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INSIDE



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Schools want voucher info on tax bills

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

Few homeowners know a portion of their property taxes allocated for the Neenah Joint School District goes to pay private school vouchers, according to Board President Brian Epley. “The amount of public dollars going to pay vouchers is increasing in Wisconsin,

but it’s a mystery since it’s obscured by going through the school levy,” he said. “I know vouchers can be controversial, but this is a non-partisan issue. It’s about raising awareness.” Last March, the Board of Education passed a resolution requesting that property tax bills in the five municipal governments making up the district’s atten-

dance area — the City of Neenah, the Village of Fox Crossing and the towns of Neenah, Clayton and Vinland — disclose the amount of money levied for private school vouchers and independent charter schools. In the 2025-26 school year, the district

SEE **Voucher info** ON PAGE 7



Photo from Neenah Public Library

Science extravaganza

The Neenah Public Library hosted the SciFest Science Extravaganza on Saturday. From hands-on experiments and creative projects to exploring the natural world and the human body, young scientists had opportunities to learn, discover and let their curiosity shine.

Student manager has become big part of Neenah football

By Tim Froberg
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Football is a tough guy’s game. It demands physical and mental strength and tests the will of those who play it. They don’t get much tougher than Mason Gretebeck. He doesn’t wear a helmet, cleats or shoulder pads and you won’t find his number on the Neenah roster. But Gretebeck is tough when it comes to life. Gretebeck is a student manager for the Neenah varsity football team. He’s unable to play the sport he loves because of a health disability, but has become a valuable contributor to the program. Gretebeck has a rare neuromuscular disease called DOK-7 CMS (Congenital Myasthenic Syndrome) which impacts the muscles in his arms, legs and core, causing weakness and fatigue. He was diagnosed with the disease around the age of two and has undergone 17 surgeries over the years. Gretebeck uses a wheelchair to get around in large spaces such as Neenah High School, but can walk fairly well and gets out of his chair to do most tasks. Some days are tougher than others in terms of managing the disease, but Gretebeck has always been a fighter

and pushes himself through any discomfort and does as much as he can without the chair. Competing in football, or any competitive high school sport, is off the table. However, the junior has found other ways to bolster Neenah’s football program. One of Gretebeck’s main responsibilities as a student manager is to film Neenah varsity practices and games through the use of drone technology which provides a birds-eye view of the on-field action. But Gretebeck doesn’t just complete his film work and go home. He’s part of the team. Gretebeck regularly lifts weights with the varsity and attends all practices and team meals. He’s pushed and challenged in the weight room by Neenah coaches and his manual wheel chair is always loaded onto the bus for away games. “Mason has become a big part of our football program,” said Neenah head coach Steve Jung. “What he’s doing provides us with great film of what we’re doing. That allows us to get better each day in practice. “His commitment to the program is outstanding. Our kids really enjoy being around him because he could eas-

SEE **Rocket helper** ON PAGE 8



Submitted photo

Mason Gretebeck serves as a student manager for the Neenah football team, flying the video drone for games and practices.

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County board approves \$20M in borrowing for 2027

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

The Winnebago County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution Tuesday authorizing the county to borrow up to \$20 million to pay for 2027 capital improvement projects.

Of that \$20 million, \$10 million will be under a 10-year amortization for capital improvement projects while the other \$10 million will be under a 20-year amortization for building projects. The estimated interest rate is 4.75%, said Justin Fischer of Baird, who works with the county on its financing.

“The county is in excellent financial standing with an Aa1 bond credit rating and is doing a good job of paying off its debt at a high rate,” he said.

The remodeled highway department building is one of the capital improvement projects included in the budget. Since the project will be completed over two years, County Executive Gordon Hintz said the borrowing will be spread out over 2026 and 2027.

Previously, the county would have bor-

rowed all the funds at once and paid interest on funds it had not yet used, he said. In 2027, the county will bond for \$7.5 million and in 2028 will bond for \$12 million.

By going this route, Hintz said the county will save money.

The board will vote on the county’s complete budget next week.

UW-Fox Campus update: A Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) made up of experts in real estate, development, planning, finance and community development met last month to tour and discuss options to guide future campus programming and planning at the former UW-Oshkosh campus in Menasha, Hintz said.

TAP is currently working on a report that will make some redevelopment recommendations and share some possible options for the site. In December, those findings and recommendations will be presented to the county board.

Hintz said in early 2027 that the county board can evaluate the options, set campus goals and begin longer-term programming and plans for the campus.



Photo from Neenah Historical Society

Halloween Traditions

Neenah Police Annual Halloween Party in the Shattuck High School gym circa 1960. The Neenah Police Annual Halloween Party was held across the north and south gyms of the Neenah High School Shattuck Building.

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Calendar of events

Friday, Oct. 23

Splash Break Indoor Open Swim, 1 p.m., Neenah Middle School Pool

Fall Musical “Little Shop of Horrors,” 7 p.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts Center

St. Mary Catholic Middle School Musical: The Wizard of Oz Youth Edition, 6 p.m., Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center

Saturday, Oct. 24

Electronics Recycling Event, 8 a.m., 1475 Tullar Road

Fall Craft Fair, 9 a.m., St. Gabriel Parish

Fall Craft and Bake Sale, 9 a.m., St. Mark’s Lutheran Church

Neenah-Menasha Model Railroad Club Open House, 9 a.m., 323 W. Forest Ave.

Pumpkin Fest, 10 a.m., The Plaza and Globe Coffee

Monster Mash All Ages Dance Party, 10:30 a.m., Neenah Public Library

St. Mary Catholic Middle School Musical: The Wizard of Oz Youth Edition, 6 p.m., Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center

Fall Musical “Little Shop of Horrors,” 7 p.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts Center

Sunday, Oct. 25

Neenah-Menasha Model Railroad Club Open House, 10 a.m., 323 W. Forest Ave.

Fall Musical “Little Shop of Horrors,” 2 p.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts Center

St. Mary Catholic Middle School Musical: The Wizard of Oz Youth Edition, 2 p.m., Jane Bergstrom Fine Arts Education Center

Tuesday, Oct. 27

An Evening with Author David McGlynn, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Friday, Oct. 30

Halloween Dance Party featuring The Doo Wop Jukebox, 5 p.m., Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort and Hotel

Saturday, Oct. 31

Trick-or-Treat, 4-7 p.m., City of Neenah

Sunday, Nov. 1

Fox Crossing Fire Association Chicken Booyah Fundraiser, 10 a.m., Station 40, 1326 Cold Spring Road

Fox Valley Drum Show, 11 a.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts Center

Sunday Concert Series: The Del Ray’s, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

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Habitat, developer team up on new neighborhood

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

A new 56-home neighborhood in Fox Crossing will be the first of its kind in the region.

Named Horizon Crossing, the mixed-income neighborhood will include 39 market-rate homes built by developer Tom McHugh Construction and 17 homes built by the Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity.

Horizon Crossing will be located just south of U.S. Highway 10 between Clayton Avenue and Irish Road. Construction on the market-rate homes will begin this fall while construction on the Habitat for Humanity homes will begin in 2027.

Currently, about half of the Habitat homes in the development have families selected to live there through its Homebuyer Purchase Program. Habitat homeowners engage in community volunteerism, complete dozens of hours of homeownership education and go through a thorough application process to secure a zero-interest mortgage with income-based repayment.

“As the need for housing grows and the availability of land to build becomes harder to come by, we continue to expand ways

in which we can serve the community,” said John Weyenberg, president of Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity.

He said a mixed-income neighborhood is something new for the Fox Cities.

“It has been proven that these mixed-income neighborhoods help to support not only homebuyers through our program but also the community at large,” Weyenberg said. “We are excited to embark on this new endeavor.”

The Habitat development is made possible through the support of leading sponsors Community First Credit Union and local philanthropist Mary Beth Nienhaus. In recognition of the project’s key sponsors, two of the development’s main streets will be named after them — Nienhaus Way and Meraki Way.

Community First Credit Union CEO Cathie Tierney said the organization was proud to partner with Fox Cities Habitat on the project and to see the new neighborhood take shape.

“Homeownership is about so much more than having a place to live,” she said. “It’s about security, stability and feeling connected to your community. We’re excited to help make that opportunity possible for more families.”

Library organizing Monster Mash all ages dance party

Neenah News

Families with children of all ages can join in the fun at the Neenah Public Library’s annual Monster Mash Dance Party.

