Neenah News
Serving Neenah & Fox Crossing
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Inside



Senior Standout
Versatile Crowe drives Zephyrs' success
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Neenah schools' AI policy learning focused

By MaryBeth Matzek
Neenah News

The Neenah Joint School District continues to find practical ways to implement AI into students' learning process.

The district recently shared an update of how AI is integrated into learning while aligning with the district's educational goals and values with members of the school board and the community.

Rocco Marchionda, the district's director of instructional technology, said when AI was discovered in the fall of 2022, Neenah schools began studying how teachers could implement it in their classrooms and how it would affect students. He said the district knew AI was not going away and students needed to be prepared to work in a world where it was being used.

"We want to be in front of what's expected in the workplace for our families and students," Marchionda said.

Teachers and staff members have been offered a variety of training and courses to improve their AI skills and literacy. Marchionda said ensuring teachers are well prepared to use AI tools in the classroom is important since it enhances students' learning process.

When putting the district's AI policy together, Marchionda said there were two

See **AI in schools** on Page 8



Photo from St. Mary Catholic Schools

Turkey Olympics

St. Mary Catholic Middle School on Nov. 20 held its annual Turkey Olympics. The fun-filled competition kicked off Thanksgiving week at the school.

Why readers pay for the newspaper they get for free

By Grace Lim
News Contributor

Every Friday, Neenah News arrives in Gina Larsen's mailbox, whether she pays for it or not.

But Gina and her husband, Eric Larsen, have supported the newspaper from the beginning in 2022. In April, they began making monthly contributions to help keep it going.

"I want to pay for it because I respect it, I appreciate it and I want it to continue," Gina said. "And the one way that Eric and I know we can do that is to provide some foundational support so it does stay in our community."

Gina, who has lived in Neenah for 31 years, once dreamed of starting a Neenah newspaper herself. She'd watched local coverage decline and missed the community journalism she'd grown up with.

Raised in Pulaski, Gina remembers the Pulaski News, a student-run community newspaper established in 1942 and produced in the hallways of the high school. It served a town of fewer than 2,000 people when she was growing up.

"It was just a pillar, really, in the community," she recalled.

She remembers sitting on her father's lap while he read her "the funny papers," as he called the comics. Later, she and Eric experienced the familiar thump of the daily newspaper landing on the front porch. But as local coverage declined, Gina wondered whether Neenah might someday have a newspaper of its own.

Then Karen Schneider came along.

Gina had admired Karen's Oshkosh Herald. When Karen began exploring the possibility of starting Neenah News, they connected over coffee, discussing ideas and even what to name the newspaper.

See **Local journalism** on Page 6



Photo by Grace Lim

Gina Larsen has supported Neenah News since its launch in 2022. She and her husband, Eric, now make monthly contributions to help keep local journalism alive in their community.

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

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

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Seminar to inspire waking up with purpose

Neenah News

The Fox Cities Chamber will launch its first Level Up Live seminar with a program focused on building confidence, shifting mindsets and approaching everyday life with greater purpose.

"Waking Up on Purpose," featuring keynote speaker Thor Yorham, will take place from 8 to 10 a.m. Wednesday at Jewelers Mutual Insurance Co., 24 Jewelers Park Drive, Neenah.

The session will explore how individuals can find greater significance in their everyday lives – recognizing the reasons behind negative self-talk and focusing on the things they can control. Participants will learn practical strategies for building confidence and developing a more positive outlook.

The program also will address how developing adaptable social personas can help reduce social awkwardness and conversational guesswork, giving participants tools to navigate everyday interactions with greater confidence.

Level Up Live is free for Fox Cities Chamber members. Nonmember registration is $25. Learn more or register at shorturl.at/tWrGx.



Photo from Neenah Historical Society

Tis the season

The National Manufacturers Bank and the First National Bank at the corner of Commercial Street and Wisconsin Avenue during the 1930's. Both banks were advertising to join their Christmas Club. A bubbler was on the corner.



Calendar of events

Friday, Nov. 27

Finish the Lyrics Trivia Live Holiday Edition, 2 and 7 p.m., Greene's Pour House

Skate Show, Stronger Together: A Celebration of Community, 7 p.m., The Plaza

Saturday, Nov. 28

Small Business Saturday, all day

Amanda Lauer, Author of "My First Saint Nicholas Book: Celebrating St. Nick's Feast Day and Christmas Story," Book Signing and Presentation, 10:15 a.m., Neenah Public Library

Tuesday, Dec. 1

Fox Crossing Gingerbread Night, 5 p.m., Fox Crossing Municipal Complex, 2000 Municipal Drive

Wednesday, Dec. 2

Fox Valleyaires Barbershop Bistro, 5:30 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Neenah

What Was The Star of Bethlehem?, 6:30 p.m., Neenah Public Library

Thursday, Dec 3

Bake Sale, 7 a.m., ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah

Friday, Dec. 4

Mike Malone Trio plays A Charlie Brown Christmas, 2 p.m., Neenah Public Library

A Very Neenah Christmas, 5 p.m., Downtown Neenah

Swamp Water Boogie, 7 p.m., Short Branch Saloon, 1102 Harrison St.

Saturday, Dec. 5

Timeless Treasures Christmas Bazaar, 8 a.m., Peace Lutheran Church, 1228 South Park Ave.

The Grinch Family Breakfast, 9 a.m., Washington Park Shelter

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

A Very Neenah Christmas Market, 10 a.m., Downtown Neenah

Author Chris Baker Book Signing of "Christmas With You," 10 a.m., Lyons Books, 127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Madrigal Dinner, 1 and 6:30 p.m., Neenah High School Atrium

Sunday, Dec. 6

A Very Neenah Christmas Market, 10 a.m., Downtown Neenah

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

Neenah Community Band Winter Concert, 3 p.m., Neenah High School Performing Arts Center

Correction

November 13, Page 14: Neenah junior midfielder Tyler Geschrei earned honorable mention recognition on the Fox Valley Association all-conference soccer teams.

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Neenah prepares to showcase city's special holiday spirit

By Pamela Hart
News Contributor

Neenah's recognition as one of Hallmark Channels's Top 25 Merriest Christmas Towns makes this year's upcoming community Christmas celebration especially meaningful.

With its picturesque downtown, welcoming businesses, beloved holiday traditions and community spirit, Neenah offers the kind of authentic Christmas experience often seen on the big screen.

"Being recognized by Hallmark as one of America's merriest Christmas towns is such an incredible honor for our community," said Michelle Dunning, Outreach & Development Coordinator for Future Neenah. "What makes Neenah special isn't just the beautiful decorations or festive activities. It's the people, the traditions and the way our community comes together."

It's about to be that wonderful time of the year in downtown Neenah. The Christmas tree is up and decorated. The stores are preparing their live mannequin window displays, and Santa and Mrs. Claus, along with a few reindeer, are planning their arrival.

From Dec. 4 to Dec. 6, the downtown will transform into a winter wonderland filled with twinkling lights, festive entertainment, holiday shopping and tasty treats as Future Neenah presents A Very Neenah Christmas and A Very Neenah Christmas Market.

Visitors are invited to step into a real-life Hallmark Christmas movie, where charming storefronts, cheerful carolers, glowing holiday lights and the warmth of a close-knit community create a setting for making holiday memories.

A Very Neenah Christmas festivities, presented by Community First Credit Union, begin Dec. 4 with the lighting of the Christmas tree at 5 p.m. followed by visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, horse-drawn carriage rides and viewing the beautiful ice sculptures and live mannequins.

Visitors can indulge in a pie in a cup or homemade Chex Mix at the Cafe Belle Rue, hot chocolate and bread sampling at The Great Harvest, hot chocolate at Wilmar Chocolates and raclette cheese at The Cheese Table. Warm soft pretzels, sausages, roasted nuts, loaded baked potatoes, sweets and other seasonal favorites will be available from various street vendors.

A figure skating show featuring members of the Valley Figure Skating Club will take place at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 5 at The Plaza. They will be performing a sneak peek of their holiday show. At 12:15 p.m. the Cafe Belle Rue presents a Nutcracker ballet in the heated warming tents by The Plaza.

Lyons Books has invited local Neenah author Chris Baker for a book signing from 10 a.m. to noon Dec. 5. His debut novel "Christmas With You" is a historical novel inspired in part by his grandparents' story and set in Neenah starting in the 1930's and spanning seven decades.

The holiday magic continues all weekend at A Very Neenah Christmas Market, presented by Galloway Company. Inspired by traditional European open-air Christmas markets, the illuminated Galloway Christmas Village features 15 wooden holiday huts offering unique gifts, handcrafted treasures, seasonal foods and festive beverages. Village hours are 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 4, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 5 and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dec. 6.

