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Public invited to hear Garcia at MAPS Great Speaker Event

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) will feature popular youth speaker David Edward Garcia as the motivational speaker for this year's Great Speaker Forum on Friday, Feb. 24, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. at the Merrill High School Fieldhouse, and the public is invited to attend.



“Speaker David Edward Garcia empathizes with diverse students who face challenges because he was once considered an ‘at-risk student’ himself before defying the odds and graduating with a bachelor’s degree and then earning his Master’s Degree,” a MAPS press release said. “He has motivated children and mature adults in some of the greatest metropolitan cities of the world: Los Angeles, New York, Sao Paulo, Paris, and London. His upbringing facilitated his multiculturalism/multilingualism, which make it easy to relate to diverse audiences.”

All of that sounds impressive, but Garcia’s own words tell more about the message he will bring to the youth of the Merrill community, and to anyone else who comes to hear him speak.

“Find your genius ... find your strength ... find success on your own terms,” Garcia says. “Every single one of you is a genius ... When you find your genius, you become

See GARCIA page 3



One of our loyal Foto News readers sent us this beautiful Valentine’s Day sunrise image captured from the WSAW Skycam here in Merrill. Did you know you can check out the weather in Merrill via the Skycam at any time? You can also see what the weather is doing in Marshfield, Plover, Wausau, Rib Mountain, and Stevens Point by peeking in at the Skycams. Take a look: <https://www.wsaw.com/weather/cams/>. WSAW Merrill Skycam sponsored by Courtside Furniture.

It’s fish fry season at St. Francis in Merrill



The St. Francis Xavier Catholic School cafeteria was the place to be last Friday, Feb. 17, for the first St. Francis Lenten fish fry of the 2023 season. Tina L. Scott photos.

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Most Wisconsin bars and restaurants that serve food offer fish or a fish fry option on Fridays, but during Lent, fish fries become a regional and cultural event unto itself. Going out on a Friday night for a fish fry is a tradition for many couples and families, regardless of whether they abstain from meat on Fridays for religious reasons or not.

Roman Catholics are most widely known for abstaining from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and on Fridays as a Lenten practice.

In fact, some Catholic congregations began serving fish fries on Friday evenings, and those Friday night fish fries at churches turned into annual fundraisers.

Here in Merrill, St. Francis



Deep fried pollock, French fries, coleslaw, rye bread, and tartar sauce are standard fare at the St. Francis Lenten fish fries. Baked cod, deep fried shrimp, combination meals, and even a sampler of each are also on the menu.

Xavier Catholic Church is one such congregation, and they’ve made Friday night fish fries into an event, serving baked and deep fried fish, along with deep fried jumbo shrimp, French fries or baked potato, cheese

curds, coleslaw, rye bread, beverages, and homemade desserts. The smell of fish permeates the building, from the school halls to the sanctuary area, throughout the 40 days of Lent.

Fueled by the efforts of dozens of volunteers from the congregation, the St. Francis Lenten fish fries now provide a substantial amount of income for the church and school, which their budget relies upon. All of the work—from prepping the fish to making the coleslaw, deep frying the pollock to baking the desserts, waiting tables to sweeping floors, and everything in between—is done by volunteers. It takes about 75 volunteers each week to perform all the tasks necessary to turn the school cafeteria into a restaurant, where Friday-night fish fry fans can get a full meal and even a beer.

See FISH FRY page 6

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MHS students will travel to Greece

Los Mezcales fundraiser will help students earn money for their trip

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

From March 17-24, 2023, during Merrill High School (MHS) Spring Break, 20 advanced-placement students will board a flight to Athens, Greece, for the experience of a lifetime. This Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) School Board-approved trip will guide participants through Greece and Italy with a specially-trained Passports Tour



Pictured: Brian Ball, Jaiden Pillai, Clayton Evans, Chloe Malinowski, Cassandra Kasten, Macie Wienke, Gabe Small, Alexa Emmer, Kasia Holt (MHS Counselor), Alana Polak, Johanna Dahlke, Erin Kreamsreiter, Amy Raddatz (MHS Teacher), Janna Jacobson, Lacie Sczygelski, Nora Trojanowski, Mia Smith, Julia Shull, and Isabel Wendt. Missing from photo: Lauren Cohrs, Maddox Lammerding, Hazley Bonnell (PRMS Teacher), and Alexis Rogers. Submitted photo.