Guests are invited to come in costume, dance and play, and make a monster craft.

The event will be from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday. The program will be held outside in Shattuck Park.

In case of inclement weather, the dance party will be held inside the library in the Shattuck Room. No registration is required.

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Local artist to showcase paintings, photographs

By George Halas
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

Three floors highlight three different facets of an artist's life as The Hang Up Gallery of Fine Art at 204 W. Wisconsin Ave. in Neenah hosts The Art of Timothy Mayer Gallery Exhibition through Nov. 1.

The first floor of the gallery features paintings and photographs of Wisconsin landscapes including a work in progress, a 72" by 62" painting by the Menasha native of the boat dock at Smith Park in Menasha that was destroyed in the recent tornado.

The third-floor spotlights photos and paintings Mayer did for and in conjunction with the Green Bay Packers, including the last photo ever taken of Lambeau Field before the massive renovations that began in 2001.

"The Packers beat Tampa Bay in overtime in that game," he recalls.

Between 1999 and 2002, Mayer worked as an independent contractor with the Packers. During that time, he produced several paintings of Lambeau Field, one of which was selected as the official portrait that was turned into 800 signed art prints and sold at the pro shop.

In addition to many photos of Brett Favre and other Packers' players, the exhibit includes a copy of a photo of Chicago Bears' Hall of Famer Brian Urlacher, the original of which currently hangs in the NFL offices on Park Avenue in New York.

"It was his rookie year, and I knew Urlacher was going to be a good player," Mayer said. "I caught him on the sideline. The Bears actually won that game."

The second-floor exhibit, which will run through Veterans Day, focuses on Mayer's work as the founder, president and executive director of the Appleton-based Artists



Photo from Timothy Mayer

Artist Timothy Mayer works on creating a painting of former Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre. Some of Mayer's art is on display at The Hang Up Gallery of Fine Art through Nov. 1.

for The Humanities that began in 2003 with the Fallen Soldiers Project. Mayer began painting portraits of U.S. Military Service personnel who lost their lives in the Middle East to honor their supreme sacrifice.

"The second floor has paintings, drawings, sculpture and other artifacts including flags folded at funerals," Mayer noted.

In 2005, with the aid of a \$50,000 grant from John J. Keller of J.J. Keller and the Keller Foundation, himself a World War II veteran, Mayer founded the Artists for Humanities to work with veterans, particularly the homeless, through expressive art and life coaching.

"The objective was to treat trauma and PTSD through art," Mayer said. "They used art to tell their stories."

Partnering with a psychotherapist and Vietnam veteran, and with an assist from Father Conrad Krantz of St. Norbert Abbey who donated space, Mayer began offering a free expressive art program.

In 2009, Mayer expanded his organiza-

tion to focus on filing the unmet reintegration needs of returning veterans, assisting them in coping with PTSD, substance abuse and homelessness through expressive art therapy.

Mayer began working with the Veterans Administration facility in Tomah, where he received training from psychiatrists, psychologists and peer counselors.

"Tomah had a nine-week inpatient program," Mayer said. "If your PTSD was severe, they sent you there."

Over the next 10 years, Mayer travelled around to various Wisconsin VA's and a center in Milwaukee that focused on homeless women veterans suffering from PTSD and sexual trauma. His efforts yielded 6,700 veterans painting and 1,000 group therapy sessions. To date, he has worked to the benefit of over 5,200 veterans.

The Hang Up Gallery For Fine Art is open from 10 a.m. through 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

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Event provides group of seniors with advice, inspiration

Neenah News

Edie Raether wanted to give a group gathered Friday for the School for Seniors meeting advice and inspiration. She provided them with a message of hope.

“Hold onto hope,” said Raether, 82, who is a bestselling author and multi-TEDx speaker. She presented about “Never Grow Up ... It’s a Trap!,” saying your birthdate should never determine your expiration date.

“You can choose how you respond,” Raether said. “It’s all a choice about how you bounce forward. It’s not too late. I know we can all bounce forward.”

Raether went on to say the ability of age is a gift, so she encouraged those at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall to leave a mark, not a stain and enjoy what they’re doing.

“The most important chapter is the one you’re now writing,” Raether said. “You’re not finished. Your legacy is built one moment at a time.”

Raether, a neuro-behavioral strategist who used to work in Green Bay and now

lives in North Carolina, was one of the speakers during the free event presented by the City of Neenah Committee on Aging and Lakeland University Lifelong Learning.

Informational sessions were designed just for area seniors.

Stacy Parish from the YMCA of the Fox Cities and Officer Joe Benoit from the Neenah Police Department were other speakers during the meeting, which included tables with information from a variety of community organizations.

Parish spoke about ageless grace, including timeless fitness for the body and brain. Benoit discussed scams that target seniors and what can be done to protect against common scams.

School for Seniors has been held annually since 2016 and interest continues to grow in the program, said Joshua Kutney, Lakeland University’s Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Kutney and committee members organized the event to meet the needs of seniors in the community.



Edie Raether talked to a group of area seniors Friday about setting goals and shaping who they are becoming during the School for Seniors event at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church.

Flu season has arrived earlier than usual, preventative shots encouraged

By MaryBeth Matzek
NEENAH NEWS

It’s only mid-October, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports the 2026-27 flu season has arrived weeks earlier than usual.

With positive flu tests already being reported on the West Coast, Jaci Grignon, communicable disease supervisor for Winnebago County, said it is ideal to get this year’s flu shot before the end of the month. It takes about two weeks for the immunization to be fully effective.

“Everyone age 6 months or older needs to get immunized to protect them from getting the flu,” she said.

The flu is a serious disease and can keep someone out

of school or work for a week, if not longer, Grignon said.

“You feel so awful that you don’t want to go anywhere. It will knock you out,” she said.

The months of November through February tend to be the peak flu season, but it can start earlier or last longer, Grignon said.

“The important thing is to be prepared for whenever the flu enters the community,” she said.

Getting a flu shot is important especially for people with compromised immune systems, pregnant women, young children, adults over 65, people with asthma, heart disease, diabetes or those who live in nursing homes or long-term care residences.

Grignon said flu symptoms come on suddenly and usually include fever, a dry cough, sore throat, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigues.

“You feel awful when you have the flu,” she said.

Anyone who has just come down with the flu should contact their medical provider. He or she may be able to provide patients with Tamiflu, which would help lessen or shorten symptoms.

“If you live with someone with compromised immune systems, an older adult, a pregnant woman or young children, it definitely makes sense to see your provider and get some Tamiflu so you can help protect those in your household,” Grignon said.



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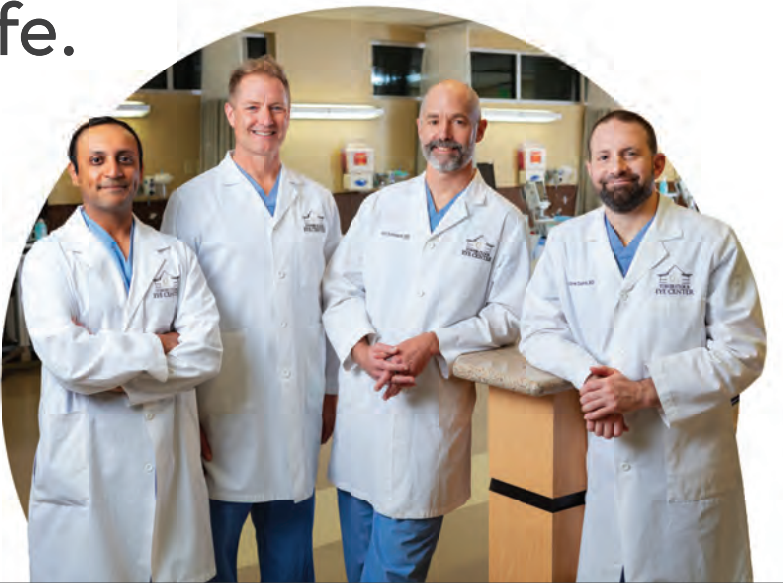
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FEMA Disaster Recovery Center opens at UW Fox

A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Recovery Center opened Monday at the former UW-Fox campus, 1655 University Drive in Menasha.

The center is opening following the Oct. 7 federal major disaster declaration, which made federal assistance available to individuals and communities affected by July 27 tornado.

The center will have representatives from FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) available to answer questions, assist with applications and help residents navigate federal recovery programs.