Highlights of the Christmas Market include limited-edition 2026 Christmas Market Mugs with a choice of Gluhwein or Galloway's famous spiked eggnog. Visitors can take a spin on the magical Holiday Carousel along with listening to music and watching performances in the tent. They can snap a festive photo in front of the Whiskey Barrel Christmas Tree or climb aboard the Giant Christmas Sleigh, a special creation handcrafted by Neenah High School students.

Many of the downtown businesses will have extended hours throughout the weekend for holiday shopping. Visit the Future Neenah website at futureneenah.org for complete event schedules, entertainment details, activity times and the Christmas Market map.

Wisconsin Avenue will be closed from Commercial Street to Doty Street on Dec. 4 and continue to be closed from Church Street to Doty Street throughout the weekend. Free parking is available around the event and in the Church Street Green ramp.

"We can't wait to welcome visitors to experience that magic firsthand," Dunning said. "Whether you've celebrated with us for years or you're visiting for the first time, this is the perfect weekend to discover why Neenah is a Hallmark Christmas Town."

Santa Float 2026 dates start next week

Neenah News

The Santa Float will visit the streets of Neenah and Menasha from Monday through Dec. 11.

Santa's daily route and the link for a Santa tracker is posted on facebook.com/NeenahMenashaFireRescue and at nmfire.org.

The Neenah-Menasha Local Firefighters have run the Santa Float for 76 years. Off-duty firefighters from Local 275 make the Santa Float possible.

The Santa Float is 100% funded through donations, with the community's generosity making the tradition possible every year. This year, the firefighters are looking for funds to cover the float's operating funds, ongoing float improvements, maintenance and updates.

Community members can donate to the Santa Float through its GoFundMe page at gofundme.com/f/gxkjh5-santa-float or by mail at Neenah Menasha Charitable Foundation c/o Santa Float, 125 E. Columbian Ave., Neenah, WI 54956.



Photo from Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue

Off duty Local 275 firefighters have been volunteering their time to prepare this year's Santa Float.

The Santa Float was started by Fire Chief John Zick when Santa began visiting the homes of children who were confined home by illness in 1952.

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DNR honors Neenah couple for work at state natural area

By MaryBeth Matzek
Neenah News

Diane Perschbacker and Rory Williams enjoy spending time outside and were looking for a way to give back.

The Neenah couple discovered the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources held workdays in state natural areas where volunteers help eradicate invasive plant species and help protect rare plant species. In 2017, they attended a workday at the Oshkosh-Larsen Trail Prairies State Natural Area, adjacent to about four miles of the Wiouwash Trail.

"We're both interested in nature and hiking outdoors, and it wasn't too far away from the house," Williams said.

The couples' involvement grew with Perschbacker and Williams taking over as the site's volunteer coordinators in 2019 after attending specialized training.

"After a while, you realize you're making a difference to those species that are out there and you enjoy it more and more," Williams said.

That continued commitment and dedication led Perschbacker and Williams to be honored as the 2026 State Natural Areas Volunteers of the Year for their efforts along the Oshkosh-Larsen Trail Prairies State Natural Area.

"Diane and Rory are consistent. They started in 2017 and average 200 hours per year. That amount of time can really change a site," said Jared Urban, DNR state natural areas volunteer coordinator. "Year after year with that amount of time, you really see some results with the invasive plants."

As the site's volunteer coordinators, Perschbacker and Williams can plan their own workdays with the DNR trusting their abilities.



Submitted photo

Rory Williams, left, and Diane Perschbacker receive the 2026 State Natural Areas Volunteers of the Year from Jared Urban, DNR state natural areas volunteer coordinator. Williams and Perschbacker take care of the Oshkosh-Larsen Trail Prairies State Natural Area.

"The DNR began saying to us, 'go ahead and take care of the sweet clover or could you take care of this?'" Williams said.

Sweet clover is the biggest invasive species the crews deal with in the state natural area. State natural areas are unique places that support 90% of Wisconsin's rare plant species and 75% of its rare wildlife species.

Besides taking care of invasive species, Perschbacker and Williams work to preserve rare plants, such as Golden Alexanders and native orchids, and insect species. Williams has spotted rare butterflies and bumblebees, including the endangered rusty patched bumblebee.

"The State Natural Area has a fairly robust number of yellow bumblebees, which is an area of special concern. I throw on a camera and draw out there and document what we're seeing," he said. "We've also documented Tiger beetles and this year we helped out UW-Madison with a fungus beetle survey."

The DNR's Urban said taking care of plants benefits butterflies, insects, birds and mammals.

"A healthier prairie equals healthier wildlife," he said.

When Williams retired, he wanted to find an organization that could bring together several of his hobbies — being outside, documenting rare species and helping remove invasive flora to make room for spare flora. Likewise, Perschbacker was looking for something that got her outside throughout the year and incorporate hiking.

"Having the trail so close to home is a bonus," she said.

The segment of the Wiouwash that runs adjacent to the state natural area they oversee is very busy, Perschbacker said.

With the duo working so hard in the Oshkosh-Larsen Trail Prairies State Natural Area, Williams said the DNR can send crews to other state natural areas in the state that do not have volunteers taking care of the area. Perschbacker and Williams contact the DNR for larger projects requiring more people and larger equipment.

The busiest times of the year in their state natural area runs from June to August, Perschbacker said. At that time of year, they can spend up to 12 hours a week working.

"We were excited to win the award and hope it draws more attention to the work we do so we can recruit more volunteers and eventually help us recruit the person who wants to be the next steward for the area," she said. "The older we get, it's not as easy to bend over so much. It can be hard physical labor. We would love to pass on what we've learned and train the next steward."

The DNR actively recruits for volunteers to help take care of state natural areas. No experience is necessary, and training and equipment are provided onsite. Learn more about the volunteer program by visiting dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/StateNaturalAreas/volunteer.

Organizations partner for annual community giving campaign

Neenah News

HeadsUp Fox Cities, a Neenah-based nonprofit organization empowering former foster youth through transitional housing, personalized mentorship and community-driven support, has been selected as a partner organization in the 11th Annual Giving Tuesday Campaign presented by the CoVantage Cares Foundation.

The campaign officially kicks off on Dec. 1 inviting community members to support local nonprofits while maximizing their impact through CoVantage's matching gift commitment.

Funds raised through the campaign will help HeadsUp Fox Cities. Donations will support HeadsUp Fox Cities' programs and services for young adults ages 16–24 who have experienced foster care or been impacted by the child welfare system.

Contributions will help provide individualized life skills coaching, transitional housing support, basic needs assistance and connections to resources that promote long-term stability and independence.

Through CoVantage's Giving Tuesday campaign, community members can help ensure young adults have consistent support, meaningful relationships and the tools they need to build a future of their own choosing.

Running through Dec. 15, the Giving Tuesday Campaign will match donations dollar-for-dollar, up to a combined total of $200,000 across all participating organizations.

Community members can support HeadsUp Fox Cities by making a donation during the campaign period. Thanks to CoVantage's matching commitment, every dollar donated has the potential to make twice the impact for local organizations and the people they serve. For more information about the Giving Tuesday Campaign or to make a donation, visit covantagecu.org/givingtuesday.

Neenah schools holding candidate meeting Monday

The Neenah Joint School District will elect three school board members on April 6.

The district is holding a candidate informational meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday for people interested in running for the school board at the Administration Building, 410 S. Commercial St. The first day to circulate nomination papers is Tuesday.

The candidate filing deadline is 5 p.m. on Jan. 5 at the Neenah Joint School District office. If necessary, a primary will be held Feb. 16.

The three board seats up for election include board president Brian Epley, board clerk Alex Corrigan and Susan Garcia Franz.

For more information, visit the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education website at https://www.neenah.k12.wi.us/about/board-of-education.



Doty Cabin ready for repair work starting in spring



MaryBeth Matzek
Reporter

The Neenah Parks and Recreation Department will begin some restorative and repair work on Doty Cabin next spring.

Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. and MSA Professional Services completed an assessment report over the summer on the cabin, which is listed on the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places, to identify areas needing repair and maintenance to keep the cabin in good condition.

Director of Parks and Recreation Mike Kading said $75,000 was put aside in the city's 2027 budget for the Doty Cabin repairs.

"There's few other communities who preserve and embrace their history like Neenah does," he said.

The current cabin was built in 1947 as a reconstruction of the original James D. Doty cabin built in 1884-45, using some of the original components from the log cabin.

After receiving the consultant's report, Kading discussed it with the cabin's lead maintenance staff member and the cabin's volunteer leader to identify and move forward on key repairs.

The cabin's gutters will be the first project addressed, Kading said. He said they were damaged during the July 27 storm and play an important role in water management. While the original cabin did not have gutters, Kading said they are vital to have. The gutters will be tin but look like they are made from wood.

The cabin's stone fireplace and chimney have some leaks so a full inspection will be needed to determine where the leaks are coming from during rainstorms, Kading said. When repairing the chimney and fireplace, historic masonry guidelines will be followed, including core restoration techniques using accurate and breathable mortar mixtures.

