca District Attorney Kat Turner said in an Aug. 28 filing.

The case received attention from all over the state as four people were killed. On Dec. 16, 2023, Farmer turned his vehicle into oncoming traffic on U.S. Highway 10 just south of Weyauwega and crashed into an SUV, killing Weyauwega residents Daniel Gonzalez, 25, his brother Fabian Gonzalez, 23, and their sisters, Lilian Gonzalez, 14, and Daniela Gonzalez, 9.

Court records state Farmer was heavily intoxicated and had an open bottle of vodka in his vehicle.

He is being represented by the state public defender’s office attorneys Nicholas Smith and Devon Lee. Online records show both attorneys joined the case a year after the sentencing hearing.

Smith and Lee argue that the judge did

not sign the warrant for a blood draw and instead the judge directed a sheriff’s deputy to sign the judge’s name on the warrant.

Farmer’s attorneys cite Wisconsin law that states a search warrant needs to be signed by a judge and requires the judge to “immediately sign the original warrant and enter on the face of the original warrant the exact time when the warrant was ordered to be issued.”

They argued this never happened and therefore the blood draw was warrantless. The Wisconsin State Crime Lab reported that Farmer’s blood-alcohol content from the blood draw was 0.346, which is four times the legal limit.

Turner stated Farmer’s appeal makes no sense.

“Finally, as a practical matter, Farmer’s

argument makes no logical sense,” Turner stated. “He insists that dating a notary jurat is vital because it is the only way a reviewing court can ascertain whether the search was conducted pursuant to a valid warrant. But dating a notary jurat still would not confirm whether the officer swore to the facts in his affidavit before or after the search warrant was authorized.”

Turner added Farmer’s counsel at trial did not error by not making a motion to suppress the blood draw evidence and called the idea “meritless.”

Online court records show Waupaca Circuit Court Judge Diane Meulemans has until Dec. 28 to decide if Farmer’s postconviction motion will be moving forward. If the appeal moves forward, it will likely be heard by a three-judge appeals panel.

Independent sheriff’s candidate withdraws from race

Neenah News

Independent Winnebago County Sheriff’s candidate Dani Falesnik of Neenah withdrew from the race Sunday prior to a scheduled candidate’s forum.

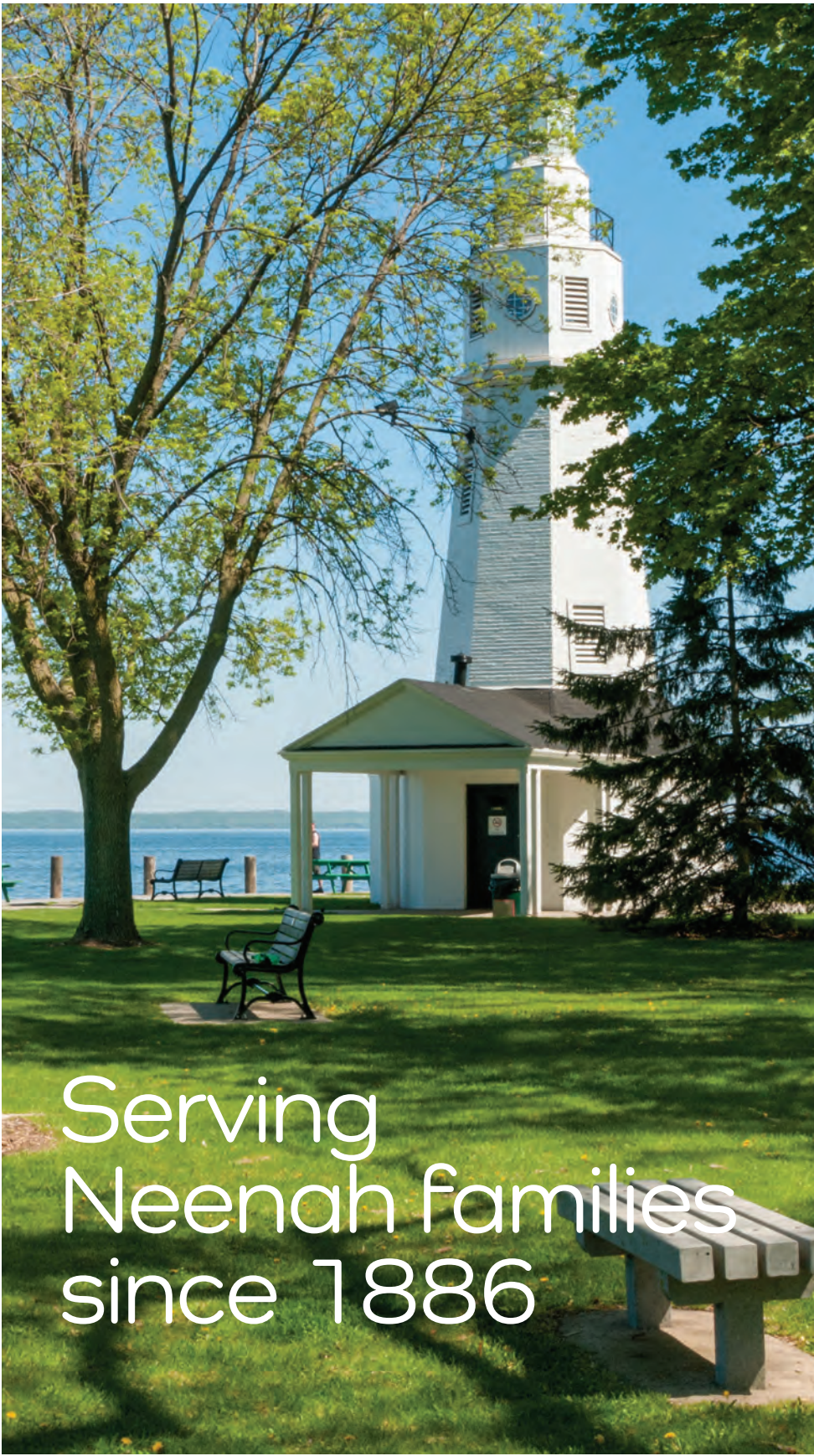
Falesnik cited concerns about splitting the progressive vote.