“We are pleased to have FEMA and SBA resources available locally for residents and businesses impacted by the July 27 tornado,” said Winnebago County Emergency Management Director Eric Rassmussen. “Our community has made significant progress in recovery, thanks to the work of local organizations, volunteers

and neighbors helping neighbors. These additional federal resources provide another opportunity for those still facing challenges to get the assistance they need.”

A second disaster recovery center will open Oct. 26 at the Grand Chute Fire Department Disaster Recovery Center, 2250 Grand Chute Boulevard.

The hours for both centers are:
Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Sunday: Closed

The disaster recovery centers will be open for at least 30 days.

Applying for FEMA assistance
Residents are encouraged to apply online at DisasterAssistance.gov, the easiest and most efficient way to begin the FEMA application process.

Those who prefer in-person assistance can visit a Disaster Recovery Center to

ask questions, get help with applications, check their application status or learn about the appeals process. Residents can also contact FEMA at 800-621-3362.

Individuals who have already received assistance from local organizations or oth-

er recovery resources are still encouraged to apply. Receiving local assistance does not automatically disqualify survivors from FEMA assistance.

The deadline to apply for FEMA Individual Assistance is Dec. 7.

Voucher info

FROM PAGE 1

levied \$4.3 million — or 11% of the local school property tax collected — that went to fund private voucher and independent school programs.

Earlier this month, Neenah Alderman Dan Steiner issued a directive to Director of Finance Vicky Rasmussen to look at what it would take to add a line to Neenah property tax bills showing how much of the school district levy goes to voucher programs. At its next meeting, aldermen will vote on whether to move ahead with the directive.

If the directive is approved, Rasmussen would develop a proposal and share with the common council, who would then vote on it.

Steiner said he knows the process would not be done in time for this year’s tax bills, but that it was something to look at for the 2027 property tax bills.

To make changes to the town tax bills of Neenah, Vinland and Clayton, Epley said the school district would need to work with Winnebago County since they produce the bills for those municipalities. He said there have been some meetings with the towns.

“It’s about transparency – that’s why we want to show on the bills how much funding is going to voucher programs so when

we go to taxpayers and tell them we need more money for the schools, they can understand that not everything designated in their property taxes for the district is coming here,” Epley said. “State funding for schools has not kept up with inflation and funding is tight.”

Here’s how the Wisconsin’s private school voucher program works: If a district student enrolls in a private school, the Neenah school district pays the elementary or middle school \$11,305 annually or \$13,799 if the student enrolls in a private high school.

To qualify for the voucher program, a family’s income must be at or below 220% of the federal poverty level when first applying.

Epley said the funds do not stay in the district. While some Neenah students use vouchers to attend schools located within the district’s limits, others use them to attend Xavier High School in Appleton or Valley Christian School in Oshkosh, for example.

Neighboring municipalities have started sharing how much private schools receive through the voucher program from local school districts on their property tax bills. Green Bay began listing how much of the Green Bay Area Public School District’s levy went towards private school vouchers on its 2025 tax bills. Appleton’s Common Council voted earlier this month to add the same information to this year’s property tax bills.

Chamber to hold talk about marketing

Neenah News

The Fox Cities Chamber will host its final Fox Talk seminar of 2026, “Marketing on a Budget,” from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Nov. 18 at Community First Credit Union, 1575 Dresang Way, Neenah.

The seminar will provide businesses of all sizes with practical strategies for using marketing to reach customers and grow their bottom line, without requiring a large marketing budget.

Presented by Maria Nelson, president, and Meagan Hardwick, vice president, of Red Shoes Inc., the seminar will focus on ways businesses can make the most of the marketing resources they already have

while identifying opportunities for low- and no-cost marketing.

Attendees will learn how to better understand their target audience, develop a marketing plan with clear goals and strategies, and use digital marketing tools such as social media, email marketing and search engine optimization. A question-and-answer session will provide attendees with an opportunity to address specific marketing questions.

The event is free for Fox Cities Chamber Members, and \$25 for non-members. Register at members.foxcc.net/chamber-events/Details/2026-fox-talks-marketing-on-a-budget-1907413?sourceTypeId=Website.

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FROM PAGE 1

ily be down on life. But he’s super valuable to us, getting us great film. He’s such a nice kid and servant leader. He’s obviously got a lot going on with his health, but he’s just a positive kid who is happy to be part of something that gets him around doing

Sturgeon spearing license deadline approaches

Neenah News

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reminds all spearers interested in harvesting a lake sturgeon from Lake Winnebago during the 2027 sturgeon spearing season to purchase their license before Oct. 31.

All license holders must be a minimum of 12 years old. There are an unlimited number of licenses available for Lake Winnebago, and both residents and nonresidents can purchase a license through the Go Wild system or at any license sales location.

There are a few exceptions to who can purchase their license after the Oct. 31 deadline: military personnel home on leave during the spearing season and

things his classmates do.”

Gretebeck has been a football student manager since his freshman year. He had no experience with drones until he accepted the position and has learned to operate them literally on the fly. Drones have built-in cameras and screens and have been a game-changer in terms of sports preparation. They are battery powered and directed on the ground by operators

youth who will turn 12 between Nov. 1, 2026, and the last day of the 2027 spearing season.

The Upriver Lakes fishery (lakes Poygan, Butte des Morts and Winneconne) is managed by a preference point system and lottery that is limited to 500 permitted spearers. Successful Upriver Lakes tag applicants have already been notified for the 2027 season and have until the start of the spearing season to purchase a license. Successful Upriver Lake tag applicants cannot purchase a tag for Lake Winnebago.

The 2027 sturgeon spearing season will open on Feb. 13, 2027, and will run for a maximum of 16 days or until any of the predetermined harvest caps are met.

like Gretebeck.

“It’s fun,” Gretebeck said. “It’s like chasing mice because you have to make sure all the players are in it and they’re running around super fast. I was a little nervous when I started doing it because I really didn’t know how to operate a drone. I thought I was going to crash it. I had zero experience with drones. But you learn. A big thing is paying attention to the batteries.”

Gretebeck actually thought Jung was joking with him when he first approached him and asked if he’d be interested in the drone film project.

“I was like, ‘He can’t be serious - there’s no way we have drones,’” said Gretebeck with a chuckle.

Gretebeck initially became interested in the game when his older brother, Henry, joined the Neenah football program as a junior varsity player.

“Mason would always go to Henry’s games and my wife (Wendy) was good friends with their mom, Keri,” said Jung. “Wendy would always tell me how much Henry’s little brother loved football. And then Mason started coming to our middle school lifting sessions. That’s how I got to know him.”

Mason is a weight-room regular along with the rest of the Neenah football players. The consistent strength training has clearly benefited his health.

“I feel a lot stronger now,” said Gretebeck. “Before I started lifting with the team, I couldn’t walk as fast and as far as I can now. I’m out of my wheelchair so much more. I love it.”

Gretebeck’s workouts are supervised by a Neenah coach, usually assistant Payton Blake.

“He does most of the lifts the other kids do and we make sure that it’s always safe for him,” Jung said. “I think his mom was

a little nervous about it at first, but Mason wanted to do it and he’s gotten better just because of the lifting. It’s made him so much more mobile.”

Keri Gretebeck has also noticed a difference in her son since Mason became part of the Neenah football program.

“We’re very grateful to the coaching staff for their support,” Keri said. “In the weight room, coaches encourage Mason to push himself to do his best, no matter what that looks like. They expect a lot from him – just like they expect a lot from every other kid on the team.”

In addition to the physical gains, the Friday night lights experience has also given Mason life lessons along with a sense of belonging.

“Mason is passionate about Neenah football and being part of the team has been an extraordinary experience for him,” said Keri. “His commitment to this sport has taught him discipline, responsibility, teamwork and sportsmanship. We’re incredibly proud of him. He has overcome so much.”

Mason is a rock-solid student who plans to attend college after graduating from Neenah High. He’s interested in pursuing a major in a sports-related field, possibly sports management.

Until then, Mason will continue his role with the Neenah football program: strengthening the team through his film work and his own body through weight training.

“I love being a part of the team,” he said. “It gives me an opportunity to be part of a sport that I can’t do because of my disability. And if I could do a sport, it would definitely be football.”

“I think God opened a door for me to be able to be part of something that has really made my life better.”



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Stuckel brings strong mental, physical game for Rockets

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

The time between the plays of a football game are usually a way for the players to catch a quick break.

It may only be 20 or 30 seconds, but after running or tackling or blocking that time off is the chance for players to regroup mentally a little bit while also catching their breath.