Director, organizers say. Travelers will visit the Acropolis and Parthenon, the archaeological site of Delphi, Pompeii, Capri's Gardens of Augustus, Colosseum and the Roman Forum, the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica, Pantheon, and other sites according to the plan.

Students have been hard at work fundraising for their trip. In November, they sold Condor Coffee. In January, they sold Dina Mia pizzas, sauces, and lasagna.

And on Monday, Feb. 27, Los Mezcales in Merrill will host

a fundraising event, donating a portion of the day's sales to the group. The students invite the public to come down to Los Mezcales that day to meet them, put them to work, and enjoy delicious food. The students want to thank Los Mezcales and the community for supporting them in their fundraising efforts and for helping enable them to have and pursue this opportunity to travel and see another part of the world and some of the historical places they have studied, firsthand.

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Merrill woman sentenced to three years for trafficking meth

Timothy M. O'Shea, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that 35-year-old Nicole Elsholtz of Merrill was sentenced on Feb. 16, 2023, to three years in prison for conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine by Chief U.S. District Judge James D. Peterson. Elsholtz pleaded guilty to this charge on March 14, 2022.



Elsholtz

The government's investigation revealed that Elsholtz purchased large amounts of methamphetamine from

co-defendant Levi Bagne between July 2019 and June 2020. Bagne and co-defendant Krista Sparks routinely mailed packages containing methamphetamine from Arizona to co-defendant Cory Freyermuth in Oshkosh, Wis. Once Bagne let her know that the methamphetamine had arrived, Elsholtz would drive to Oshkosh and get it from Freyermuth. After driving back to Merrill, Elsholtz sold the methamphetamine to a variety of customers.

Bagne, Freyermuth, and Sparks pleaded guilty to participating in this methamphetamine distribution scheme and were sentenced by Judge Peterson to 16 years, 8 1/2 years, and 2 1/2 years, respectively.

The charge against Elsholtz is the result of a joint investigation by the Central Wisconsin Narcotics Task Force, Drug Enforcement Administration, Lake Winnebago Area Metropolitan unit, and Merrill Police Department. The investigation was conducted and funded by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), a multi-agency task force that coordinates long-term narcotics trafficking investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorney Aaron Wegner handled the prosecution.

MERRILL FOTO NEWS

Student of the Week

This Week's Featured Student is **Payton Zimmerman**
 Son of **Jeremy & Jennifer Zimmerman**
 Payton is in 7th grade at New Testament Church Christian Academy. He was nominated by Mrs. Hoffman.

What is your favorite subject in school? Why?
 My favorite subject is social studies. I like to learn about history.

What is your favorite part of school? Why?
 My favorite class is gym class. I like my gym teacher. We get to play basketball.

What would you like to do/become someday? Why?
 I really like sports. I would like to become a professional sports player.

Payton is a hard worker. He loves to help other children play sports. ~ Mrs. Hoffman

Student of the Week Sponsored by:
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We Love you, Gram. Paul, Ted & Mark

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Backtrack Vocals to perform in Merrill

The Merrill Area Concert Association (MACA) will present Backtrack Vocals in concert at the Merrill High School Auditorium on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

Backtrack Vocals is a five person professional a cappella singing group that began their musical journey via YouTube. Their unique music videos feature new arrangements of familiar songs including pop, funk, Motown, standards, and Broadway songs. The program will include medleys including Temptations music, songs from Mary Poppins, I'll Be There-Lean On Me medley, as well as music from the Greatest Showman, Sweet Caroline, and Walking on Sunshine. The variety of arrangements and music styles appeals to all age groups.

Attendance at all MACA events is open to members only, but it's easy to purchase a season membership which supports the association's ongoing mission to provide live performances by professional musicians for the



Grace Copeland

entertainment and betterment of the Merrill community. Membership entitles members to attend all performances during the season. To

join, visit www.merrillconcerts.org, email MerrillConcerts@gmail.com, or contact Diane at 715.722.3401.

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

Be The Joy

DEAR READER,

Today I want to share just one thought: Be the Joy. It can make the difference in almost everything.

You can spread joy around. You can receive joy. To me, that means putting a smile on your face and going out of your way to say hello to someone.

It means putting a spring in your step when you go somewhere. It means having a "giddy up and go get 'em" kind of day. It means looking for the best and the light in everyone. It means seizing each moment with a positive outlook for whatever may come.

Joy. That's something we all want in our lives. But to have it, we've got to live it. So, be the Joy!