“This campaign was never about a title,” Falesnik said. “It was about proving that the office of sheriff belongs to the people — and that a woman, a therapist, a non-officer has every right to run it.”

Falesnik is a Licensed Professional Counselor with 15 years of experience in mental health and human services.

The candidates vying for the position Jason Rippl (Democrat) and Darin Rice (Republican) were expected to participate in a candidate’s forum Wednesday in Oshkosh sponsored by the League of Women’s Voters of Winnebago County and co-produced by the City of Oshkosh. Sheriff John Matz has announced plans to retire.

The election is Nov. 3.



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Hoelzel proving to be force at net for Neenah

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

There are generally two distinct skills for volleyball players who hold down the middle position at the net. Although needing to be proficient in both hitting and blocking, players will often lean to having a strength in one area or the other. Neenah's Paige Hoelzel believes she is a blocker.

"I like to say I'm a middle blocker who also hits," Hoelzel said at a practice earlier this week. "I love blocking. It's my favorite thing to do. It brings a different part of volleyball to the game."

And as much as a thunderous spike resonates around a packed gymnasium, smothering one of those attempted kills can be just as tide-turning.

"I definitely think it changes the momentum of the game when a big stuff block happens," Hoelzel said. "The crowd just goes off and the bench is doing its thing having fun. It's just so exciting."

Hoelzel has been making life miserable for opposing hitters the last two seasons since joining the Rockets' varsity squad as a sophomore.

She finished her first season on varsity with a team-leading 90 blocks, while also chipping in with 118 kills. Hoelzel improved in both categories last season, leading the team with 97 blocks – nearly double of any other Rocket player – while also notching 130 kills in earning first-team all-Fox Valley Association honors.

"I definitely started feeling more confident in my abilities freshman year and into sophomore year," Hoelzel said. "It was tough (playing varsity as a sophomore) but I really wanted to do my best and play at the highest level so I worked really hard to where I am today."

As much as Hoelzel relies on her 6-foot, 2-inch frame to be a smothering blocker at the net, she also has the experience to understand how opponents are attacking and where the opportunities will come.

"I'm watching where the pass is and if its on the net, then I'm ready for the middle to get set," Hoelzel said. "I'm watching



Neenah senior Paige Hoelzel is entering her third season playing at the varsity level for the Rockets and is a returning first-team all-Fox Valley Association selection as a middle blocker.

Senior Standout



ball, setter and once I know who it's going to, I'm on them."