That's not the case for Neenah High School senior linebacker Connor Stuckel. A big part of his responsibility to the Rocket defense starts after a play ends.

"We align (defensively) a lot by the offense's formation so a lot of our defenses are called by Connor," Neenah head coach Steve Jung said. "He has to direct and get our kids lined up and that's part of his job. That's how we have been running our defense for years and we have been blessed to have kids who can do that – he is one of them."

Stuckel, a two-year starter at linebacker for the Rockets, can be seen shouting instructions, adjusting the alignment of the linemen in front of him or those beside him while also making sure he is in the proper position.

Then, when the play begins, the best place to find Stuckel is wherever the ball is.

"Sometimes it's a lot. (My focus) is really tight and I'm dialed in," Stuckel said after a practice earlier this week. That's why it's important the first few days of practice (each week) to get everything memorized and then everything starts to flow naturally.

"During games, I'm over on the bench watching film and just looking at all the keys."

That's a lot for a player to handle but Stuckel has grown into the role over his two seasons on the Rockets' varsity team and feels comfortable with everything expected of him.

"I like it. Everyone comes to me with questions and I feel like I can help this team out more," said Stuckel, who split the role with Jonah Ritter on last year's defense. "I did have a lot of responsibilities more toward the end of the year. I started taking over more as the voice of the defense and now I'm mostly commanding the defense."

Stuckel doesn't just command the defense, he plays it pretty well, too.

A year ago, he was the team's leading tackler, while also recording a pair of forced fumbles and two interceptions and earned first team all-Fox Valley Association honors.



Neenah senior Connor Stuckel is a returning first-team all-Fox Valley Association linebacker and is the leading tackler for the Rockets this season.

"It was a shock, honestly, when I saw my name," Stuckel said. "The first thing I thought was I have to step it up next year and keep my name up there. I'm always trying to get better."

Stuckel has certainly made a strong case to be a two-time first team selection with his play this year.

He's once again the leading tackler for one of the top defenses in the FVA and already surpassed his tackle totals from last year with 74 stops including 41 solo tackles. He's also forced three fumbles, recovered one and registered a sack.

His development at the position has definitely gained the attention of opposing defense coordinators who have often thrown double-team blocks at him to keep out of the way. Not that he minds.

As much as he likes to make tackles and wants to be in on every play, he completely trusts his teammates to make plays as well.

"I will get a lot of double teams but I actually don't mind that because all of the other guys are getting tackles then," Stuckel said. "I don't have the pressure of making every single play. I can do my role and not worry about because I have these incredible"

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bly talented players that can help me out."

Stuckel may be fine relying on his teammates to make tackles when he can't but there there is still not a better feeling than meeting a ball carried in the hole and slamming them to the ground.

"Just laying someone out and after that your team is just huddled around you," Stuckel said. "That's an amazing feeling. There's nothing like it."

Stuckel began playing organized football at a young age and fell in love with the game immediately.

Yet, it may have been the backyard battles with his older brother, Bennett – who was on the roster for last year's NCAA Division III champion UW-River Falls – that really shaped Stuckel as a player.

"Me and my brother growing up, we were always playing football in the backyard. It was my life. I was the physical one so I would just drop my shoulder and run through him and he was the fast one so he would just run around me," the younger Stuckel said. "I think anything at the early ages is super important in football. Getting used to the game, developing those skills is going to help you out."

As he came up through the ranks, Stuckel played an array of positions on the defensive side of the ball – he said he was a jack-of-all-trades on defense – and even spent some time playing fullback.

But as a sophomore, he settled in at linebacker – earning Defensive Player of the Year honors on the junior varsity team – and has made it his home.

That home will be moving next season when Stuckel continues his career at NCAA Division I Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, where he will play under the same head coach – Matt Walker – that his brother had at UW-River Falls.

"I'm excited about that," Stuckel said. "My other offer was at Sioux Falls but I felt more connected to the Drake atmosphere and it's got good academics, too, so I was like this is where I am going to play."

Yet, nothing will match being a Neenah Rocket.

"I feel like there is nothing like the con-

SEE **Senior Standout** ON PAGE 14

“

In elections, emotions often dominate the conversation. However, when selecting the next Winnebago County Sheriff, the candidates' own records provide a clearer, more objective picture. Darin Rice has held leadership roles across corrections, detective, and patrol divisions. Jason Rippl has never served in a leadership role within the agency and has no comparable leadership experience. About four and a half years ago, Rippl and I discussed his potential run for sheriff and the prospect of running against me. I told him I would emphasize my leadership experience and note his lack of it. I advised him to test for, and seek, first-line leadership positions to strengthen his qualifications and understanding of a leadership role. Despite my suggestions, he did not do so. Accepting a leadership role in a 24-hour operation requires sacrifice, commitment, and a willingness to be responsible for others. Darin Rice has exemplified these attributes his entire career.

If this were an interview for a police chief position, Jason Rippl would not meet the minimum requirements to apply. Rice would be a sought-after candidate.

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-Winnebago County Sheriff, John Matz

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Rockets revel in share of FVA title, gear for De Pere

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

With just under three minutes to play, Neenah’s hopes of earning a third-straight Fox Valley Association title were in jeopardy.

Kimberly had scored a touchdown to take a three-point lead in the back-and-forth FVA tilt at Rocket Stadium and the Rockets would have to drive nearly the entire length of the field if they wanted to get the win.

“It was go time,” senior quarterback Ashton Van Beek said of the mood in the huddle before the drive. “We just had to keep our composure. The game’s not over until the final buzzer and we had been there before so everybody was pretty comfortable. We knew what we had to do.”

Sparked by a 20-yard run from Dylan Foat on the second play of the drive and a 24-yard scamper by Van Beek to set the Rockets up with a first-and goal, Neenah drove 93 yards in just seven plays to surge back ahead of the Papermakers.

Van Beek covered the final four yards through the middle of the Kimberly defense, running over a defender at the goal line for the score.

“Absolutely not,” Van Beek said about if he could have been stopped before reaching the end zone. “I was putting my head down and I was not stopping my feet until I saw the red.”

Neenah’s 35-31 win over Kimberly, which earned the Rockets a share of the FVA crown, was not solidified though until the closing seconds when Logan Price intercepted a deflected Rylan Welch pass inside the 5-yard line.



Neenah News

Neenah quarterback Ashton Van Beek breaks free for a 95-yard touchdown run during the Rockets’ dramatic 35-31 over rival Kimberly last Friday.

“(Teammate Owen) Fox jumped up and had it in his hands but it got punched out and just landed in my hands. I just got lucky,” Price said of his team-leading third interception of the season. “We knew they wanted to get it to (Maddux Her-mus). They had been doing it the whole game. We had one guy on the inside, one on the outside and thankfully the ball just got tipped it to me.”

The victory not only earned the Rockets a share of the FVA title but it also sent them into the WIAA playoffs on a five-game winning streak and into a Level 1 matchup with a familiar foe.

Neenah earned the No. 4 seed in its section of the bracket and will face De Pere – the program that beat the Rockets 28-27 in a first-round game at Neenah last season – at Rocket Stadium on Friday night.

The winner of the game will likely face top-seeded Bay Port in a Level 2 game next Friday.

“I’m sure the coaches are going to be on us all week saying they have a bad taste in their mouth from last year and it’s time to go,” said Van Beek, who finished with 215 yards rushing and three touchdowns against Kimberly, while also completing 13-of-20 passes for 183 yards and two scores. “Last year we didn’t stick to our standard. This year, we have to do that.”

De Pere finished the regular season 6-3 and took fourth in the Fox River Classic Conference North Division. The Red-birds are coming off a 42-0 rout of Green Bay Southwest in their regular-season finale and enter the postseason having won three of their last four games.

But this is a bit of a different Redbirds

squad the Rockets will be facing this year. Whereas last year De Pere threw the ball all over the field and had more than 2,000 passing yards in the regular season, this year’s Redbirds are led by their running game, paced by senior Liam Fieber who is averaging eight yards per carry and has nearly 800 yards this season – roughly half of the team’s total.

“This year they are more run-oriented, so it’s a little bit different but they can still throw the ball and still have talent at the receiver position and we have to be ready for that,” Neenah head coach Steve Jung said. “(Last year’s) loss still stings. That was one of the harder losses of my coaching career. It’s not too often in life you get a second chance so we’re excited about it.”