PATRICK J. WOOD, Publisher

Author of "Dear Reader" and "Tapestry of Love and Loss"



Rep. Tiffany announces 2023 Congressional Art Competition: A day in the life of Wisconsin

Congressman Tom Tiffany announced his district office is accepting submissions for the 2023 Congressional Art Competition. All high school students in the Seventh Congressional District are encouraged to participate.

"Northern and western Wisconsin are blessed to have such talented young students, and I look forward to seeing this year's Wisconsin themed submissions," said Congressman Tiffany.

The Congressional Art Competition began in 1982 and gives each congressional district the ability to have artwork crafted by young constituents displayed in the U.S. Capitol Building. This year's theme is: A day in the life of Wisconsin. Entries need to demonstrate a Wisconsin theme, and each submission must be mailed or hand-delivered to Congressman Tiffany's Wausau Office (2620 Stewart Ave. Suite 312 Wausau, WI 54401) by Friday, April 7, 2023, at

5:00 p.m.

Each entry must be original in concept, design, and execution and may not violate U.S. copyright laws. For more information and competition guidelines, please visit Congressman Tiffany's website at: <https://tiffany.house.gov/services/congressional-art-competition>. Contact Maggie Cronin with questions at 715.298.9344 or email maggie.cronin@mail.house.gov.

GARCIA from page 1

unstoppable. ... On the other side of that pain is power ... is something wonderful, is a beautiful treasure ... don't ever give up just because you can't see it."

"Life is not about what happens to you. It is about the story you tell yourself about what happened," he says. "Life can be cruel to you ... but life can never write your story. ... Find your genius. ... Write your story. ... Find your team."

If this kind of motivational speech is what you need to hear, alongside the Merrill community's youth, make it a point to attend this event to hear Garcia for yourself.

"We are pleased to welcome David as this year's Great Speaker Forum presenter," said Shannon Murray, Superintendent of MAPS. "We encourage members of the community to attend and witness the value our outstanding guest speakers bring to our students."

The Merrill Great Speaker Forum has been bringing in high-quality speakers to present to MAPS middle school and high school students each year for more than 40 years.

Since 1978, the Merrill Great Speaker Forum has invited diverse and engaging speakers to the schools, focusing on subjects including self-esteem, self-worth, dignity of person, pride in self, goals and achievement, patriotism, and coping with societal problems like drug abuse and teen pregnancy, the release said.

The Merrill Great Speaker Forum is funded entirely by donations from Merrill business and individuals with contributions ranging from \$25 to \$1,000.

This year's speaker was made possible by the following individual and business donations: Merrill Foundation, \$1,500; Prairie River Properties, \$500; Merrill Lions Club,

\$200; Kiwanis Club of Greater Merrill, \$150; Turtle Lake Forestry, LLC, \$150; Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie #584, \$100; Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc., \$100; Merrill Chamber of Commerce, \$100; Reindl Printing, \$100; Ron & Kay Nicklaus, \$100; Rose Skic, \$100; Baumgart Waste Removal, \$50; Eagles Ladies Auxiliary #584, \$50; KB Body Shop, Inc., \$50; Maxine & Jay Tlusty, \$50; Social Topics Club, \$35; Brad & Tammy Woller, \$25; Gleason Lions Club, \$25; and, Hugo's Pizza Shop, \$25.

"We continue to appreciate the support the Great Speaker Forum has received from local businesses and members of the community," said Murray, "Our partnership with the community is vital, and we thank you for supporting our students!"

The Great Speaker Forum Committee is made up of community members, school district personnel, and students. Students participating on the committee this year are Aaron Collinsworth, Jaiden Pillai, Brooke Rudie, Josie Geiss, Zander Meyer, and Maya Paulus.

"The students researched potential speakers and ultimately made the decision based on the relevancy of the message the speaker brings to the students," the press release said. "Students serve on the committee beginning in sixth grade and remain active through their Senior year."

Staff members on the committee are Trisha Detert, Diane Goetsch, Kasie Holt, Trina Knospe, Shannon Murray, and Tammy Woller. Community members on the committee are Renea Frederick, Clyde Nelson, Mike Ravn, Lynne Reindl, Sarah Sturm, and Jay Tlusty.