Kading said some of the cabin's logs also need to be repaired since there are some areas with small cracks or deterioration.

Exterior windows, door frames and trim will also be inspected for areas of deteriorating wood and be repaired and repainted as needed.

MSA Professional Services conducted a review of the building's electrical needs and the possibility of adding a system to cool down the cabin on hot summer days.

Kading said it was recommended the cabin's electrical system be updated to a 100-amp 120/240-volt single phase electrical service with a pole mounted transformer and installing LED-type lighting to improve efficiency.

As for how to cool the cabin, a non-ducted cooling system could be used to create more ventilation and cooling.

Kading said the money in the budget will help the overall project get started and the city will look at other funding sources, such as grants. One possibility to fund cabin repairs and maintenance long-term is to create an endowment, he added.

Lake Edge Learning Center move approved

Neenah News

Lake Edge Learning Center is moving into the Fox Valley Community Learning Center, the former Shattuck Middle School.

The Neenah Common Council approved a special use permit application at its Nov. 18 meeting approving the childcare center's move. Lake Edge's facility on Doty Island was severely damaged during the July 27 tornado, forcing the move.

The Fox Valley Learning Center is a nonprofit organization looking to restore the building into a community campus for lifelong learning, recreation and connection. Current tenants include New Springs Christian Academy and the Neenah Joint School District Health Clinic.

Lake Edge Learning Center is planning to relocate to the school's east wing on the first floor along Reed Street. The center would also have a fenced-in, outdoor play area between the main building and east wing.

A loop driveway along Division Street will serve as the pick-up and drop-off area. To keep the area secure from the rest of the building, access will be controlled via badges.

"It's a natural extension of our mission to host a childcare facility at the Fox Valley Learning Center," said Colleen Bies, co-founder and director of Fox Valley Learning Center.

Bies said the center will update the portion of the building that will be leased out to Lake Edge.

Lake Edge is seeking to raise $100,000 to fund its move.

Community ice show rescheduled to today

Neenah News

A skate show has been rescheduled as temperatures remained warm last week and the opening of the ice skating rink at The Plaza was delayed.

The Stronger Together: A Celebration of Community skating exhibition is now scheduled for 7 p.m. today at The Plaza. Public skating is scheduled to be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The ice skating season was expected to open Nov. 20 but was pushed back to Monday with the arrival of temperatures more favorable to ice conditions.

Support local business on Small Business Saturday

This Saturday is Small Business Saturday, and the Fox Cities Chamber encourages local residents to support Fox Cities businesses.

Small Business Saturday was founded in 2010 and has quickly become an important part of small businesses' busiest shopping season.

In 2025, the reported projected spending in the U.S. from those who shopped at small businesses on Small Business Saturday was around $18 billion.

Since 2010, the total reported U.S. spending at small businesses during the annual Small Business Saturday is an estimated $241 billion.



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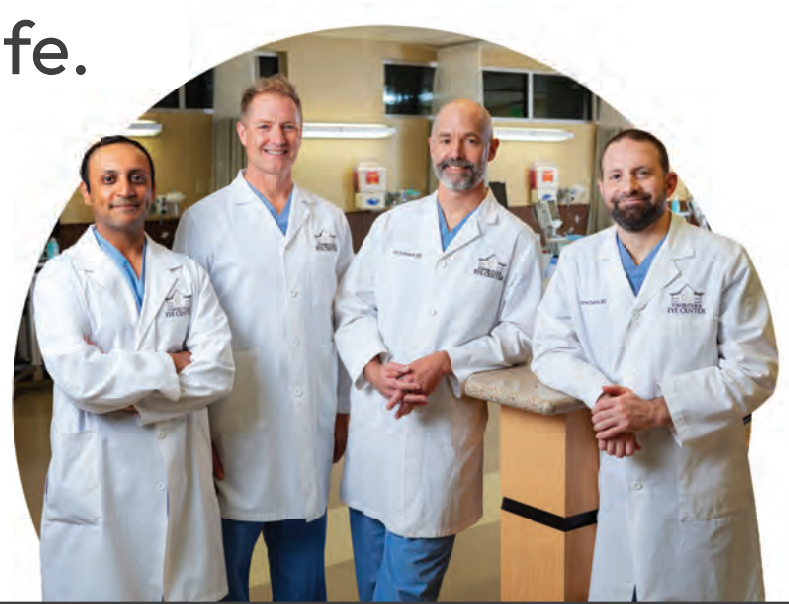

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Local journalism

from Page 1

Gina, who spent 30 years as a copywriter specializing in healthcare and public health communications, helped with a few early launch activities.

"I just told her I thought this was a great idea," Gina said.

Today, Gina works as minister of congregational care at First Presbyterian Church, Neenah, helping people navigate life transitions and loss. Her work centers on connection and wellness, something she also values in community journalism.

Every Friday, Gina retrieves the mail. When she sees advertising inserts inside Neenah News, she silently thanks the businesses that purchased them, knowing their support helps keep the newspaper going.

Then she reads the paper. Eric has a designated spot on the kitchen counter called "his pile," where Gina leaves the newspaper with his mail. When he gets home, he picks it up, settles beside the fireplace and reads.

Gina appreciates the stories about people in her community, the writing and the accessibility of the staff. She likes knowing she can contact someone with a story idea and receive a response.

"I just value the fact that there's some really kind and attentive storytelling that goes on," she said.

She also values having a reliable source of local information. Social media offers an endless stream of posts and opinions, but readers often must determine what's accurate. With a newspaper, someone has made the calls, checked the facts and edited the stories.

"We've been without that for so long," she said.

When Neenah News began, readers paid to subscribe. The newspaper later switched to free distribution, but Gina continued supporting it. When Winnebago Media Group became a nonprofit in April 2026, she began making monthly contributions, believing the nonprofit model serves the community rather than corporate shareholders.

Her commitment to journalism is personal, too. Gina and Eric raised a journalist. Their daughter, Lydia, is a coastal climate change reporter for The Post and Courier in South Carolina, where she works with its nonprofit Rising Waters Lab.

Gina remembers telling her children, "The last bastion of democracy is journalism." Lydia still reminds her of those words.

But you don't need a journalist in the family to appreciate local news. Gina compares it to how people sometimes forget where their food comes from. Someone planted it, harvested it and brought it to market.

A newspaper doesn't simply appear in the mailbox, either. Reporters make calls, interview people and check facts. Editors select stories, proofread copy and assemble the pages.

All of that takes time, skill and money.

Winnebago Media Group, the nonprofit publisher of Neenah News, the Oshkosh Herald and Winneconne News, is seeking 5,000 members willing to contribute $50 a year to support local journalism across the three newspapers. That's less than a dollar a week.

Gina's suggestion for anyone who can afford to give is simple: Set up an automatic payment and forget about it. What matters is recognizing the value of something that's become part of your life.

"Please stop and think about the value and the enjoyment you get out of this newspaper every week," she said.

Gina hopes readers will consider what Neenah would lose without its newspaper. The local stories, reliable information and familiar paper arriving every Friday can be easy to take for granted.

But unlike so many newspapers that have disappeared, Neenah News is still here. As a locally managed nonprofit, its readers have an opportunity to help shape its future.

Gina has been doing her part from the beginning. Now I'm asking the rest of us to consider doing ours. After all, a newspaper can only serve its community as long as that community is willing to support it.

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Grace Lim is a journalist, educator, founder of Humans of Oshkosh and owner of Grace Lim Creative. She believes local journalism and community storytelling help people feel seen, informed and connected.

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Fox Crossing Village Board lowers assessed tax rate

By MaryBeth Matzek
Neenah News

The Fox Crossing Village Board approved a balanced budget Monday with the assessed tax rate dropping 4.5% in 2027 to $3.620 per $1,000 of assessed value.

The budget calls for $15,872,692 in spending in 2027, with public service (the fire department and police department) the largest expenditures, followed by debt service.

"We have a very low tax rate compared to our neighbors, especially with the services we offer," said Financial Director Jeremy A. Searl.

While the tax rate declined, Fox Crossing residents will pay more for several fees. Annual recycling and garbage fees will increase $5 for a total of $225 while sewer rates will increase 3.5%, which is approximately $18 per year for an average residential family.

Water rates will rise 3%, which is about $15 per year for the average residential family usage.

Searl said the budget was put together as if the July 27 tornado did not happen. It does not include costs for rebuilding the east side fire station or the community center.

"For homeowners on the east side who were affected by the storm, we sent them letters suggesting they reach out to the assessor and talk to them about the condition of their home," he said. "The 2027 tax rate is based on what your home was valued on Jan. 1, 2026. Please reach out about what damages or repairs you have had done."

Searl said the village has been in contact with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) about possible grants that Fox Crossing could receive related to the reconstruction of the fire department and community center.

When it comes to spending in 2027, Fox Crossing will provide a set pool of funds to be used for performance-based wage increases. Searl said some years that not all the funds are used.