The Rockets are also a different team heading into the playoffs, even though their approaches both offensively and defensively haven’t changed much from last season.

Neenah entered the playoffs last season off a stunning 17-14 loss to Hortonville that cost the Rockets an outright FVA title. The team had won its previous four games before the loss, but all four wins were by seven points or less.

“Last year, we were not playing that well down the stretch and I feel like this year we are playing really well, especially offensively,” Jung said. “Ashton is 100 percent healthy and that helps out a lot. I feel like our team has a good mojo right now.”

Van Beek, who missed three games due to injury in the middle of the season has rushed for 654 yards and 13 touchdowns this season, while completing nearly 60 percent of his passes for 1,014 yards and

SEE **Rocket football** ON PAGE 14



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EWC co-champion Zephyrs taking aim at playoff success

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

It had been roughly 60 years since an 11-player St. Mary Catholic football team had claimed a conference championship.

That drought ended on Friday night.

Dominic Todd ran for two touchdowns while the Zephyrs held eighth-ranked Brillion to a season-low point total in collecting a 31-6 win to land St. Mary Catholic a share of the Eastern Wisconsin Conference crown with the Lions.

“It feels unbelievable to be honest,” junior linebacker George Voss said. “I really can’t put into words how it feels because it is such a mix of emotions but just a lot of joy from the whole team. It wasn’t just one person it was the whole team that shared the victory.”

The Zephyrs have had plenty of enjoyable moments over the past two seasons as they have hit different milestones of success.

But topping the Lions – and doing it in a convincing fashion – was certainly a sweet way for the Zephyrs to tie a bow on the prize.

“Coaches were always on us saying that you have to believe it and if you tell yourself enough it will come true,” Voss said. “It was kind of just the next win (approach). Win

the next game, win the next play and if you keep doing that you can just stack them up. The opportunity presented itself to us and we just made it happen.”

St. Mary Catholic will now turn its attention to the WIAA postseason where the Zephyrs earned the No. 2 seed in their section of the Division 6 bracket. The team will play Fall Creek on Friday night at Zephyrs Stadium with the winner to face Regis or Luther in a Level 2 game.

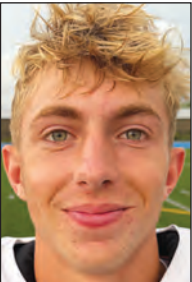
The Crickets, who are making their 26th WIAA playoff appearance, enter the post-season with a 5-4 record and are coming off a 41-0 thumping of Pacelli in the regular-season finale. Prior to the win, Fall Creek had dropped three straight games and totaled just 20 points in those three games.

Zephyrs head coach Rob Detterman said the Crickets are certainly a competitive bunch and his squad will have to be clicking to knock them off.

“They look really well coached,” Detterman said. “They are not real big but they are very fast, especially at the line of scrimmage. Their guys are quick off the ball and presents a different challenge from what we’ve seen and that’s hard to replicate in practice.”

Fall Creek is led by senior running back Ethan Westrate, who has rushed for 849 yards and nine touchdowns. He is averaging nearly seven yards per carry. The Crickets have used two different quarterbacks this season, who have combined for 796 passing yards, with nine touchdowns and four interceptions.

Defensively, the Crickets have logged three shutouts this season but have also sur-



Fairweather



Voss

SEE **Zephyr football** ON PAGE 14

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Veteran Neenah lineup looks to reign over tough state field

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

It’s like the old television show “Cheers” when Norm would enter the bar and all of the patrons would welcome him by shouting his name in unison.

Everybody knew his name because he was always there.

It’s hard to tell if the Neenah High School girls tennis team would get as warm of a greeting from its opponents entering the Nielsen Tennis Stadium in Madison for the WIAA Team State Tournament, but the Rockets are certainly a regular there.

Neenah will be making its 14th appearance in the last 15 years and 23rd appearance overall when the Rockets take to the court against Elkhorn in a WIAA Division 1 quarterfinal on Friday afternoon.

“Team state is definitely my favorite part of the season,” said senior Rebekah Thomas, a member of the Rockets’ No. 1 doubles team. “I am looking forward to it.”

Having the entire team at the stadium and competing is something special.

“It’s good to get to watch your teammates to really set the tone of our matches,” said Sydney Michalkiewicz, who joins Thomas at No. 1 doubles. “Be hyped for them and then try to play to the best of our ability and come out with a good result.”

The fact that the Rockets have made so many appearances at the team state tournament – their total is second to only Eau Claire Memorial – means Neenah will bring a lot of experienced players into the unique tennis venue.

Six members of the Rockets played last year and a total of seven have played in a team state tournament at some point in



Submitted photo

The Neenah High School girls tennis team competing at the team state meet this week consists of: (front, from left) Rachel Thomas, JB Kennedy, Rebekah Thomas; (back, from left) Molly Van Dyke, Sydney Michalkiewicz, Evelyn Buss, Ellie Grace Zickler, Page Vickman, Ella Motto, Celia Gentile.

their careers. Thomas and Celia Gentile have four team state tournaments under their belts in addition to participating in the individual state meet at the venue.

“Having the experience down there with multiple matches helps,” said Gentile, who plays at No. 1 singles. “It’s definitely more exciting and with all of the fans looking down at you with that setup. It’s a lot more rowdy I feel like.”

Gentile, who finished third at the individual state meet last weekend, will lead the Rockets singles lineup followed by Rachel Thomas, Ellie Grace Zickler and

Page Vickman. Neenah’s doubles lineup will consist of Rebekah Thomas and Michalkiewicz at the No. 1 flight, followed by Ella Motto and Evelyn Buss and Mollie Van Dyke and JB Kennedy.

It’s a group that won titles in six of the seven flights at sectionals and finished well ahead of runner-up Cedarburg in the final team standings.

Gentile, Rebekah Thomas and the top two doubles pairings all advanced to the individual state tournament, with Rebekah Thomas and Michalkiewicz joining Gentile by finishing third in their bracket.

“We played a lot of good teams at individual state so bringing that fire and intensity to team state is really going to be key to how we do,” Michalkiewicz said. “It’s good to have experience and hopefully we can come out with good results.”

Motto and Buss won two matches before falling to eventual Division 1 state champions in the third round.

They played really well at sectionals and those that made it to individual state had a great tournament,” Neenah head coach Dan Grassl said. “They are playing really well. They are super focused and excited and ready for the tournament this weekend.”

Neenah beat Elkhorn, 4-3, at a dual meet tournament earlier this season and feature a strong singles lineup that Grassl is wary of. Gentile was supposed to play Elkhorn’s No. 1 singles player Charlotte Meyer in the third-place match at state, but Meyer defaulted.

However, as strong as the Elks may be on the singles side, the Rockets are led by their three doubles tandems – who each finished the regular season with 30-2 records – and Grassl believes that group will be tough to beat in Madison.

“I count on them for points every time we play,” Grassl said. “Our doubles teams have been melding and have really played well this season. It’s great when you have a group of players you know you can count on and then we have singles which is very strong also.”

The winner of the Neenah and Elkhorn match will face the winner of Middleton and Westosha Central in the semifinal

SEE **Neenah tennis** ON PAGE 15

Zephyrs enter state tourney shorthanded, boosted by experience

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

Imagine going to an Italian restaurant and there not being pasta available.

Or stopping into a top-notch steakhouse only to find that salads and vegetables were the only thing on the menu.

The St. Mary Catholic girls tennis team is heading back to the WIAA Division 2 Team State Tournament in the second straight year but the Zephyrs will be doing it without a key piece of what made it successful.

Junior Vivie Auth, the two-time state doubles champion and this year’s No. 1 singles player, was injured during the sectional tournament and is unable to compete for the Zephyrs. She was the second-seed in the Division 2 singles bracket at last week’s individual state tournament but had to default.

“I think it makes everybody a little bummed she won’t be there, but I believe that everybody will lift their games up,” St. Mary Catholic head coach Lizzy Auth said. “Lots of teams deal with someone who is injured. It happens in lots of sports and these girls are going to be able to handle it just fine.”

Vivie Auth’s teammates are hoping to rally around her not being able to play.

“We were relying on her to get an automatic win because she is so strong of a player,” said Halle Janssen, part of the Zephyrs’ No. 1 doubles team. “Without her we have to work a little bit harder now to win our individual matches because we will be down a player.”