And when an over-pass from the opposing team is floating its way to the net?

Well, there's nothing better than blowing out the candles, so to speak.

"A birthday cake ball. That's my favorite. I'm always excited for a birthday cake ball," Hoelzel said. "You have no one against you and it's 'Boom.'"

Hoelzel was a bit of a late arrival to the sport of volleyball, having not started playing competitively until seventh grade.

Before that point, she had played basketball but didn't feel a real connection to the sport.

"I didn't really enjoy it but I still wanted

to play a sport so I tried out for volleyball. I immediately fell in love with it," Hoelzel said. "I've always played middle ever since I first started. They were like you are tall, we are putting you right in the middle. I've stuck with it and I love it."

Hoelzel has already committed to attend and continue her volleyball career at NCAA Division II Southwest Minnesota State next fall and will be playing in one of the top Division II conferences in the nation.

She is excited about the opportunity to play at the collegiate level but knows it will be a big step up.

"I'm really excited for it," Hoelzel said. "I've met the whole team already and my coaches and I'm really excited for what's after high school."

Before Hoelzel officially joins the Mustangs, she does have her senior season to get through at Neenah and believes it will be a special one.

With a veteran lineup and plenty of talent on the Rockets' side of the net, Hoelzel believes this group has the chance to do something special.

"I have a good feeling about this year. We flow together perfectly as a team. Everyone knows what they are going to do and we can execute everything," Hoelzel said. "We feel when we play higher competition we play better because we really want to win. It brings a very competitive side out of us."

And that has the Rockets thinking about a possible trip to the Resch Center in November, ending their season at the state tournament.

"I definitely think about that all of the time," Hoelzel said. "I really want to make it to state. As a team we talk about that we have the opportunity to make it far so we want to use that and go far."

Whenever Neenah's season comes to a close, Hoelzel knows it will be difficult peeling off that Rockets jersey for the final time.

"It's going to be a sad moment because I love this team a lot. I've had a lot of great experiences and it changed me as a person," Hoelzel said. "(Volleyball) made me more confident in myself and made me a leader. I was very quiet when I first was on the team as a sophomore. Over time, I've just become incredibly confident in my abilities both on and off the court. It's taught me a lot of life skills."



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Prep roundup

FOOTBALL

Rockets come up short against Warhawks

Neenah ran into top-ranked and defending state champion Arrowhead last Friday and suffered a 35-7 loss in the final tune-up before the start of the Fox Valley Association schedule.

The game was tied at seven at halftime before the Warhawks scored 28 points in the second half to pull away for the win.

It was the third straight week the Rockets had faced a state championship finalist, having matched up against Bay Port in a preseason scrimmage before falling to Green Bay Notre Dame in the opener.

It is the first time that Neenah has started a season 0-2 in a non-COVID affected year since 2012.

The Rockets were slated to open FVA play against Appleton East on Thursday at Rocket Stadium. Results of the game were not available for this edition.

SOCCKER

Rockets rally to earn tie with Polar Bears

Neenah scored twice in the final eight minutes to earn a 3-3 tie with Hortonville in the team's Fox Valley Association opener on Tuesday night.

Tyler Geschrei scored in the 73rd minute to bring the Rockets within a goal before Ian Baetke notched the tying tally with two minutes left in the match. Baetke also scored Neenah's first goal in the first half, while Kolton Fleege assisted on both Baetke's goals.

Oliver Peterka finished with five saves in goal.

Last week, the Rockets picked up a pair of nonconference wins, beating Bay Port 3-2 and collecting a 2-1 win over DC Everest.

Fleege had a pair of goals and Hunter Brown also scored in the win over the Pirates, with Brown, Jordy Banda and Evan Glennon notching assists. Fleege and Baetke scored against DC Everest, with Brown picking up an assist.

Peterka was in goal for both wins totaling nine saves in the two matches.

Second-half surge lifts Zephyrs to win

St. Mary Catholic broke a halftime tie with a pair of second half goals to earn a 3-1 win over Cedar Grove-Belgium in a Big East/EWC road match on Tuesday.

Rhett Probst, Nathan Jensen and John-Paul Foord scored for the Zephyrs, with

Jensen, Bryce Heimann and Aiden Tines adding assists.

The Zephyrs suffered a hard-fought 1-0 loss to New Holstein/Brillion last week to open the conference schedule.