The village is adding three new part-time positions. Two part-time records clerks will be added in the police department to help with requests, and one part-time custodial position will be added to help in the municipal complex.

The budget also includes the use of $962,973 of the fund balance — $429,723 for one-time projects and capital items and $533,250 for roll-over of 2026 budgeted activity that was not completed. Searl said one of the unfinished projects is a large IT infrastructure property to replace the village's SAN and virtual host servers and the back-up SAN and virtual host servers.

In the municipal complex, work will be done in the board room to replace speakers and microphones. The building's bathrooms will also be updated, and a service door will be replaced.

Man arrested after firing bullet into duplex

Neenah News

A 46-year-old Neenah man was arrested last weekend after firing a bullet into an adjacent duplex, leading to a portion of Neenah being placed under a shelter in place order for a short time.

At approximately 8:20 p.m. Saturday, Neenah Police Department officers responded to the 300 block of Stanley Court after receiving a report that a bullet was fired into a residence. No injuries were reported.

When police officers arrived, they determined the bullet originated from the opposite side of the duplex. Officers established telephone contact with the sole occupant of the resident where the firearm had been discharged. The individual, later identified as Joel P. Morgan, refused to comply with officers' commands.

Due to the nature of the incident, the Winnebago County Office's Multi-Jurisdictional SWAT Team, Crisis Negotiations Team and Drone Team responded to assist. After several hours, Morgan was taken into custody without further incident.

Sheriff's records show that Morgan, 46, was arrested by Neenah Police Department at 1:30 a.m. Sunday.

The scene was secured and deemed safe. Police said this was an isolated incident, and there is no ongoing threat to the public.

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office and Gold Cross Ambulance assisted during the incident.

Fox Crossing man charged in string of burglaries

Neenah News

A Fox Crossing man remains in custody after a string of alleged burglaries.

Joseph L. Chmielewski, 24, is facing six felony counts, including burglary of building, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, receiving stolen property (between $5,000 and $10,000 or firearm) and three counts of felony bail jumping.

If convicted on all felony counts, Chmielewski could be sentenced to 24.5 years in state prison followed by 22 years of extended supervision.

Chmielewski had been out on bond in an Eau Claire County case where he is charged with possession of methamphetamine. As part of his bond, he is to commit no further crimes.

Chmielewski was convicted of possession of narcotic drugs in Winnebago County in 2023.

According to the criminal complaint, Chmielewski allegedly got out of rehab and was living with his mother in Fox Crossing. On Nov. 2, police were called to the house due to a "suspicious situation."

Someone in the home noticed Chmielewski had a gun. Police believed the handgun with a Ruger 9mm was reported stolen a few days earlier.

Fox Crossing police received theft reports from three individuals. One man reported vintage comic books and Pokémon cards from his garage and van parked on the street were stolen. Another man reported his vehicle had been rummaged through and that his wallet was stolen. A third man reported earbuds and a winter hat were stolen from his truck.

Online records show Chmielewski is in custody at the Winnebago County Jail on a $2,500 cash bond. He is due back in court on Dec. 21 for an arraignment and motion hearing in front of Winnebago County Judge John Jorgensen.

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Subcommittee to look at County scholarship breakdown

By MaryBeth Matzek
Neenah News

A special subcommittee will decide how many seniors from county high schools and homeschooled students can receive the college scholarships handed out annually by the County Board of Supervisors.

As part of the 2027 county budget, the board approved adding two additional $2,100 scholarships, bringing the total to 11. During that discussion, it was mentioned there were 10 high schools located in the county and that homeschooled students should also be eligible with many supervisors incorrectly thinking a student from each high school received a scholarship.

Last spring's scholarships went to two students each from Neenah High School, Oshkosh North High School, Winneconne High School, one student from Wyldewood Christian School and two homeschooled students.

Since there were no guidelines in place about how the scholarships were to be divided up or if they went to the top overall candidates, Corporation Counsel Mary Anne Mueller suggested the University of Wisconsin Education, Extension and Agriculture Committee put some rules in place.

Supervisor Kate Powers, who is not on the committee, said she's been involved with the scholarships "a long time" and made the initial motion at the budget meeting to add a 10th scholarship since the county had gained another high school. She went to the library to look up information about the scholarship's founding in 1998. Back then, one scholarship went to one senior at each county high school, but that has changed through the years.

As part of the application process, students need to fill out an application form and write an essay answering the question "If I were to run for a Winnebago County Elected Position, which one would I run for and why?"

"I think we need some protections around the homeschooled students, otherwise we're opening it up to abuse. They do not have any official documents that we can confirm someone is actually a student," Powers said. "It could be a 27-year-old guy filling out applications in his mother's basement, seeing it as an easy way to make money. You can create anything with the Internet, and he could make up any type of documents he wants."

Powers recommended earmarking one scholarship for homeschooled students with the other 10 going to students from brick-and-mortar high schools.

Supervisor Tim Macho suggested since the committee was starting over with how the scholarships are handed out, "why don't we go back to one scholarship per high school?"

But what if no students from a high school apply, asked Supervisor Kristl Laux.

"Would that scholarship go unused, or would it go to another top student at a school that already received a scholarship?" she asked.

Committee Chair Lucas Reinke acknowledged Powers' concerns about fraud, but he was unsure how frequent something like that would happen since a parent, teacher or principal has to vouch for a student.

Powers responded someone abusing the system could pretend to be their own parent, too.

Since the applications for the 2027 scholarships open in February, Reinke recommended forming a subcommittee of committee members to put guidelines together and then bring it back to the full committee. He was going to confirm the process of forming a subcommittee with Mueller and then form the group.

Coughlin Center meeting room changes: The UW Education, Extension and Agriculture Committee also reviewed proposed changes put together by UW-Extension about meeting room usage at the James P. Coughlin Center.

When the rooms are not used for county use, nonprofit organizations and community partners are allowed to use them on a first-come, first-served basis and can only be used for educational, civic or informational purposes only. For-profit, religious and political groups are not allowed to use the space.

Beginning Jan. 1, the Coughlin Center will have a new fee schedule in place. No fees are charged when the county, Department of Natural Resources or the U.S. Department of Agriculture use meeting rooms. A $15 fee per meeting reservation will be charged to Winnebago County 4-H groups, clubs, boards and committees and Winnebago County HCE groups, clubs, boards and committees. All other eligible groups will pay a $30 fee.

Room users are allowed to move tables and chairs to suit their needs but need to return the meeting rooms to their original configuration. They also must complete and turn in a meeting room follow-up card, which states all items that must be done to ensure the room is ready for the next user. Management and staff will not assist with room set-up, reset or cleaning.

Area 10 Education 10 Director Liliana Ramirez said administrative staff were spending too much time setting up different rooms for meetings, which is why Extension decided to have meeting organizers oversee arranging their own space.

"These changes really increase the accountability and responsibility of the people using our facility," Reinke said.

The county's Facilities & Property Management Committee will need to approve the changes before it can go to the County Board for final approval.

Report released on AI use in local government

A new report from the Whitburn Center for Governance and Policy Research finds Wisconsin local governments are taking a tentative approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI), and desire policies and strategies to utilize this technology in ways that maximize benefits to residents while minimizing risks.

Survey data collected from leaders of 92 Wisconsin cities and villages reveal that:

Relatively few Wisconsin governments are using AI beyond basic tasks.

Few Wisconsin governments have policies and structures in place to govern AI use.

Political debates over data centers, cultural divides over the ethics of AI, and concerns about staff knowledge and public acceptance have made local government leaders cautious about embracing the technology.

Larger municipalities feel better prepared for the use of AI than smaller municipalities.

The report includes a review of existing AI policies and provides a model governance framework for local governments seeking to use AI to improve performance by increasing efficiency.

Specifically, the Whitburn Center recommends local governments use existing structures and processes to inventory their capacity and needs, draft personnel and organizational policies, create key performance indicators that can be integrated into strategic plans, and create citizen oversight through board and commission structures.

The full report can be viewed at uwosh.edu/whitburn-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/211/2026/11/WhitburnAIReportFINAL.pdf.

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AI in schools

from Page 1

key points the schools adhered to — that any AI system used by the district be a closed loop so information would not be shared outside of the schools and that the tool recorded everything, so it remained in compliance with the district's records retention policy.

The district selected Magic School as its educational AI Tool during the summer of 2024 and Marchionda said teachers have control over how they use AI in their classrooms. In addition to Magic School, the district also uses Google Gemini and since Neenah has a paid Google workspace environment, it remains a closed model.

"Teachers can bend AI easily to their curiosity, but they can also turn AI off and on for their students whenever they want," Marchionda said.

Implementation varies among staff members, and he said they are encouraged to share what they learn with their peers.