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Patrick J. Wood
Publisher
publisher@mmclocal.com

Tim Schreiber
General Manager
tschreiber@mmclocal.com

Kurt Haebig
Circulation Manager

Sue Schroeder
Graphic Designer

Tina L. Scott
Editor
tscott@mmclocal.com

Dinah Schneider
Sales Consultant
dschneider@mmclocal.com

Jennifer Gartmann
Sales Consultant
jgartmann@mmclocal.com

Heidi Schult
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| OBITUARIES |



Joanne G. (Heckmann) Fischer, age 82, of Spring, TX, passed away on February 9, 2023 at Autumn Leaves of Cyresswood memory care and was too early for the Rapture. Joanne was born July 5th, 1940, in Merrill, WI, son of the late Martin and Gladys (Richmond) Heckmann. Joanne fell in love with Ronald Fischer, a neighbor, high school sweetheart. Joanne and her brother Bill moved to town when Joanne was thirteen and

Ronny was eleven with Bill being his best friend. The two exchanged vows on August 24, 1963, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill, WI and on August 24, 2013, repeated their 50th vows at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill, WI.

Joanne graduated from Trinity Lutheran school in 1955 and had a deep belief in the Bible. She was very devoted to knowing her memory verses and she is believed to be the first 8th grade student from Trinity School to be a Sunday School teacher for Trinity Lutheran Church Merrill. Joanne graduated from Merrill Senior High School in 1959. She worked at Weinbrenner shoe factory until marriage and then worked for the Wisconsin Conservation Department as secretary to the President at Madison, WI while her husband went to school. After her husband graduated, she became a mother to our children in seven different states. 1st was Indianapolis, Indiana for four years, 2nd was Roxana, Illinois for two years, 3rd was Indianapolis, Indiana for 6 months, 4th was Kalamazoo, Michigan for 2 years, 5th was Midland Texas for 4 years, 6th was New Orleans, La for 8 years, then 7th location was to take Ronny from the field to the head office in Houston, TX. for 19 years with retirement 20 years ago for Ron. Joanne and Ron became an empty nester in 2011 in Spring, TX.

Joanne's love of the Lord was very evident in the way they raised their 4 children. Joanne always kept God and Christian values at the core of everything in their home and daily lives. The love of the Lord passed on through their children so much so that it even encouraged one of the spouses to become saved early on in their relationship. Joanne loved teaching her grandchildren and great-grandchildren about the Bible and loved telling the story of Jesus' birth on Christmas Day and His resurrection on Easter. Those are all stories that will continue throughout generations to come.

Joanne has always been a very faithful servant of the LORD. She taught Sunday school through her years in the New Orleans area (Slidell). Then she concentrated on her own grandchildren and great grandchildren by babysitting while the parents worked. It was a great joy and fulfillment to relate JESUS to whoever she met. An example is during thanksgiving to distribute fourteen pumpkin cheesecake pies to neighbors.

Joanne is survived by her husband of 59 years Ronald D Fischer. She was fortunate to have our children raised all living within 60 minutes from our home in Spring, TX. Joanne is survived by three sons raised: Dennis (Jeanie) Fischer of Cypress, TX; Daniel (Holly) Fischer of Tomball, TX and Robert (Katie) Fischer of Spring, TX and one daughter Debra (Bill) Starnes of Washington, TX. She has six grandchildren: Victor Anthony Barrera, Abigail Barrera, Robert Fischer, Cole Fischer, twins Cade Fischer and Kinsley Fischer. She also has two great grandchildren: Brinley Fischer and Bailey Fischer. She is survived by Brother William (Judy) Heckmann. She is preceded in death by her parents and six half-brothers: Carl Prosser, Herbert Prosser, Harold Prosser, Wesley Prosser, Howard Prosser and Lawrence Prosser and one half-sister Ethel Mientke.

A celebration of life gathering will be held at Klein Funeral Home, 16131 Champion Forest Dr., Spring, TX from 5:00 to 8:00 pm on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. Memorials can be made to Trinity Lutheran Church, Spring TX or Trinity Lutheran Church, 107 N State Street, Merrill, WI 54452.

A graveside service and entombment for Joanne will be held on Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at 11:00am at Merrill Memorial Park Cemetery in Merrill, WI. Rev. Scott Gustafson will officiate. A luncheon will immediately follow the graveside service at Trinity Lutheran Church.

Waid Funeral Home & Cremation Service of Merrill, along with Klein Funeral Home of Spring, TX, is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at www.waidfuneral.com.



John W. Erickson Sr., age 86, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, while at the Aspirus Wausau Hospital. He was born on May 8, 1936, to the late Andrew and Emma (Albertson) Erickson in the township of Westbrook, MN., and grew up in Merrill, WI. John proudly served in the United States Navy and was honorably discharged. He met the love of his life, Miss Barbara Potter, and the two exchanged their marriage vows on February 21, 1959, in Merrill, WI. They had been married for 63 years, a marriage union filled with love and devotion. Barbara survives.