GOLF

Oitzinger leads Rockets in win over Terrors

Adrianne Oitzinger shot a 45 to earn medalist honors as Neenah toppled Appleton West in a Fox Valley Association dual meet at Ridgeway Country Club.

The Rockets registered the five lowest scored on the day to beat the Terrors, 184-236.

Alex Guden and Lillian Quella added rounds of 46, while Paige Keck chipped in a 47.

Neenah fell short of powerhouse Kaukauna on Monday at Countryside Golf Course as the Ghosts picked up a 160-205 win over the Rockets.

Quella had the low round of the day for Neenah with a 48, followed by Keck with a 51, Guden with a 52 and Leah Milske with a 54.

Quella also led Neenah in a dual meet against Oshkosh North at Westhaven Golf Course.

The senior shot a 44 as the Rockets carded a team score of 189. Oitzinger added a 45, followed by Guden with a 49 and Keck with a 51.

TENNIS

Zephyrs knock off Plymouth in dual meet

St. Mary Catholic swept all three doubles matches in collecting a 6-1 win over Plymouth on Tuesday.

Faith Bergstrom and Laney Schmidt at the No. 3 doubles flight highlighted the sweep by bouncing back from a first-set loss to claim a 6-7, 7-5, 10-3 win. Halle Janssen and ella Chier at the No. 1 flight and Scarlett Bergstrom and Kieran Bergstrom at the No. 2 flight each posted straight-set wins.

Vivie Auth posted a 6-0, 6-0 win at No. 1 singles while Nadia Alexander at No. 2 singles and Norah Wroblewski at No. 4 singles each dropped only one game in their wins.

St. Mary Catholic also picked up a 5-2 win over Roncalli/Two Rivers last week.

Auth and Alexander picked up wins at the top-two singles flight – with Alexander pulling out a three-set victory. All three doubles pairings won in straight sets and dropped a combined nine games in

SEE **Prep roundup** ON PAGE 10

Zephyrs ride big victory into conference schedule

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

Now things get serious for the St. Mary Catholic football team.

Following last week's 44-8 dominant win over Manawa to even their record this season at 1-1, the Zephyrs will head into Eastern Wisconsin Conference play with a trip to Two Rivers on Friday.

With the start of the league season – and the official beginning of the push for a return to the WIAA playoffs – there was a different feeling around practice this week as the team prepared for the Raiders.

"I think going into conference changes the whole energy," said junior linebacker George Voss. "Before it was almost like a prep game. It still mattered but now we get into conference play and we really want to win conference."

Voss had a big game in leading the Zephyrs past the Wolves, leading the team with six tackles while having a hand in all three turnovers that the defense forced.

He intercepted a pass, recovered a fumble and also forced a fumble that was recovered by Finnley McClone.

"It's a huge energy-giver when you can (get a turnover)," Voss said. "It gives the offense a boost and really brings the whole team up. You can get hyped up with everybody."

After losing the turnover battle in the season-opening loss, head coach Rob Detterman was pleased to see his squad come back strong last Friday.

"Week one we were on the minus side of

the turnover equation and getting into the positive side is where we want to be every week," Detterman said. "The defense was outstanding from play one. We were aggressive and got them off the field constantly."

Detterman said the defense got a taste of what they will see from the Raiders in last Friday's contest.

Both teams like to throw the ball more than run and Two Rivers will likely have a lot of the same looks the Zephyrs saw from Manawa.

"They are very similar to Manawa. It was kind of like a prep week for us," Detterman said. "(Two Rivers') quarterback is a little more athletic and throws the ball a little bit better, so it is going to be a step up."

The Raiders have Easton Cariveau under center and the sophomore has thrown for nearly 400 yards and four touchdowns, while leading the Raiders to 50 points in the first two weeks.

Senior Ben Klein is the leading receiver for Two Rivers, while four different players have caught touchdown passes from Cariveau.

"A lot of teams in the conference run a lot, but Two Rivers passes more than most teams we see so our DBs and our coverages have to work pretty hard," Voss said. "The whole team had a great game (against Manawa). We played together way better than the week before. I think it's important to look at that and take it to Two Rivers."

St. Mary Catholic's offense also stepped up its play in the win over Manawa led by quarterback Tarver Trinkner. The senior connected on 10-of-15 passes for 150 yards and threw touchdowns to three different receivers in the win.