"Parents are naturally interested in how their students are using AI and one example is a teacher can push out a chat bot that answers questions as if it was Mark Twain so students can ask about life at the time 'Tom Sawyer' was written, how the book was written … and teachers are able to see the conversations the students are having with the bot," Marchionda said.

When handing out assignments, teachers determine how much, if any AI, can be used.

There is an assessment scale running from using no AI to using AI throughout your work as much as the student wants or specifically directed in the assignment's assessment. This rule plays a larger role in high school than the lower grades.

Marchionda said the district has AI ethics guidelines for students describing how and when AI can be used in schoolwork. They also learn AI is not always accurate so information needs to be verified and that it is a digital tool so it should not be used to take the place of real-life interactions.

Teachers also get to know their students and their writing styles, which can help if there is suspicion AI was used incorrectly to complete an assignment, Marchionda said.

"We have AI detection tools, but we don't want to rely on those. Our teachers can use an oral conference to talk with a student about what they wrote to determine if it's really their work," he said.

Students also begin learning in elementary school about digital citizenship and the role AI technology plays in their technology — that it's just a tool and does not replace critical thinking. Students' understanding and education about AI evolves as they get older.

While teachers use AI to supplement their instruction, Marchionda said they are still the drivers in the classroom.

"Our human teachers are the most valuable thing in our classroom. Great teachers can do so many things AI can't do like making students feel like they belong — technology can't do that," he said.

Hairstylist retiring after 40 years connecting with community

By Pamela Hart
News Contributor

After 40 plus years as a hairstylist at The Hair Connection, Pat Camps is retiring from the business as of next week.

She has mixed emotions but with repetitious movement causing discomfort, her doctor suggested for her to be done in order to maintain a healthy next chapter of her life.

She is passionate about her role at The Hair Connection, telling her clients and coworkers, "I love it, it is fun. I'm going to miss my clients and our conversations."

Camps can not only do anything behind the chair, but also does facials, manicures and pedicures. All her talents performed behind the chair are a reflection of who she is as a person.

She takes care of her clients like she takes care of herself, being attentive to her personal health by maintaining healthy hair, nails and skin. To this day, most clients do not know her age because Camps truly believes no one needs to know.

The fact that hairstylists are truly deserving of the title "Hairapist" is what Camps has embraced over the years. Some of her clients have been with her since she started at The Hair Connection, which is located at 1315 S. Commercial St.


Camps

From start to finish, Camps wants to make them feel welcomed, look and feel good, but more importantly feel valued and listened to. She is interested to hear about their family, community, favorite places to shop and vacations.

Helping clients find the perfect products for their hair ensures that Camps would see them again. She will let a client know if a product is not going to work or explains how to use the product. Most visits end with a meaningful hug.

The memories are endless. Camps treats her coworkers like her clients even under stress. She asks questions, gives her insight, shares her experiences and gives direction, which she hopes makes others feel valued and proud of their job.

Coworkers have observed Camps mingling with their clients, offering compliments on a new style, color, perm or cut.

Not only is she a hairstylist, Camps puts together the flower arrangements outside of the salon. Camps has been offered a position to come back post-retirement to take care of the plants.

The Hair Connection team is planning a celebration to share memories and hugs, and to honor Camps for her dedication to the clients and salon for the past 40 years.

Police look to pack squad car with gifts

Neenah News

The Neenah Police Department is encouraging community members to come together and pack at least one of its squad cars with kindness and gifts.

The police department will be teaming up with Walmart Neenah and Simplicity Credit Union to help make a difference in the community.

The Stuff the Squad event will be from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday at Walmart Neenah, 1155 W. Winneconne Ave.

Organizers are encouraging shoppers to grab a few extra items to donate and help fill the squad car. Every donation will go directly to Neenah residents.

"Together, we can help our neighbors and spread a little extra kindness this holiday season," the police department said. "Let's show everyone just how big Neenah's heart really is."



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Program to explain the Star of Bethlehem

Neenah News

Community members are invited to explore one of the greatest mysteries in history during an upcoming program.

The presentation about the Star of Bethlehem will be at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Neenah Public Library.

For centuries, people have wondered whether the Star of Bethlehem described in the Gospel of Matthew might have been a real astronomical event. Local astronomy enthusiast Richard Beal will present an engaging exploration of the leading natural explanations that have been proposed, including planetary conjunctions, comets, novae and other unusual celestial phenomena.

The presentation will consider what the biblical account says, what ancient observers understood about the night sky, and how historical records and modern astronomy may help us solve this enduring mystery.

The presentation is part of a partnership with the Future Barlow Foundation at the Neenah Public Library.

Weather permitting, telescope observing will be offered outside the library following the presentation, providing participants with an opportunity to view some of the season's celestial sights.

To advertise in the Neenah News, call 920-486-1616



Photo from Neenah Public Library

Creative art

Participants explored freely-shaped watercolor mushrooms Nov. 12 during the Creative Art Studio for Adults at the Neenah Public Library. The artists explored adding texture to watercolor with salt, rubbing alcohol, plastic wrap and embossing. The Creative Art Studio for Adults at 6 p.m. Dec. 10 will explore watercolor collage. Registration is required.

Public library calendar

Dec. 1

Leap into Writing 9 a.m.

Toddler Time Storytime (ages 12-24 months) 9:15 a.m.

Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA (all ages) 10 a.m.

Powered by Yarn 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 2

Baby Time Storytime (birth to 12 months) 9:15 a.m.

Musical Movers Storytime (ages 1-5) 10 a.m.

Mah Jongg Meet Up -Instruction and Open Play 5:30 p.m.

What Was the Star of Bethlehem? 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 3

Wee Read Storytime (ages 2 and up) 10 a.m.

Open Chess 5:30 p.m.

Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.

Dec. 4

Fitness Friday: Full Body Strength 9:15 a.m.

Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.

Mike Malone Trio plays A Charlie Brown Christmas 2 p.m.

Dec. 7

Stitching Group 1 p.m.

Adult Afternoon Program: Henry Stolze Jr. & the National Tinsel Company 2 p.m.

Dec. 8

Storytime for Everyone at Valley VNA (all ages) 10 a.m.

Tech Talk Tuesday: All About Device Settings 1:30 p.m.

Legal Assistance Clinic 4:30 p.m.

Cookbook Book Club: Dips 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 9

Mah Jongg Meet Up -Instruction and Open Play 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 10

Open Chess 5:30 p.m.

Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.

Creative Studio for Adults: Paper & Palette: Watercolor Collage (registration required) 6 p.m.

An Evening with Author Ron Rindo 6 p.m.

Dec. 14

Monday Matinee: The Odyssey 1 p.m.

Stitching Group 1 p.m.

Short Story Night 7 p.m.

Dec. 15

Adult DIY Design Workshop 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 16

Library Board Meeting 4 p.m.

Mah Jongg Meet Up - Open Play Only 5:30 p.m.

How the Victorians Invented Christmas 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 17

Open Chess 5:30 p.m.

Ukulele Open Jam 6 p.m.

Dec. 18

Fitness Friday: Balance and Strength 9:15 a.m.

Chair Yoga 10:30 a.m.

Dec. 21

Stitching Group 1 p.m.

Open Art Studio for Adults 3 p.m.

Not Quite Cozy Mystery Book Club 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 22

Open Chess 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 23

Mah Jongg Meet Up - Open Play Only 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 24

Library Closed All Day

Dec. 25

Library Closed All Day

Dec. 28

Monday Morning Book Klatch 10 a.m.

Stitching Group 1 p.m.

Dec. 29

Open Chess 5:30 p.m.

Movie Talks: Movie Trivia Night 6:30 p.m.

Bollywood Dance 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 30

Mah Jongg Meet Up - Open Play Only 5:30 p.m.



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Deep, experienced Neenah squad ready to open campaign

Neenah News

Boys Hoops PREVIEW

A strong senior class will give the Neenah boys basketball team a strong foundation entering the 2026-27 season as the Rockets look to continue to challenge for a top finish in the Fox Valley Association.

Four of Neenah's top five scorers from last season will be back for head coach Lee Rabas and will give the Rockets plenty of versatility and firepower offensively.

"Depth – lots of options if we are struggling," Rabas commented about the strengths of this year's squad. "Guard play (will also be a strength) and some experience."

Leading the list of returning players is senior Kolton Fleege, who earned second-team all-Fox Valley Association honors last year and is the top returning scorer for the Rockets after averaging 8.9 points per game last season. He also led the team in rebounding last season at 5.1 caroms per game.

Seniors Jackson Rindt and Jacob Jungwirth both return after earning honorable mention recognition in the FVA last season and averaged 7.4 and 7.0 points per game, respectively.

Senior Xavier Bezares was the third leading scorer for Neenah last season at 7.7 points per game and rounds out a solid group of returning offensive threats for the Rockets.

Seniors Matthias Charles and Chase Nitz were also regulars in the Rockets rotation last season, while seniors Henry Farrell, Gavin Keepers and Tyler Clark also saw varsity action a year ago.