St. Mary Catholic will face Edgewood in a semifinal match on Saturday morning at Nielsen Tennis Stadium with the winner advancing to the state final later that day. Top-seeded Brookfield Academy, the

2024 Division 2 champion, and Pacelli are matched up in the other semifinal.

What the Zephyrs lineup will look like for their semifinal match remains to be seen because Lizzy Auth has some options in singles.

St. Mary Catholic will certainly have singles players Nadia Alexander, Elsa Rossmessl and Norah Wroblewski in the lineup. Alexander and Wroblewski each advanced to sectionals, with Wroblewski winning the No. 4 flight title.

That trio could either each bump up a flight and a junior varsity player could be inserted at the No. 4 flight or the Zephyrs could default at the No. 1 flight and have the three singles players compete at their regular spots.

“We are still deciding,” Lizzy Auth said.

The Zephyrs’ doubles lineup is intact and has played a key role in the team’s success all season.

Janssen and Ella Chier, who each played singles in last year’s trip to the state meet, are coming off a fifth-place finish at state after entering the tournament as the bracket’s seventh seed.

“I think it will be a good boost,” Chier said of the individual state meet finish for the tandem. “We were both singles players last year and working over the course of the season together to create a good doubles team and to get fifth in state is pretty boosting.”

The Zephyrs’ No. 2 doubles team of cousins Scarlett Bergstrom and Kieran Bergstrom won a sectional title and advanced to the individual state meet where the duo lost in three sets to Altoona’s No. 1 pairing in the first round.

Neither player competed at the team state last year so getting the experience in Nielsen Tennis Stadium last weekend was



Photo courtesy of St. Mary Catholic

The St. Mary Catholic girls tennis team competing at the WIAA Team State meet this weekend consists of: (front, from left) _ Norah Wroblewski, Vivie Auth, Elsa Rossmessl, Faith Bergstrom, Scarlett Bergstrom; (back, from left) Coach Lizzy Bergstrom Auth, Nadia Alexander, Laney Schmidt, Ella Chier, Halle Janssen, Kieran Bergstrom, Coach Emma Jares.

certainly helpful.

“I think the experience will help,” said Kieran Bergstrom, a senior. “The courts are not foreign to us and are familiar so it will be less nerve-wracking when we go on.”

Plus, the duo will get to face No. 2 pairings again.

“We were playing a No. 1 doubles team (at individual state), so I think it gets us really ready to play No. 2 doubles (teams) again,” the sophomore Scarlett Bergstrom said.

The Zephyrs’ No. 3 pairing of sophomores Faith Bergstrom and Laney Schmidt also claimed a sectional title and give St. Mary Catholic three formidable pairings heading to team state.

“(The doubles teams) have done a phenomenal job all season and I think they will continue to,” Lizzy Auth said.

One of the reasons for the success of all three doubles pairings is the fact they compete against each other in practice on a consistent basis.

Playing against that kind of quality competition has helped all three teams develop.

“The difference from last year when I was a freshman to now as a sophomore is crazy and a lot of the reason for it is (Ella and Halle),” Scarlett Bergstrom said. “They are amazing.”

Added Chier: “Practicing together re-

SEE **Zephyr tennis** ON PAGE 15

Baetke fuels offensive eruption in Rockets’ tourney win

By Steve Clark
NEENAH NEWS

It wasn’t the start to the match that Neenah soccer coach Kevin Baetke wanted to see.

But the end turned out just fine. West Allis Central/Hale scored 35 seconds into the teams WIAA Division 1 regional match on Tuesday night but the Rockets were able to respond with three goals in a five-minute span to grab the lead and went on to collect a 9-1 win over the Hammers.

“That’s definitely not the way I wanted to start the game,” Kevin Baetke said. “I had a lot of confidence in what we were going to do and what was going to happen in the game. I’m glad it stopped at one and then we quickly responded with a few.”

The Rockets, who are seeded third in their sectional, will advance to play Sussex Hamilton in a regional final on Saturday at 1 p.m. in Neenah. Neenah beat Hamilton 2-1 earlier in the year.

Neenah was also the third seed in their sectional last season but lost a 2-1 decision to Menomonee Falls at home in the regional opener.

So when the Hammers got a goal from Easton Bray on a driven shot from outside the penalty area inside the opening minute, there might have been cause for some concern. Baetke remained confident.

“We knew they were dangerous. We knew they had guys who could put it in the net,” the coach said. “Thirty seconds in is probably a little early to give one up but I wasn’t too concerned.”

It didn’t take long for Neenah to get rolling and once the Rockets got the momentum, they just kept ringing up goals.

Kolton Fleege ran onto a long ball on the right side, dribbled to the end line before cutting a pass back into the penalty area



Neenah News

Neenah’s Ian Baetke tries to work around a West Allis Central/Hale defender in the first half of Tuesday night’s WIAA Division 1 regional playoff match. Baetke finished with five goals in the Rockets’ 9-1 win.

to an open Ian Baetke who easily stuffed a shot into the open net about three minutes after the Hammers’ goal.

A minute later, it was Hunter Brown dribbling up the left side of the field before sending a cross toward the front of the net. Ian Baetke stumbled a bit around the West Allis Central/Hale goalkeeper but somehow got the ball across the goal line to give the Rockets the lead.

“I knew (Hunter) was going to cross it so I just had to get in there,” Ian Baetke said. “I don’t know what I hit it with. I think it was my shin. They all count the same.”

About three minutes later it was Ian Baetke’s turn to set up a teammate, lofting a long ball that Owen Van Zeeland ran onto and chipped it into the net for a 3-1 lead less than 10 minutes into the first half.

Pushing the ball up the wings and crossing balls into the penalty was the theme of the night for the Rockets.

Led by Fleege, Neenah was able to take advantage of its speed on the outside to get past the backline of defenders which created the majority of the Rockets’ scoring chances.

“Kolton, especially, played a phenomenal

game. We knew we could victimize them, and a lot of teams, just with the speed of our wingers,” Kevin Baetke said. “When we are in space and take our time and have patience, we can find Ian and other guys making great runs in the box and tonight it was a bunch of tap-ins to take the lead and hold onto it.”

Ian Baetke was the beneficiary of the work done by the flanking players.

It took the junior only 11 minutes to rack up a hat trick in the game and he finished with a total of five goals – the most he’s had in a game as a high school player – despite sitting out for about half the time played.

“Scoring goals is always a great feeling so when you can score five, it feels really good,” Ian Baetke said. “I have the easy job of just finishing the goals. The person who scores will always get the credit but it really happens with everyone else. Our wingers are phenomenal. They make me look good.”

Fleege assisted on Baetke’s third goal and then set up Cooper Christie for a goal on a cross that Christie made a lunging strike to get in the back of the bet.

A few minutes later, Fleege was the recipient of a through ball from Jordy Banda and drilled a shot into the near side of the net for a 6-1 lead that Rockets would take into halftime.

Ian Baetke scored twice in the first 15 minutes of the second half to extend the lead before the game ended on a West Allis Central/Hale own goal off a Neenah corner kick.

“We talked at halftime that we kind of let the game slip in the second part of the first half and going forward that can’t happen,” Kevin Baetke said. “So it was a good, easy victory with lots of goals and there were also some things to work on.”

Prep roundup

CROSS COUNTRY

Zilm, Rockets capture another FVA crown

Sophomore Sam Zilm raced to a second-straight win as Neenah captured the girls title at the Fox Valley Association cross country meet held last week at Countryside Golf Course in Kaukauna.

Zilm not only recorded her second straight win at an FVA meet but set the record for the fastest time on the Countryside Golf Course, shaving about 13 seconds off of last year’s winning time. She finished the race in 17-minutes, 27.9 seconds.

Izzy Malloy added a fourth-place finish for the Rockets and Elsa Weiland made it three Neenah runners in the top 10 by placing sixth overall.

Neenah, Kimberly and Appleton North each had three runners finish among the top 11 but the Rockets fourth and fifth finishers helped seal the victory. Maddie Schoonover was 12th overall and Lizzy LaPlant finished 14th to round out the scoring runners.

Olivia Landrath added a 17th-place finish, which was ahead of the fourth runners for both Kimberly and Appleton North.

The Lightning edged the Papermakers by one point for second place in the team standings, while Oshkosh West was fourth.

The boys race saw Neenah finish fifth overall with Elliott Drake leading the way with a fifth-place finish.

The next three Rocket runners finished within eight seconds of each other with Drew Sabatke in 29th place, Isaac Rangel

in 30th and Connor Schott in 31st. Dylan Olson rounded out the Neenah scoring runners in 43rd place.