John grew up on the family dairy farm, taking care of his parents, and took over the operation of the farm. John had also worked at Merrill Distributing, the Merrill Golf Course and Anson & Gilky Windows. John had a heart of gold, and his family was first and foremost in his life, he cherished his time spent with them and watching his grandkids and nephews at their sporting events, both locally and nationally. John was so proud of his grandchildren, and he instilled love and dedication in each of their lives. He put so much into his whole family; he was a very dedicated family man. John's family lovingly remembers him enjoying grilling and talking with family and friends around the bonfire, collecting baseball cards, fishing, bowling, and watching Lawrence Welk. He was an avid Packers, Brewers, and Bucks fan, and enjoyed bowling and taking walks at the Council Grounds. John looked forward to a nice day out on the golf course, working on his game. He was a member at the Lions Club and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Merrill. He will be missed by all who knew him.

John is survived by his loving wife of nearly 64 years: Barbara Erickson of Merrill, sons: John 'Jack' W. (Lorann) Erickson Jr. of Merrill and Brien (Amy) Erickson of Marion, WI, daughter: Lana (Todd) Woller of Pleasant Prairie, WI, granddaughters: Diana Woller, Melanie (Wesley) Cashwell, with their children: Quinn, Emilee and Spencer and Becky (Clint) Turquist, with their children: Aiden and Olivia, grandsons: Marshall Woller, Joshua (Aura), with their son: Maxwell, John, D.O. (Katie), with their children: Grace and Elizabeth, Aaron (Victoria), with their children: Milayna 'Mila' and Everly 'Eva' and Michael (special friend: Kayla) with his daughter: Libby, brother: Orea Erickson, brother-in-law: Charles Pergande, sister-in-law: Carol (John) Miller and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, daughter: Vicky Erickson, infant son: Todd Michael Erickson, brothers: Derald and Arlo Erickson, sisters: Lorna (Floyd) Gorman and Susie Pergande, brothers-in-law: Eddie Bennett and Glennwood Goodwin and sisters-in-law: Margie Erickson, Grace Wood and Corrine Bennett.

The memorial service for John will be held on Saturday, February 25, 2023, at 12:00 PM at Waid Funeral Home in Merrill. Pastor Kathy Tulman will officiate. Visitation will be held on Saturday, February 25, 2023, from 10:00 AM until the time of the service, also at the funeral home. Military honors will take place at the funeral home immediately following the service. A luncheon will then take place in the Lincoln Room at the funeral home. Burial of John's cremated remains will take place at Merrill Memorial Park Cemetery in Spring. The service will be live streamed for those unable to attend and can be found under his obituary on the funeral home website. It will then be posted as a recording for future viewing. The family wishes to thank the wonderful doctors and staff at the Aspirus Wausau Hospital for their care and compassion they showed to John and his family. Waid Funeral Home & Cremation Service of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at www.waidfuneral.com.



Lennart Gustav Olund, It is with deep sorrow and much love that we mourn the passing of Lennart Gustav Olund, age 87, of Merrill, WI on February 15, 2023.

Len was born to Helmer and Greta Olund in Akron, Iowa on August 3, 1935. His family then moved to Merrill, Iowa where he grew up. He excelled at sports and academics throughout his school years and also met his future wife, Helen Delutri. They graduated together in 1953.

Len served in the Air Force with training at Bryan Air Force Base and Lackland Air Force Base, both in Texas, and Graham Air Base in Florida. He returned to Merrill, Iowa and continued to work for the Air Guard. He married Helen in 1956 and they began their 66 years of dedication to each other.

They welcomed their first five children in Iowa, then moved to Sacramento, California in 1963. There they embraced the births of their next six children before moving to Merrill, Wisconsin in 1971. They saved the best for last and completed their family here with three more children. They've been blessed with 41 grandchildren and 38 great-grandchildren.

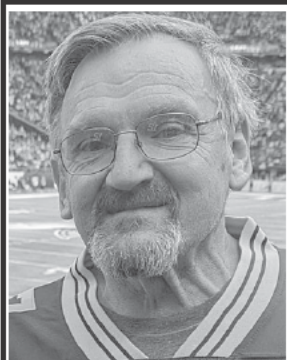
Len's family was the pride and joy of his life. He would say he may not have the most money but he was the richest man because of his family. They have been blessed by the strong values he instilled in them. Even in the most challenging of times, his sense of humor never failed. The legacy of his wisdom, wit, ingenuity, and work ethic will live on forever.