Rabas also expects varsity newcomers in juniors Deaken Rittner, Elliot Devlin, Jonah Rivet and sophomores Gregorio Balandran and Dumont Mason to contribute this season.

"We are very pleased with our current group of high school players and the potential they possess," commented Rabas. "There is always the next generation of players who want the opportunity to play and perform."

The Rockets finished with a 12-6 record in the FVA last season and placed fourth in the final standings, but struggled toward the end of the conference schedule winning just one of their last five league games.

Rabas is looking for the team to bounce back from that finish this year and believes this team is a group that can compete with the best the talented league has to offer.

"We have to play better defense than we have the past few years. We have to be tougher defensively and rebounding," Rabas commented. "Offensively, we need to take care of the ball and be efficient (have to have better field goal shooting percentages). Those things we have struggled with the past few years."



Neenah News

Senior Kolton Fleege earned second-team all-FVA honors a year ago after averaging 8.9 points and 5.1 rebounds per game.

St. Mary Catholic

The Zephyrs return four of the five starters from last season and an experienced nucleus of players as they look to build on last year's runner-up finish in the Big East North.

Leading the group of returning players will be a pair who received all-conference recognition a year ago in senior Luke Fairweather and junior Dylan Brenn, who were both on the league's honorable mention list.

The 6-foot-7 Brenn is the top returning scorer after averaging 13.9 points per game last year and finished second in all of Division 4 in 3-point shooting at 46 percent.

"Dylan is a unique talent: 6-7 and still growing, he has guard skills with 3-point accuracy and range and an inside presence," commented head coach Paul Bradshaw. "He took a big step last year and with his size and skills, he could be a very dominant player in Division 4."

Fairweather averaged 11.7 points per game a year ago and also paced the Zephyrs in assists (6.4) and steals (1.8) per game.

Senior Tarver Trinkner averaged 9.5 points per game last season and joins Fairweather in the backcourt to give the Zephyrs a strong duo.

"Tarver and Luke are both great leaders and have the ability to score in bunches," commented Bradshaw. "They are strong 3-point shooters and can finish at the rim well, too."

Seniors Max Vosters returns after averaging 9.0 points per game and was the team's top rebounder at 6.2 per game and will anchor the inside attack along with senior Alex Klinkhammer. Both players can also step out and shoot 3-pointers.

Junior Gavin Beck played a key reserve role last season and will be in the backcourt rotation once again for the Zephyrs.

"We will be a fast team with size so we expect to maintain our traditional scoring punch but be better defensively and on the boards," commented Bradshaw. "We have a lot of experience on this team and they've played together for many years, this allows us to add to what we've done historically on both ends of the floor."

The Zephyrs will pose problems for opposing defenses this season as they will feature a unique approach.

St. Mary Catholic has a multitude of scorers and has a history of being a very unselfish group which means they can overwhelm opponents with a balanced attack. However, they also possess the individual talent to produce big scoring nights and take advantage of an individual

See **Boys basketball** on Page 15







Senior Standout is brought to you by: Nicolet NATIONAL BANK

Crowe brings all-around game to court for Zephyrs



Neenah News

Senior Autumn Crowe is the reigning Player of the Year in the Big East North after leading the Zephyrs in scoring, rebounding assists and steals last season. The four-year varsity performer has committed to play next season at Winona State University.

By Steve Clark
Neenah News

There isn't much Autumn Crowe doesn't do on a basketball court.

Need scoring? Easy. Drives to the basket, 3-pointers and probably some put-back baskets, too.

Have to get some rebounds? She's got that covered.

Looking for a stifling defender? Yep, she thrives there, too.

And just when it seems the St. Mary Catholic senior has done it all, she makes a couple of nifty passes to set up open teammates for baskets.

The four-year varsity player and reigning Player of the Year in the Big East North has the versatility to do whatever the team needs her to do. Now, as a senior, she has taken on more leadership for this veteran Zephyr squad.

"It feels a little different (being a senior). It feels like I'm taking a different leadership role now," Crowe said before a practice last week. "The seniors last year, they were the seniors and now we are stepping in as the oldest ones here."

Crowe said she is more of the "lead by example" type but knows that at times she has to use her voice – something she learned from some of the teammates she had in her first three seasons.

"They would tell us what to do when they needed to," Crowe said. "If you have to tell someone what to do, it's part of being in that leadership role. Others look up to you and they will do what you say."

Crowe, who also plays volleyball and runs track for the Zephyrs, made an immediate impact on the squad as a freshman, averaging seven points per game on a team that was loaded with offensive talent.

She nearly doubled her scoring average as a sophomore and then took another step forward last season when she averaged 21.8 points, 8.7 rebounds, 5.3 steals and 2.8 assists per game – all marks which led the team.

"As an underclassman, you have to play more of a role – you are what the team needs you to be," Crowe said. "As an upperclassman, you can be one of the main people and fill the role of the people before you."

Crowe, who has already surpassed the 1,000-point plateau for her career, was a unanimous first-team all-conference selection and earned her conference player of the year honors last season.

Senior Standout

Nicolet NATIONAL BANK

More importantly, she was the driving force in St. Mary Catholic making a second straight trip to the WIAA State Tournament. But despite her 16 points and six rebounds, the Zephyrs were held to a season-low point total in a loss to Albany/Monticello in the Division 4 state semifinals.

"We weren't clicking and weren't playing as much as a team," Crowe said. "(The loss) has really stuck with us. It is motivation. It gives us the urge that we really want to try to get back and this year we are going to win. That's obviously the goal."

Crowe said her first memories of basketball were just shooting baskets with her father in the driveway before starting to play on her first organized team in third grade.

She had a passion for the sport from the start and it didn't take her long to start to excel.

"By fifth grade, I started to understand the game more," Crowe said about when she started to realize she was good at the sport. "From a young age I have played lots of other sports, but basketball has always been my favorite."

Crowe has a unique opportunity this year for the Zephyrs as her younger sister, Ava, who is a freshman, is also on the varsity roster.

That can be a good thing or a tough thing depending on the day.

"Even though we fight somedays – I mean we're siblings - I think it's a cool experience," said Crowe, who is also cousins with Kamy, Kallie and Kardyn Peppler of Hortonville who will all play at UW-Green Bay. "Our whole family is very competitive, and (Ava and I) play kind of the same way. We're not supposed to guard each other though because she's more of a post and I'm a guard."

Crowe's talents have earned her a scholarship to play at NCAA Division II Winona State University next season, but she won't be heading there alone.

Two of her teammates from her AAU Team 1848 squad – Winneconne's Grace

See **Senior Standout** on Page 15

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Zephyrs' defense stifles Timberwolves in easy victory



Steve Clark
Sports Reporter

Two games, two easy wins for the St. Mary Catholic girls basketball team.

Autumn Crowe poured in 33 points while the defense stifled the Timberwolves as the third-ranked Zephyrs cruised to a 72-36 nonconference win at home on Monday night.

Head coach Jeff Chew said the first two games were about working on some things and seeing what the squad can improve on. He was pleased with what he saw from his veteran roster.

"Combined, the first and second game, we have done different presses and we've worked on some little things," Chew said. "Just to see how we play and what we can work on more."

Chew and his coaching staff will have their work cut out for them after the Zephyrs were firing on all cylinders – both offensively and defensively – against the Timberwolves.

St. Mary Catholic never trailed, built a 23-point halftime lead and then held the Timberwolves to just three points in the first 10 minutes of the second half.

"In the second half today, we were very good defensively in the half court," Chew said. "When they execute (defensively), they are really fun to watch. The effort is there and they work hard."

Just like offensively a team can get into a rhythm, so can the defense and the Zephyrs' pressure forced Living Word Lutheran into a multitude of turnovers.

"We feed off each other's energy and can find a rhythm in our defense," said junior guard Gabby Guerrero. "You have a steal turn into several steals and then we go on a run. It just needs to start off with some energy."

The Timberwolves scored six straight points to answer a strong start from the Zephyrs and narrowed the margin to 18-10 with just under 11 minutes left in the first half.

Crowe then scored nine straight points to extend the Zephyrs' lead to 17 points and the rout was on from there.

Crowe, who also finished with double-digit rebounds, scored 24 of her game-high point total by finding the basket on offensive rebounds, driving to the basket and knocking down a pair of 3-pointers in the game.

"It's always fun to watch Autumn when she gets going like that," Guerrero said. "It's always exciting. It helps everybody have fun."

Guerrero added 13 points and Luci Nackers finished with 10 to give the Zephyrs three players in double figures. Bitsy McCauley knocked down three 3-pointers to finish with nine points.

That's the kind of balance Chew likes to see from the squad.

"That's what we are trying to do, play as a team and find the open person," Chew said. "It doesn't matter who scores, we just want to win the game."

St. Mary Catholic will return to the court on Tuesday when it opens Big East Conference play at home against Hilbert. The Wolves went winless in conference play a year ago.