He also led the team with 64 yards rushing and two touchdowns.

"It felt good to execute. We really didn't execute the first week like we know we could," Trinkner said. "No turnovers, de-

SEE **Zephyr football** ON PAGE 11

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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 9

the three matches.

Rockets open FVA slate win easy win

Neenah dominated Appleton West in earning a 7-0 victory in the Fox Valley Association opener last week.

The Rockets' trio of doubles teams lost only one game combined in the dual meet as Rebekah Thomas and Sydney Michalkiewicz at the No. 1 flight, Ella Motto and Evelyn Buss at the No. 2 flight and JB Kennedy and Mollie Van Dyke at No. 3 doubles each posted easy wins.

Megan Slabbert highlighted the sweep of the singles matches for Neenah by earning a 6-0, 6-0 win at the No. 4 flight. Celia Gentile, Ellie Grace Zicklert and Page Vickman won the other singles matches for the Rockets, all in straight sets.

Also last week, the team finished off the Brookfield Central Invitational by going

1-1 with a 4-3 win over Homestead and a 5-2 loss to Brookfield East.

Zickler at No. 3 singles and Vickman at No. 4 singles posted wins against Brookfield East while the doubles pairings of Motto and Buss and Kennedy and Van Dyke also earned wins.

In the loss to Brookfield East, Gentile earned a win at No. 1 singles, while Kennedy and Van Dyke also won at No. 3 doubles.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Zephyrs take title at Omro Invite

St. Mary Catholic finished 5-0 without dropping a set to take the title at the Omro Invitational on Saturday.

The Zephyrs dispatched Shawano, Wautoma and Westfield in pool play before topping Wild Rose. In the title match, St. Mary Catholic beat Shawano for a second time, 25-17, 25-18.

Luci Nackers finished 20 kills, 5 digs and nine aces, while Autumn Crowe add-

ed 19 kills and 20 digs. Emily Weiss finished with team-highs in assists (59) and aces (17) with Bitsy McCauley posting a team-best 21 digs.

The Zephyrs opened their season by going 3-0 at a home quadrangular last week sweeping matches from Amherst, Random Lake and West Bend East.

Crowe finished with 15 kills, followed by Nackers with 12 kills, while Adele Brennan added 11 kills and 27 assists. Weiss led the team with 33 assists, while McCauley tallied 18 digs.

Rockets shine at Joust Invitational

Neenah finished 5-2 at the talent-rich Joust Invitational at UW-Stout over the weekend, posting wins over Catholic Memorial, Slinger, Oak Creek Cedarburg and Xavier.

The Rockets dropped matches to Hamilton and Wisconsin Lutheran.

Brielle Brown and Lily Ronjue each tallied 48 kills over the course of the tournament, with Brown posted an impressive

15 kills in the win over Slinger. Paige Hoelzel added 27 kills and Elaina Kramer had 23.

Finley Kelley and Sena Messner led the team with 85 and 75 assists, respectively.

On defense, Aubrey Lindgren posted 87 digs to lead the Rockets, while Brown finishing with 43 and Romjue totaling 40.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Neenah rolls past Polar Bears in FVA opener

Sam Keepers racked up nearly half of Neenah's kills to lead the Rockets to a 25-13, 25-17, 25-16 win over Hortonville in the team's FVA opener on Tuesday.

Keepers finished with 16 kills in the match as the Rockets totaled 35 as a team. Xander Reddick had the next highest total with five.

Levi Steckling totaled six aces to lead the team, while also leading the squad with 16 digs.

SEE Prep roundup ON PAGE 11

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Prep roundup

FROM PAGE 10

Cam Diekfuss had an all-around performance with 27 aces, eight digs, four aces and four kills.

Neenah also picked up wins over Sun Prairie East and Madison Memorial last week in a triangular meet.

Keepers had 19 kills in the two matches to lead the way, while Reddick had seven kills against Madison Memorial and Ashton Olson added nine against Sun Prairie.

Dylan Zimmerman and Ethan Sina combined for 56 assists in the two matches.

CROSS COUNTRY

Neenah girls run well at Jamie Block Invite

The Rockets had the top finishers in

three of the four divisions at the Jamie Block Invitational held in West Bend on Saturday.

The meet is broken down with runners in each grade competing against one another.