Len has been reunited with his parents and older brother, Trygve Olund. He will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Helen; his children Scott (Julie) Olund, Kirk (Ann) Olund, Kathy Young, Lisa (Kurt) Mehre, Karin (Mark) Leopold, Craig (Annie) Olund, Lance (Patti) Olund, Troy (Patrice) Olund, Todd (Karen) Olund, Beth Shull, Kyle (Vicki) Olund, Jill (Steve) Schultz, Kali (Darin) Erickson, and Shane (Amy) Olund; and 79 grand- and great-grandchildren; his younger sister Margaret Marineau; 1 nephew and 4 nieces.

A visitation will be held at Waid Funeral Home on Sunday, February 26, 2023 from 12:00pm to 4:00pm. A memorial service will be held on Sunday, February 26, 2023 at 4:00pm also at the funeral home.

As an expression of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital or Disabled American Vets (DVA) in Len's name, or the charity of your choice.

Waid Funeral Home & Cremation Service of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at www.waidfuneral.com.



David Jay Brown of Merrill, WI passed away unexpectedly on February 13, 2023. Dave was born on October 11, 1952 to John and Vesta Brown in Tomahawk, WI. He was a proud veteran of the United States Army. He worked at PCA Paper Mill in Tomahawk, WI for 30+ years, had his own upholstery business and loved everything cars and Packers. Dave loved spending time with his children, family and

friends, and was happy and willing to help anyone with any project, big or small. Anyone who ever met Dave, knew what a special, kind and amazing man he was. He will be greatly missed. Dave was preceded in death by his parents, John and Vesta Brown and his sister Vesta Brown. Dave is survived by his wife Cindy Brown, his daughter Shelly Green (Chris Wisley), his daughter Emily Maule (Jeremy), his son Mason Bronson (Ashley), 4 grandchildren, Gavin, Morgan, Elizabeth and Luke, his siblings Benjamin Brown, Norman Brown (Irene), Gerald Brown, Richard Brown (Lynn), Harry Brown (Lillie), Ruby Schoone (Lawrence), Marian Coey, Betty Swamer and many nieces and nephews. Two very special people in Dave's life were Bill Voight and Josh Wendt.

A Celebration of Life will be held at the Nokomis Town Hall, 2541 Lake Nokomis Rd, Tomahawk, WI at 12:00 pm on Saturday, February 25, 2023. Waid Funeral Home & Cremation Service of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at www.waidfuneral.com.

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Movie Reviews

BY CHRISTOPHER STAMM
GUEST MOVIE REVIEWER

Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania

(Now playing in theatres)

★★★★☆

This film is rated PG-13 for language and peril.

Well, the house of mouse and *Marvel* have cranked out yet another superhero movie, this one being the third installment of the *Ant-Man* franchise, and it is more of the same. *Ant-Man*, a/k/a Scott Lang, is skating along on his heroics from *Avengers*

Endgame and really not doing much else except writing a book and being mistaken for Spiderman. He spends his time trying to make up for lost time with his daughter, and that comes to a crashing halt when he, his daughter, Hope Van Dyne (The Wasp) Hank Pym, and Janet Van Dyne all get sucked into the Quantum realm and, well yadda yadda yadda the story is what it is. Bad guys, good guys, weird creatures, and a floating head. Yes, a floating head.

Look, *Marvel* movies

are fun—well, most of them are anyway, but they are all the same movie with different characters. So if you are looking for ground breaking stuff, move along. You are not going to find that here. The mouse has its formula, and people still lay down their cash to see it, and as such, the formula will continue until they have beaten that horse into the ground.

My issue with this one is that it's an obvious set-up for the next several films. But on the upside, I really like Paul Rudd and his performance of *Ant-Man*, so there is that.

Three out of five stars for *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* because the production value is high, the visuals—as always—are excellent, and because I like Paul Rudd. But honestly, there really isn't much there. It's just a recycled story we have all seen before with different villains and heroes thrown into the mix. It is what it is, and the mouse will get its cheese, because they know we will all still go see it.



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Lightly battered jumbo shrimp are also on the menu, and diners can substitute deep fried cheese curds in place of French fries or baked potato for an additional charge.
Tina L. Scott photo.