Zephyr teams take eighth at Big East meet

Both the St. Mary Catholic girls and boys squads finished in eight place at the Big East Conference meet held at Hilbert High School last Saturday.

Myla DeLeeuw and Claire Higgins finished in 18th and 19th place to lead the Zephyr girls, while Natalie Lee placed 29th at the race. Rounding out the scoring runners for St. Mary Catholic were Chloe Beckett in 64th and Mary Auer in 70th.

Fritz Staner led the Zephyr boys finishing just outside of the top-10 in 12th place overall. Brady DeLeeuw was the next St. Mary Catholic runner to finish in 21st place followed by Brandon DeBaal in 65th, Leo Gruber in 73rd and Anderson Homburg ion 79th.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Rockets wrap up first FVA crown

The Neenah boys volleyball team won a five-set marathon over Appleton North last week 25-16, 16-25, 25-23, 23-25, 16-14 to claim the program’s first Fox Valley Association title.

The Rockets did not drop a match in conference play and wrapped up the title with five-set wins over Kimberly and Appleton North two days apart.

Sam Keepers finished with 20 kills to lead the balanced Neenah attack that had six different players finish with at least

four kills. Alex Locke was second on the team with nine kills.

Cam Diekfuss led the Rockets in both assists with 40 and aces with four in the match.

Defensively, Levin Steckling registered 16 digs and Dylan McNamara had a team-high six blocks.

The Rockets then finished 2-2 at their home tournament on Saturday posting wins over Waukesha North and South Milwaukee/St. Thomas More.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Zephyrs cruise to nonconference win

St. Mary Catholic rolled past Weyauwega-Fremont 25-18, 25-19, 25-15 in a non-conference match last Thursday.

Adele Brennan and Elle Davel each finished with seven kills in the match, while Brennan and Emily Weiss totaled 14 and 12 assists, respectively.

Autumn Crowe added six kills and 14 digs, while Weiss also chipped in 11 digs.

Rockets post three wins at tournament

Neenah wrapped up its regular season by going 3-1 at a tournament on Saturday.

The Rockets posted wins over Sheboygan Falls, Middleton and Wisconsin Lutheran while falling to Mosinee.

SWIMMING

Rockets collect dual meet win over Wildcats

Neenah swept the top three places in two different events and won two of the

three relays to collect a 121-65 victory over Oshkosh West on Tuesday.

Bridget Bloomhuff, Emma Doiron and Lily Sampson posted a 1-2-3 finish in the 200-yard freestyle for the Rockets, while Sydney Hansman took first in diving followed by Sophia Diaz and Meredith Buttrton.

Neenah also swept the top two places in the 400-yard freestyle relay with Kirsten Brygger, Breleigh Maurer, Ellen Farrell and Bloomhuff making up the winning team, while Lilly Karr, Sophia Schabow, Sampson and Aubrey Murwar teamed up to take second.

Farrell, Maurer, Elisabeth Hang and Brygger combined to win the 200-yard medley relay.

Bloomhuff picked up a second individual win in the 100-yard freestyle, with Maurer in the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard backstroke and Brygger in the 50-yard freestyle and 500-yrd freestyle also adding two wins on the day.

Hang also picked up a win in the 100-yard butterfly, while taking second in the 100-yard breaststroke.

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Senior Standout

FROM PAGE 9

nection you make with these players in high school and I am going to miss all of the younger guys,” Stuckel said. “I have seen them grow so much.”

It’s not over yet, though.

Stuckel and the Rockets are coming off earning a share of the FVA title with last week’s win over Kimberly and will open WIAA postseason play at home against De Pere – the program that beat the Rockets in

the first round of the playoffs last season – on Friday for the first of what he hopes will be a lengthy playoff run.

“That’s one of our goals every year. We are shooting for that conference title and after that we are saying that we want to stay together as long as we can and keep this group together,” Stuckel said. “We want to make it as far as we can. It starts with De Pere where we get a rematch. Not many times are you able to get a rematch in life, so we’re excited about that.

“From there it’s just about can we keep the momentum going and I think we can.”

Rocket football

FROM PAGE 10

11 touchdowns.

Cooper Sieck, who missed the Kimberly game with an injury, has helped strengthen the running game, while Matthias Charles (47 catches, 606 yards, five touchdowns) and Foat (30 catches, 435 yards, two touchdowns) were the top targets in the passing game.

The Rockets also have played a grueling schedule, which included non-conference

games against Arrowhead and Green Bay Notre Dame – both among the favorites in Division 1 and Division 2, respectively – and although both games ended in losses the experience gained in those contests could pay dividends in the coming weeks.

“We’re not going to see anything that will shock us. We have played against some of the best teams in the state and it was challenge and we struggled,” Jung said. “It took a lot to get our groove but we’ve got it. I’m happy where we are at and I feel like our team has the right mindset going into round one.”

Zephyr football

FROM PAGE 10

rendered at least 35 points in a game three times.

“They are similar to us with the formations that they run so we will be able to get a look of that off the scout. They are quick off the line and they have some athletic guys,” senior Luke Fairweather said. “We just need to stay tuned it, focus on our reads and all of that stuff. Know what we need to do every play and just stay focused.”

The Zephyrs are making their second-straight playoff appearance but fell to Bonduel in their first-round game last year.

But last season was more about making the playoffs for the blossoming program. This year, there’s a different mindset permeating through the team.

“I think we are a better team and we all believe in ourselves a lot and we are going into this game 100 percent thinking we are going to win,” Voss said. “Not that it’s going to be easy, we know that, but the idea and hopes are to take away the W.”

Before holding the potent Lions to just six points, St. Mary Catholic was coming off a shutout win over Kiel and has been playing

well all season long.

Detterman credits defensive coordinator Earl Peterson for commanding a varsity unit that has yet to give up more than two touchdowns to any opponent and has not allowed a passing touchdown all season.

“Our defense has been outstanding all year,” Detterman said. “We’re pretty excited about our defense and what they can do against people.”

Playing stifling defense and controlling the line of scrimmage have been the keys to the Zephyrs success all season and for St. Mary Catholic to advance in the playoffs, those two areas will have to keep excelling.

If they do, the Zephyrs could be primed for an extended playoff run that could potentially reach Camp Randall Stadium. But it all starts Friday night against Fall Creek and that’s where the Zephyrs’ focus was entering the week.

“(Making it to state is) obviously the end vision but we are staying true to what got us here and staying on our track of one week at a time. We can’t get to that Level 2, Level 3, Level 4 game until we win at Level 1,” Fairweather said. “Fall Creek is a good team, very well coached and they have some good players. But if we play our game, I know we are going to be just fine.”

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Zephyr tennis

FROM PAGE 12

ally helps. We are all strong players so we work hard with each other and it’s showing up.”

And the doubles tandems can’t wait to be on the courts next to each other again to provide support during their matches.

“During matches, we are on the courts right next to each other so I know like during matches we are always encouraging each other,” Janssen said.

At last year’s state tournament, the Zephyrs fell to Altoona, 4-3, in the semi-

final match with four of the seven matches extending to three sets.

It was a tough loss to take because it was so close but Lizzy Auth is hoping the experience will make a difference this time with the players who were there and that the veteran group can help those making their first trips.

“I think in general Nielsen is an intimidating place for a lot of players and it gets loud in there. So we share with them that it’s the same court you always play on. It just feels a little different and you just have to tune it all out and focus on your game,” Lizzy Auth said. “I think their mental game is going to be key. Come in confi-

and could be waiting if the Rockets can make it back to the final.

“Definitely getting another shot at them would be exciting and the whole team is excited for it,” Gentile said. “Hopefully, after some success we can face them again.”

But the Rockets know they have to clear some major hurdles to get there.

“We always take one match at a time,” Michalkiewicz said. “But potentially I would like to go on and go where we want to go. We will see what happens.”

dent and know they belong there.”

And that confidence – along with a few ace serves and well-placed volleys – might be enough to help get the Zephyrs into Saturday’s state final.

“We lost a lot of really good seniors from last year so I don’t think a lot of us

thought we were going to make it to state this year. So its super exciting we made it this far,” Janssen said. “I think it would be super exciting (to make the finals) and I think if we can beat Edgewood. It will be a tough match but hopefully we can get there and win.”