Neenah swept the top three places in both the senior and sophomore races. Natalie Schultz, Maddie Schoonover and Elise Braten went 1-2-3, respectively, in the senior race, while Sam Zilm, Lizzy LaPlant and Olivia Landrath were the top three finishers among the sophomores.

Izzy Malloy added a win in the junior race with Courtney Cain taking fourth, while the top Neenah finisher among the freshmen was Ramsey Green in fifth place.

The Neenah boys had a trio of top-10 finishers on the day as Nolan Moore was fourth and Blake Auxier was 10th among the freshmen runners and Drew Sabatke placed 10th among the seniors.

Zephyr football

FROM PAGE 9

fense played great and everything felt like it was working great.”

By showcasing their passing game against Manawa – which was highlighted by Luke Fairweather’s seven-catch night – Trinkner believes that it helped open up the running attack for him and running backs Dominic Todd and Cabel Vogel, who combined for 105 yards on 19 carries.

Having a balanced attack will be key against the Raiders because the Zephyrs hope to use one aspect of the offense to open up the other.

“Get our run game going and then get our passes. When we can get those play actions off the run, it’s great. Everything works off each other,” Trinkner said. “We have to execute on offense like we did last week. Run

our plays that we know we can do well.”

Any offensive success, though, starts with the group up front and Detterman was pleased with the way the line handled their business against Manawa.

“Our line was getting a great push. They were getting four or five yards of push before our backs had to make a cut,” Detterman said. “We struggled a little bit early but once we got (their defense) figured out we were able to move the ball.

“It was a good game plan. We came out and executed and we came out with a victory.”

Now the Zephyrs will be looking to make it two in a row and, more importantly, get that first conference win under their belts.

“One of our goals is to win conference and that starts this week,” Trinkner said. “We really have to bring the energy this week and every week until the playoffs start.”

Art supplies

FROM PAGE 1

supplies, and create in good company.”

Berton hopes classes at the library will provide an artistic outlet for adults in the community to share.

“If people choose to put their creations in the Community Art Exchange, the joy of art will continue to spread,” Berton said.

After the tornado, the library offered outlets for charging, wi-fi access and free lunches for all ages, Hess said. The new exchange can help add a way to decompress during a stressful time for the surrounding neighborhoods.

“Creating art promotes positive mental health, and sharing art can spread happiness,” Hess said. “Our communities have been through so much, and we hope the Community Art Exchange can help bring a little joy to everyone.”

Meyers’ Curbside Canvas was an inspiration for the Community Art Exchange, which she started over a year ago and keeps track via an excel sheet. She has people coming from all over the place such as Racine and Oconto Falls.

“I’m not a professional artist, but I’m giving away my art,” Meyers said. “I might be embarrassed about it. I might not like it. But people can still pick it up. I want to encourage people to be able to start their own creative practice.”

Meyers went to school for psychology, now working in the behavioral health field, she understands the importance of art.

“Art is just as good as therapy,” Meyers said. “To be able to get out of the day-to-day, whether you’re depressed or anxious, being able to create art I think does good for anybody’s mental health. I’m saying that as a counselor. I’ve benefited from it emotionally and I know other people have too.”

The library art classes will be another outlet for adults to have fun and play around with different ideas.



Photo from Neenah Public Library

The Community Art Exchange located outside the Neenah Public Library runs on a simple idea: Take art, leave art.

“It gives people access to art that they wouldn’t normally have,” Meyers said. “Not everyone gets original art. It’s expensive. So it’s a way to say, let’s create art together as a community.”

Art has allowed Meyers to make friends like Stephanie (Berton) and learn how to be more open.

“It encourages you to share your art with the world and be vulnerable, because art isn’t meant to just sit in a sketchbook in a drawer,” Meyers said. “You’ve got to share it. You run the risk of someone hating it, but you also run the risk of someone liking it. I’ve made art that I literally hated, but I put it out there, and someone grabbed it. So, someone’s going to like it.”

Art creates community in ways other mediums don’t, said Meyers.

“There’s so much that separates us, whether it be politics, whether it be religion,” Meyers said. But art is like art, right? You’re not going to argue about art. I think having art in a community can help some of the differences we do have and make us more unified. I mean, who’s going to be mad at art?”

Classifieds

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Salvador & Sonia Squirrel

To be money smart, you need to know the importance of saving for later.