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FISH FRY from page 1

Historically, the church serves up it's fish fry menu each Friday during the Lenten season. This year (and last) the St. Francis fish fries started the Friday prior to Ash Wednesday, which signifies the beginning of Lent, and concludes the Friday evening prior to Good Friday. This year their last Lenten fish fry will be Friday, March 31, 2023. They will not hold a fish fry on Good Friday, so that the volunteers can focus on the spiritual significance of that day. (But never fear! There are dozens of area restaurants and taverns serving up delicious fish fries that will be serving that night.)

Each week the St. Francis volunteers serve between 600 and 850 meals during their fish fries, averaging 609 to 775 meals each week during the last 11 years. In 2020, COVID canceled the event mid-season and 2021 was also a slower year, but the church is hopeful their numbers will fully rebound for the 2023 Lenten fish fry season.

Dine-in serving runs from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. on Friday evenings in the St. Francis Xavier Catholic School cafeteria, 1708 E. 10th St. in Merrill. Takeouts and deliveries are available for an additional \$1.50 charge per meal, and the phones open on Fridays at 1:00 p.m. for volunteers to take calls for takeout and delivery orders: 715.536.2803.

A benefit pancake breakfast for **Cheryl Plautz** will be served on **Sunday, Feb. 26**
8:30 am to 11:00 am.
Adults \$10.00, Children under 12, \$5.00.
St. Francis Xavier Catholic School cafeteria.
1708 E. 10th St. in Merrill.

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By Knights of Columbus Council 1133 and St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

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- Must be mechanically inclined.
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Girls win three in a row to wrap up regular season

PATIENCE PYAN AND TINA L. SCOTT

The Merrill Girls were back to conference play on Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023, when they hosted Stevens Point. The Bluejays came out hot, going on a 14-3 run. They let SPASH get back in it a little towards the end of the first half when they got it within 6 at 19-13. But Merrill kept them at that distance for most of the first half. The Bluejays played their best first half game of the season and were up 27-22 at halftime.

The second half was super competitive. The scores went back and forth between the teams, with both teams alternately taking the lead but keeping the score tight. Stevens Point would go on a run and then Merrill would answer back and vice versa. Towards the end of the game, Alayna Pozorski made a very important three-pointer to put the Bluejays up by one. Stevens Point went down and missed their shot, rebounded by Sophie Wendorf as she

was fouled, and shooting bonus free throws, Sophie sunk both of those free throws to put Merrill up by three, and those three critical points made the difference and ultimately the win! The Bluejays were led by Prayla Pyan (13 pts, 6 reb, 2 stl), Sophie Wendorf (13 pts, 3 reb), and Alayna Pozorski (8 pts, 6 reb, 4 ast).

Box Score
SPASH 45 @ Merrill 48

The Bluejays played Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln Girls on Feb. 10, which was also Senior Night for Merrill.

The Red Raiders hung around with the Bluejays going back and forth in the first half and it was fairly close going into halftime. But in the second half, the Bluejays were able to pull away and keep the lead, resulting in a great win on Senior night, 56-46! Detailed stats not available at press time.

Box Score: Wisconsin Rapids
Lincoln 46 @ Merrill 56

The Merrill Bluejays Girls Basketball team traveled to DC Everest for their last regular season game on Feb. 16. The first half went back and forth between both teams with the largest point difference being four, up until the last quarter of the half. The Bluejays kicked it into gear after being down 15-19 and went on a 16-2 run to end the half going up 31-21.

The second half went back and forth a little bit, but the Bluejays maintained the lead the rest of the game and the closest the Evergreens got was within seven points. The Bluejays performed very well, having less turnovers, more steals, and a higher shooting percentage and ultimately won the game. Merrill was led by Mia Ott (24 pts, 4 reb, 2 ast), Alayna Pozorski (12 pts, 4 reb, 7 ast), and Prayla Pyan (11 pts, 8 reb, 1 ast).

Box Score
Merrill 59 @ DC Everest 44



Maddie Drew (#2) finishes a fast break layup in the game against SPASH.



Addy Schmeltzer (#33) shoots a layup after getting a pass inside in the game against DC Everest. Patience Pyan photos.

MERRILL WRESTLING

Nine wrestlers go to Sectionals; Ryder Depies moving on to State

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Nine Merrill Varsity Wrestlers—eight boys

and one girl—traveled to Shawano on Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023, to wrestle in the Sectional Tournament. While each had high hopes

of advancing to the State Tournament, only one will move on to represent Merrill at State. Merrill High School (MHS) Senior Ryder Depies qualified to advance to the WIAA State Individual Wrestling Tournament to be held at the Kohl Center, UW-Madison, from Thursday-Saturday, Feb. 23-25, 2023.