Obituaries

Ashley Amber Day

Ashley Amber Day, of Neenah, Wisconsin, was born on April 7, 1992, in Denver, Colorado, automatically making her a lifelong Broncos fan. She loved traveling back to Denver and cherished the opportunity to watch her first game at Mile High Stadium. Ashley passed away following a tragic fall on October 9, 2026.

Ashley was an avid athlete and loved being active. During her time at Reedsville High School, she was a proud Reedsville Panther, participating in basketball, volleyball, cross country, poms, and track. After high school, Ashley attended UW-Oshkosh before returning home to attend Silver Lake College, where she competed on the cross country and soccer teams.

Ashley’s love for sports and competition continued throughout her life. She enjoyed running marathons, pitching horseshoes, and throwing darts. Even later in life, she stayed active by taking walks while carrying her spoiled cat, Olive, in her arms. Ashley was fearless. There was never an activity she was afraid to try, and she will be remembered for her bravery, determination, and strength.

Her kind heart led her to careers as a caregiver, nanny, and as a surgical technologist. She took great pride in helping others and bonded with all those she cared for.. Ashley later had the opportunity to work alongside the love of her life, Keith as a merchandise distributor.

Ashley was preceded in death by her great grandparents William and LaVenia (Summers) Metoxen; grandparents Shirley and Craig Ninham and Louise Duran; her uncle, Carl Hopfenperger; and her beloved partner, Keith Mattson.

She is survived by her parents, Gail Padilla and Danny (Bobbie Jo) Day; her siblings, Ariel, Amanda, Danny Jr.

(Kassie), Dom, and Darius (Kiera) Day; her niece, Anastasia Padilla; her nephew, Atticus Padilla; her brothers; Cano(Yuli) Padilla, Izaiah Padilla, and Iron Elk Metoxon; her Uncles Gabe Duran and David DeCoteau; her aunties Simone DeCoteau ,Caroline Padilla, Rebecca Duran, Gloria Duran, and Bertha Armijo; Grandparents, Greg (Pa) and Kathy Hopfensperger; Great Grandma Bonnie Hopfensperger along with many other cousins, extended family members, and friends who loved her deeply.

Ashley treasured time spent with family and friends and was always looking forward to her next adventure. She had recently been excited about a trip to Denver to visit Sarah Herrera and her children; Brandon, Chad and Christy to enjoy some of her favorite Chubby’s chili cheese fries.

A Celebration of Ashley’s Life was held at 3:00PM on Sunday, October 18, 2026 at the Pielhop Funeral Home (215 S. Main St. Brillion). The family will have some words of comfort for all in attendance as well as allow others to share memories to honor Ashley.

Ashley was always thinking of others and how she could be helpful. She continued to give even in death through the gift of organ donation. Just eight months ago, she stood beside her longtime partner, Keith, as he became an organ donor. During one of the most difficult seasons of her life, Ashley showed grace, courage, and strength, teaching all of us how to face life’s hardest moments. Little did we know how soon we would need those lessons ourselves. We are incredibly proud of Ashley and the countless lives she touched and impacted.

None of us were ready to say goodbye. We know your heart was broken when the Lord called Keith home, and we find comfort in believing you are together again. May you find the peace you craved and so deserved.

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November 3, 2026

Notice is hereby given that the public test of the Image Cast Evolution (ICE) voting equipment to be used by the City of Neenah for the November 3, 2026 General Election will be conducted on October 29, 2026 at 1:00 p.m., Neenah City Hall, Hauser Room, 211 Walnut Street. This public test is open to the general public.

Charlotte Nagel
Neenah City Clerk

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Kid Scoop

THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE

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

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RAPTORS!

The word raptor comes from the Latin word **rapere**, which means "to seize or grasp."



Adaptations

Raptors have three key adaptations making them excellent hunters.

EYES: Raptors have keen eyesight that helps them spot their prey from great distances. The Australian wedge-tailed eagle can spot a rabbit from about 1.2 miles (2 km) away. This is about three times farther than a human can see. Raptors can also see more colors than people, which helps them see camouflaged prey.

BEAK: They have a sharp, hooked beak for tearing their meat into bite-size pieces.

FEET: The sharp, powerful talons or claws of raptors are used to catch and kill prey.

Standards Link: Life Science: Students know that adaptations in physical structure may improve an organism's chance for survival.

Raptor Code

Use the code to find out some amazing raptor facts!

Number of different kinds of raptors that can be found worldwide: ■■■

Speed a peregrine falcon can reach when diving after prey: more than ★★ mph!

The smallest raptor, the American kestrel, is about the size of a robin and weighs about ■ oz.

The largest raptor is the harpy eagle, which nests in tall rainforest trees of Mexico, Central and South America. It has a wingspan of over □ feet.

SECRET CODE

↑ = 1	▲ = 6
▼ = 2	□ = 7
◐ = 3	◑ = 8
■ = 4	◒ = 9
▲ = 5	★ = 0

Standards Link: Life Science: Students know different animals inhabit different kinds of environments.

Types of Raptors

Read about these three raptors. Then do the math to match each one to its silhouette.

Golden Eagle = 30

Habitat: Found throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

Wingspan: About 7 feet (2.1 m)

Diet: Usually small mammals such as rabbits and squirrels. Golden eagles have been seen attacking and killing pronghorn antelope, which are several times bigger than they are.

Peregrine Falcon = 13

Habitat: Found on every continent except Antarctica.

Wingspan: 3.5 feet (1 m)

Diet: Mainly hunts birds and can typically catch their prey in the air.

Swallow-tailed Kite = 19

Habitat: Southeastern United States

Wingspan: 4 feet (1.3 m)

Diet: Slow-moving prey such as snakes, insects, baby birds and rodents.

Visit HawkWatch International's website to find more information about raptors. Discover places in your area where you can see raptors migrating. Learn how scientists study raptors using satellites at www.hawkwatch.org

Double Double Word Search

Find the words by looking up, down, backwards, forwards and diagonally. Then look for them in this week's *Kid Scoop* stories and activities.

FALCON	S R O T P A R E E S
EAGLES	K A E B S S E E R T
PREY	S R A P T I R E F A
RODENTS	P S Z X N P H A W K
SPEED	E W L Z E V L G L B
OWLS	E A Z W D C Z L J S
RAPTORS	D R Z Z O U Y E R P
COLORS	Z D Z N R Q W S Z Z
BEAK	C O L O R S S E Y E
EYES	
TREES	
DRAW	
SEE	

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

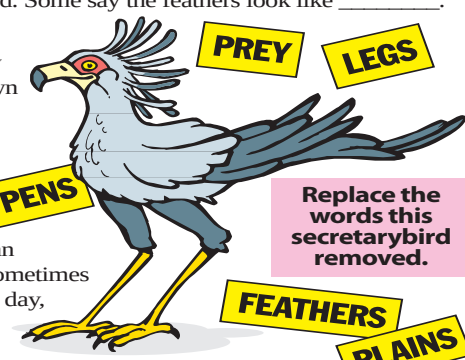
Secretarybirds

The secretarybird gets its name from the crest of _____ on the back of its head. Some say the feathers look like _____.

It has the longest _____ of any raptor and is known for running—not flying—after its _____.

These unusual birds walk through the African _____, sometimes up to 20 miles per day, looking for food. They will eat insects, mammals, birds, tortoises, eggs and snakes.

Standards Link: Life Science: Students know animals have structures that serve different functions.



PREY **LEGS** **PENS** **FEATHERS** **PLAIN**

Replace the words this secretarybird removed.

Kid Scoop FIT & FUN

Try these exercises to have fun and exercise the owl way!

Fly like an owl.



Stretch your arms wide apart and swoop around outdoors.

Perch like an owl.



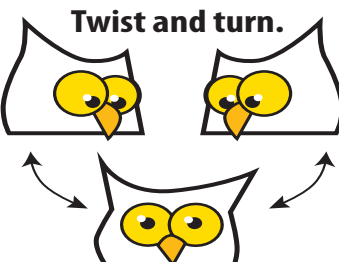
Squat down like you are sitting on a tree branch watching for mice on the ground. Fold your arms into wings with your thumbs in your armpits. How long can you stay in this position?

Hop like an owl.



Start in the perch position. Then hop to the right, hop to the left, hop forward, and hop backward.

Twist and turn.



While sitting in the perched position, turn your head as far to the right as you can. Then turn your head as far left as possible.

Standards Link: Physical Education: Understand the health benefits of physical activity and exercise.

Write On!

Bird Report

Write a paragraph reporting on your favorite bird. Include at least three facts about this bird.



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