No matter what team is the opponent, though, the Zephyrs come out with the intention of putting the work in on the court in order to walk away with the win.

"Every time we step on the court we want to get better. The win is first and foremost but getting better and bringing intensity every time," Guerrero said. "Later on this season we have tough, challenging and exciting games so we want to bring the intensity every game so we are ready for the hard games.

"Everybody on this team plays such an important role and it will be important for everyone to step up to their roles – which I think we do a good job on. That's when we play our best basketball."



Neenah News

St. Mary Catholic's Gabby Guerrero fires a one-handed pass to a teammate during the first half of Monday's win over Living Word Lutheran.

Prep roundup

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Rockets open season with two wins

Neenah got its season off to a strong start with a pair of wins last week.

The Rockets opened the season with 64-59 win at home over West De Pere behind 22 points from Farrah Danforth.

Sydney Michalkiewicz added 13 points and nine rebounds for the Rockets, while Celia Gentile also reached double figures with 10 points. Izzy Malloy added seven points and eight rebounds off the bench for Neenah.

Last Saturday, the Rockets took down Wauwatosa East, 63-42, with Michalkiewicz notching 22 points in the victory.

Danforth finished with 18 points and Malloy chipped in eight points. Danforth and McKenna Frier each had six rebounds to lead the team.

Zephyrs roll to easy victory

St. Mary Catholic opened the season with a 75-26 rout of Bonduel on the road last week.

The Zephyrs built a 50-11 halftime lead and then cruised in the second half.

Autumn Crowe finished with 16 points to lead four players in double figures for St. Mary Catholic. Luci Nackers added 14 points, followed by Martha Peters with 11 and Gabby Guerrero with 10.

St. Mary Catholic went 12-of-15 from the free-throw line in the game.

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New coaches lead talented Rocket squad into season

Neenah News

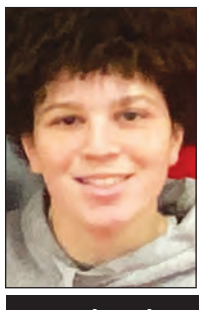
Neenah High School's powerhouse girls wrestling program has its sights set on notching another first this season.

The WIAA is sanctioning a girls team state tournament for the first time this season and the Rockets are focused on making sure that the Neenah red is present when the ribbon is cut for the event in La Crosse in March.

Girls wrestling PREVIEW

"We have our sights set on making sure Neenah is represented at the inaugural event," commented Nate Ennis, who is serving as co-head coach of the program along with Jason Kurszewski. "We believe our athletes are capable of competing at the highest level and we are excited for the challenge ahead."

Both Ennis and Kurszewski bring plenty of experience with program to the practice room as they take over for Madison Ruckdashel.



Richard

Kurszewski has been in the Neenah wrestling program for nine years, moving from the boys to the girls program in 2022 where he served as an assistant. Ennis has spent more than a decade with the Neenah program, much of that time working with the youth program, and transitioned to the girls program as an assistant coach last season.

On the mat, the Rockets will be led this season by three-time state qualifier Amari Richard, who is on pace to break the program for most career wins.

Richard is one of four returning Fox Valley Associations champions from last year for the Rockets. Along with Richard, who won the 132-pound title a year ago, senior Maya Ives (100 pounds) and sophomores Greenlee Ennis (107) and Xiomara Liriano-Ruede (235) also captured conference titles.

Juniors Jenson Kurszewski, who was second at the FVA meet last season, and Mackenzie Kujawa also return after gaining varsity experience last season.

The coaches are also expecting seniors Kylie Alexandroni and Caleigh Perry, junior Casidy Steinberg and sophomore Sonia Julian to take on larger roles with the team this season, while the program welcomes nine freshmen to the roster to give the program plenty of depth to work with.

"We are fortunate to have nearly 20 girls in our wrestling room, which allows every athlete to be challenged and develop on a daily basis," commented Ennis. "That depth benefits the entire program. The competitive atmosphere in the practice room helps accelerate development, builds confidence and prepares our wrestlers to compete against high-level opponents throughout the season."

As much success as the program has had, the coaches believe there is plenty ahead that the Rockets will achieve.

"What excites us most is the youth and potential of this team," commented Ennis. "We have a great group of athletes who are committed to improving every day and our focus remains on continuous growth, development and taking advantage of every opportunity to learn."

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Boys basketball

from Page 11

matchup.

"I think we have a very balanced attack offensively. We know opponents will try to take away some of our strengths, with our balance we can absorb that and move scoring to other teammates," commented Bradshaw. "At the same time, I do see the potential for a few of our players to become more dominant. As a result, I think we will see big games from different players throughout the season as opponents try to limit our strengths."

One of the concerns for the Zephyrs will be their depth after losing varsity prospects Caleb Vogel and George Voss for the season because of injury.

Junior Bryce Heiman is expected to fit into the rotation after a strong junior varsity season last year.

"I am really excited about this season," commented Bradshaw. "This team has energy, communicates well and they are unselfish. This could be the best team we've had in recent years."

Senior Standout

from Page 12

Mitchell and Harper Neace – have also committed to the Warriors. The trio have played together since fifth grade and is excited for the opportunity to continue playing basketball with her friends.

"Grace committed first and I was unsure. And then Harper committed and I was like I really like the program too, so I decided to go there," Crowe said. "It was the culture and the coaches. I had a good relationship with a couple of other schools but then Winona State just stood out. I felt it was just the right fit for me."

Crowe knows she will have to step up her game when it comes to playing at the collegiate level.

"I need to get stronger because college is a lot different. I also need to work on doing more mid-range stuff," Crowe said. "I'm really excited. It's a really cool opportunity."

Before she gets to that, though, she has some unfinished business with her Zephyr teammates.

An she is hoping the third time at the state tournament will be the charm and she can finish her prep career by hoisting a gold basketball.

"That's obviously the goal," Crowe said. "To get back to state and win it."

Public Notice

TOWN OF NEENAH
Winnebago County, WI

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that at an election, to be held in the Town of Neenah on Tuesday April 6, 2027 the following Town offices are eligible to be elected to succeed the present incumbents.

The term for all Town offices is two years, beginning on Tuesday, April 20, 2027.

OFFICE	INCUMBENT
Supervisor	Brooke Cardoza
Supervisor	Thomas Wilde
Chairman	Robert Schmeichel

The term for all Sanitary District offices is 6 years, beginning on Tuesday, April 20, 2027.

OFFICE	INCUMBENT
Sanitary District #2	Dan Osero

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN, that the first day to circulate nomination papers is December 1, 2026. The final day for filing nomination papers is 5:00 pm on Tuesday January 5, 2027.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN, that if a primary is necessary, the primary will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 2027.

Dated this 24th day of November, 2026

Ellen Skerke, Administrator-Clerk-Treasurer
Town of Neenah

Publish: November 27, 2026
WNAXLP

Public Notice

CITY OF NEENAH
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that public hearings will be held by the City of Neenah to consider amending the Official Street Map of the City of Neenah, established in section 26-30 of the municipal Code, as follows:

That the Official Street Map as established by Section 26-30 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Neenah is hereby amended by the following:

The following section of the "Officially Mapped Road" is to be removed:

The area which includes the following: Commencing at the southwest corner of Section 18, Town 19 North, Range 17 East, Town of Vinland, and extending east along the south line of said Section 18, 550 feet, to the Point of Beginning; thence continuing east along the south line of said Section 18, 1,050 feet; thence continuing north 850 feet to a point which is 1,590 feet east of the west line of said Section 18; thence continuing in a southwesterly direction approximately 1,360 feet, to the Point of Beginning, excluding all property west of the west right-of-way line of Interstate 41. Said reservation being in Section 18, Town 19 North, Range 17 East, Town of Vinland, Winnebago County, Wisconsin.

The hearings will be held at the City Administration Building, 211 Walnut Street, Neenah.

Plan Commission Informal Hearing: Tuesday, December 8th, at 4:00 P.M.
Hauser Room

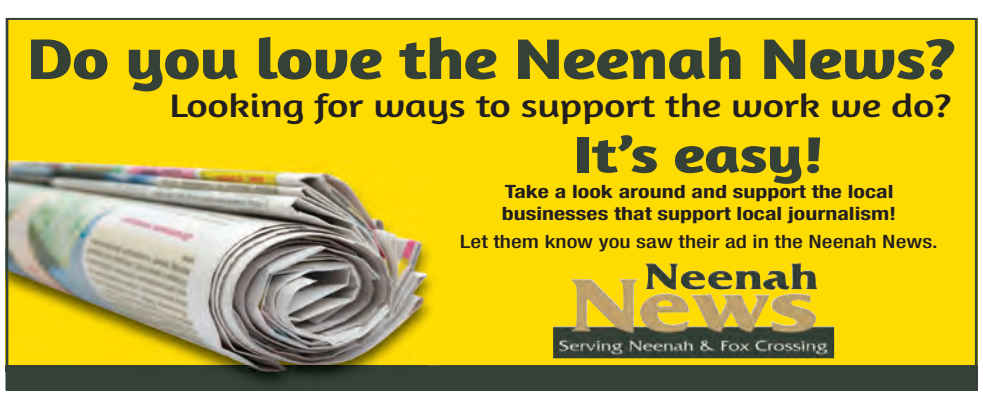
Council Formal Hearing: Wednesday, December 16th, at 6:00 P.M.
Council Chambers

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that the Common Council will hear all persons, their agents or attorneys, concerning the above proposed amendments to the official street map. Questions pertaining to the proposed Official Street Map amendment should be directed to Brad Schmidt at (920) 886-6125 or via email at bschmidt@neenahwi.gov.