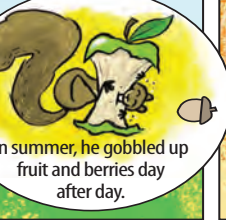
Salvador the Squirrel was born in the winter.



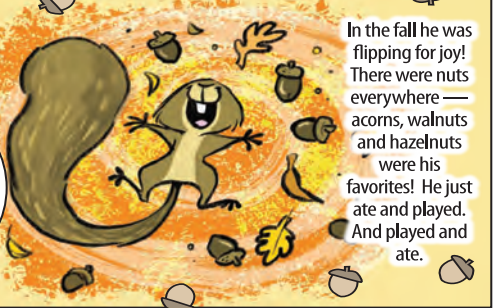
He left the nest in spring and found lots of food. He ate all of his favorites: tender shoots, new leaves, mushrooms and bugs!



In summer, he gobbled up fruit and berries day after day.



In the fall he was flipping for joy! There were nuts everywhere — acorns, walnuts and hazelnuts — were his favorites! He just ate and played. And played and ate.



Salvador's big sister, Sonia, didn't play as much anymore. She was busy saving nuts and acorns to eat in the winter, when food would be hard to find.

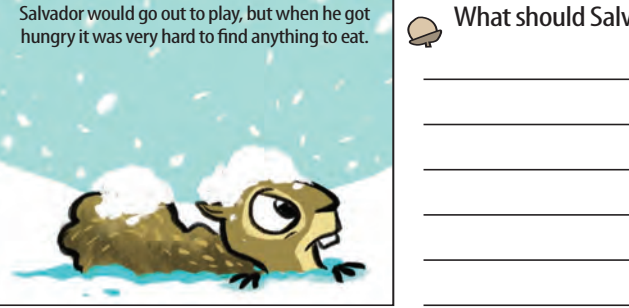


Then the weather started to turn cold and snow began to fall. The nuts on the trees and ground were nearly all gone. They had been gathered and saved by the other squirrels.

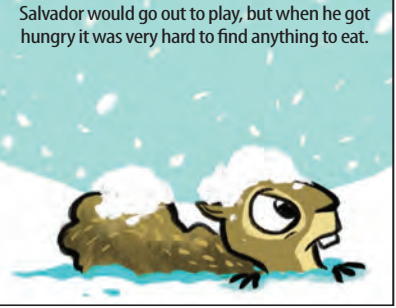


Now Salvador was really worried about the long winter ahead!

Salvador thought Sonia was b-o-o-r-i-i-n-g!



Salvador would go out to play, but when he got hungry it was very hard to find anything to eat.



What should Salvador have done differently?

Extra! Extra!

Growing, Growing, GROWING

"From tiny acorns, mighty oaks grow," is a popular saying that means even small things can be great and big one day.

Look at each number in the chart below. Then look through the newspaper to show the next number in sequence when counting by 3's. The first row has been done for you.

3	6	9	12	15
4				
8				
17				

Standards Link: Math: Addition.

Saving Plan

Like squirrels, people also need to save to help with future needs. They also need to save to be able to buy things they don't have the money for in the present.

Is there something you would like to buy, but you don't have enough money? Make a plan to see if you can save enough to buy this at some time in the future!

Write down what you want to buy and the amount of money you need.

MY SAVING PLAN

I need \$ _____ to buy _____.

Money I have saved: \$ _____

Weekly allowance I can save: \$ _____

Weekly work/chores income: \$ _____

TOTAL AFTER ONE WEEK: \$ _____

After one week, how much more money do you need to reach your goal? Repeat this plan each week until you have the money you need.

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Match each cap to the acorn with the math problem it answers.

20

14

3 + 2

17

13 + 13

8

8 + 9

26

5

12 - 4

19 - 5

16 + 4

Double Double Word Search

FAVORITES SQUIRREL FLIPPING SAVING WINTER SISTER FRUITS LEAVES HUNGRY MONEY COLD FALL NEST EAT

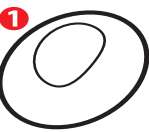
Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards, sideways and diagonally.

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

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

Let's Draw!

Follow these six easy steps to learn how to draw a squirrel.





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The Sky is Falling?

Imagine you are an ant and you see a big leaf falling from a branch high above you. How do you escape?



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