Dated at Neenah, Wisconsin this 20th day of November 2026.

Char Nagel
City Clerk
Neenah, Wisconsin

Publish: November 20th and November 27th, 2026
WNAXLP



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Legal Notices

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

**IN THE MATTER OF THE
NAME CHANGE OF:
Aric Duran Hanseter
Notice of Name Change
Hearing
Case No. 26CV1085**

NOTICE IS GIVEN:
A Petition was filed asking to change the name of the person listed above:
From:
First – Aric
Middle – Duran
Last – Hanseter
To:
First – Joan
Middle – Ariel
Last – Hansueder
Birth Certificate:
First – Aric
Middle – Duran
Last – Hanseter

This Petition will be heard in the Circuit Court of Winnebago County, State of Wisconsin:
Judge's Name: Bryan D. Keberlein
Place: 415 Jackson Street, Room 240, Oshkosh, WI 54901
Date: January 8, 2027
Time: 9:00 A.M.
If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call 920-236-4848 prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.

NOTICE TO NEWSPAPER AND PETITIONER:
Notice of this hearing shall be given by publication as a Class 3 notice for three weeks in a row prior to the date of the hearing in the following newspaper Oshkosh Herald.

**BY THE COURT:
DATE SIGNED: November 2, 2026
Winnebago County Circuit Court Judge, Branch 3**

Runs: November 27, 2026, December 4, 2026 and December 11, 2026.

WNAXLP

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

**IN THE MATTER OF THE
NAME CHANGE OF:
Hailey Angel Jensen
By (petitioner) Hailey Angel Jensen**

**Notice of Name Change
Hearing
Case No. 26CV1123**

NOTICE IS GIVEN:
A Petition was filed asking to change the name of the person listed above:
From:
First – Hailey
Middle – Angel
Last – Jensen
To:
First – Kaiden
Middle – Angel
Last – Jensen
Birth Certificate:
First – Hailey
Middle – Angel
Last – Jensen

This Petition will be heard in the Circuit Court of Winnebago County, State of Wisconsin:
Judge's Name: Hon. John A. Jorgensen
Place: 415 Jackson Street, Room 320, Oshkosh, WI 54901
Date: December 21, 2026
Time: 1:30 a.m.

If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call 920-236-4866 prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.

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

**BY THE COURT:
DATE SIGNED: November 20, 2026
Winnebago County Circuit Court Judge, Branch 5
Runs: November 27, 2026, December 4, 2026 and December 11, 2026**

WNAXLP

**STATE OF WISCONSIN,
CIRCUIT COURT
WINNEBAGO COUNTY
IN THE MATTER OF THE
NAME CHANGE OF:
Charissa Anne Huffman**

**Notice of Name Change
Hearing
Case No. 26CV1087**

NOTICE IS GIVEN:
A Petition was filed asking to change the name of the person listed above:
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Middle – Anne
Last – Huffman
To:
First – Charissa
Middle – Anne
Last – Kerber
Birth Certificate:
First – Charissa
Middle – Anne
Last – Huffman

This Petition will be heard in the Circuit Court of Winnebago County, State of Wisconsin:
Judge's Name: Michael S. Gibbs
Place: 415 Jackson Street, Room 211, Oshkosh, WI 54901
Date: 12/09/2026
Time: 8:30 am

If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call 920-236-4868 prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.

NOTICE TO NEWSPAPER AND PETITIONER:

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

**BY THE COURT:
DATE SIGNED: November 3, 2026.
Winnebago County Circuit Court Judge, Branch 4
Runs: November 13, 2026, November 20, 2026 and November 27, 2026.**

WNAXLP

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THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE

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The Case of the Turkey Day Troubles

A HOLIDAY WHODUNNIT

Percival Pilgrim is having puzzling problems. Are his problems all accidents? Or is someone messing up his day on purpose?

Help poor Percival solve his problems. Then use the clues to find out if someone—or some*thing*—is making all the trouble!

Cornucopia Confusion

Percival put some fruits and vegetables into his grandmother's cornucopia. Then he went to help his father in the fields. When he came back, somebody had taken three things!

Match the shapes to find out which things are missing from the cornucopia.

Standards Link: Visual Discrimination: Matching shapes.

Puzzling Patchwork

Percival's mother asked him to arrange pieces of fabric for a patchwork quilt. He used eight pieces to make a rectangle. He went to get his mother, and when he came back with her, someone had messed it all up!

Help Percival put all of the patches back into the rectangle shape.

Standards Link: Math: Problem Solving: Identify attributes of geometric objects; match shapes.

Broken Necklace

Percival's sister, Priscilla, helped him make a beautiful bead necklace for his mother. ***Oh no!*** Somebody broke it! Help Percival put the bead necklace back together. Be sure to follow his pattern.

Standards Link: Math: Mathematical Reasoning: Analyze and solve problems by observing patterns.

Pie Hide-and-Seek

Now the 10 delicious pumpkin pies Percival's mother made are gone! Help him find them on this page.

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple directions.

Extra! Extra!

Giving Thanks

Not all news is bad news. Make a list of the people in the newspaper and the reasons they can be thankful.

Standards Link: Writing Applications: Write brief expository descriptions.

Who is making problems for Percival?

Percival found some clues each time he had a problem. Now he knows that either his sister Priscilla, Ted Turkey or Randy Raccoon caused all the problems. Look at the picture of each suspect. Which clue do you think each one left behind?

Circle the troublemaker—the one who left a clue **every time** there was a problem.

Standards Link: Problem Solving: Analyze problems by identifying relationships.

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.

TURKEY
PIE
PATCHWORK
THANKS
NEWS
HELP
SHAPES
SOLVE
MATCH
FRUITS
LIST
BROKE
CASE
BACK

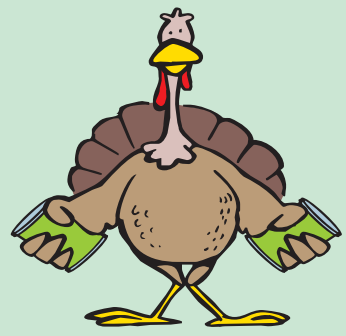
H	A	M	P	P	L	I	S	T	H
P	E	B	A	C	K	K	Y	E	E
T	A	H	T	T	N	E	W	S	V
A	G	N	C	A	C	K	S	A	L
P	L	E	H	G	I	H	V	C	O
I	E	T	W	S	H	A	P	E	S
N	G	T	O	S	T	I	U	R	F
O	Y	O	R	Y	E	K	R	U	T
B	R	O	K	E	U	A	L	S	O

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

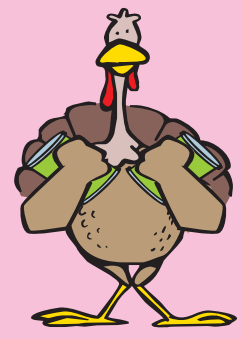
Kid Scoop FIT&FUN™

Fine Feathered Fitness

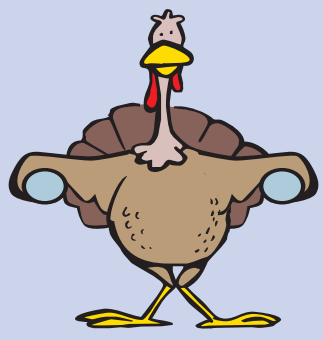
Stand with your feet apart. Hold a can of food in each hand as shown.



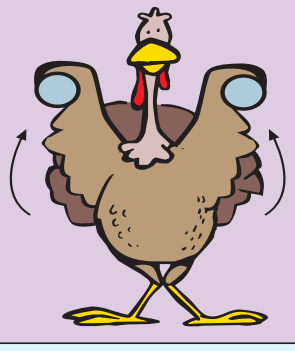
Bend your arms at the elbow, lifting the two cans 10 times up to your shoulders.



Hold a can of food in each hand with arms outstretched and palms down.



Slowly lift each arm straight up 10 times.



Standards Link: Physical Education: Use control in weight-bearing activities.

Write On!

Thanksgiving Traditions

What does your family usually eat and/or do for Thanksgiving?

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