See **STATE** page 12



Merrill's Ryder Depies had a great day at the Division 1 Sectional in Shawano on Feb. 18, 2023. The Senior picked up victories via pins in all three of his matches to win 195 and advance to State. Greg Bates/The Press Times photo.

Pet of the Week



How precious is this beauty! **Annabell** is a sweet 5 year old girl who is looking for a home and comfy couch to call her own. She is great with people and loves to get attention. We are told she does well with other dogs and is good with kids, but she needs a home that is cat-free. **Annabell** is very much a hound girl so she needs someone who doesn't mind some hound talking when she gets excited. She also knows how to sit and will do just about anything for a treat. Stop in and meet sweet **Annabell** soon!

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2023 Merrill High School Winter Sports Schedules

Boys Basketball (Varsity, JV, and JV2)

Thurs. Feb. 23	Marshfield (JV & JV2)	Away	5:45 pm
Thurs. Feb. 23	Marshfield (Varsity)	Away	7:15 pm
Tues. Feb. 28	Antigo (Varsity)	Home	7:00 pm

Please see www.wiaawi.org for playoff bracket & schedules.

Girls Basketball (Varsity & JV)

Fri. Feb. 24	Playoff Game (Varsity)	Home	7:00 pm
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Please see www.wiaawi.org for playoff bracket & schedules.

Boys Hockey (Varsity and JV)

Please see www.wiaawi.org for playoff bracket schedules.

Boys Wrestling (Varsity and JV)

Thurs. Feb. 23	State Championship (Varsity)	Away	T.B.D.
Fri. Feb. 24	State Championship (Varsity)	Away	T.B.D.
Sat. Feb. 25	State Championship (Varsity)	Away	T.B.D.

The Sports Calendar of events is sponsored by:



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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

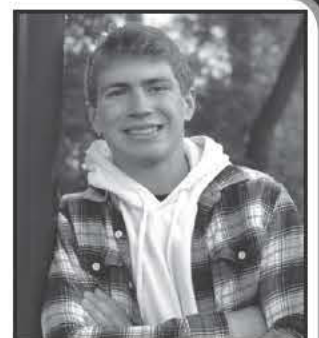
Merrill High School Senior, **Brian Ball**, has been named Athlete of the Week. Brian has been a member of the Merrill Varsity Wrestling Team since he was a Freshman, was named All Conference this year, and also went to Sectionals representing the Bluejays. He started wrestling when he was in Pre-K and has been wrestling ever since. Brian was also the quarterback for the Merrill Varsity Football Team this past season. He made Varsity as a Sophomore and was running back and outside linebacker last year. He has been playing football since elementary school. Brian also runs Track and Field, which he started in middle school. He made Varsity as a Sophomore and has been on the Merrill Varsity Track and Field Team ever since.

At school, Brian is a member of Raise Your Voice, the Link Crew, National Honor Society, LEAD, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He belongs to St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, is a member of the St. Francis Youth Group, and also volunteers to help with the St. Francis fish fries.

Brian works part-time for MAPS in the Maintenance Department. An avid athlete, Brian enjoys playing sports even in his free time and also likes to golf, go fishing with friends, and hang out with family.

The son of Tom and Mary Ball of Merrill, Brian has a 3.5 GPA, and after graduation, "will study Business Administration at UW-River Falls, and then I'll be playing football there, too," Brian said.

Congratulations from these sponsors:



Brian Ball

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Congressman Tiffany's office to hold mobile office hours in Merrill

Congressman Tom Tiffany, serving the seventh district of Wisconsin, announced a member of his staff will hold mobile office hours in Merrill on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023. A member of Tiffany's staff will be available to help and assist residents who might be having trouble with a federal agency or need assistance with federal matters such as the Internal Revenue Service, Veterans Affairs, Social Security, Medicare, passports, etc. No appointment is necessary.

On Monday, Feb. 28, staff will be available from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. in the T.B. Scott Free Library Community Room, 106 First St., Merrill.

Zones 2, 3, and 4 snowmobile trails close

Due to deteriorating trail conditions, the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department announced all Lincoln County's funded snowmobile trails and winter ATV trails (County Administered Trails) in Zones 2, 3 and 4 closed at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2023.

Trails may reopen at a later date should conditions improve. Trails in Zone 1 that are already open currently remain open at this time.

Zone 1 Trails remaining closed are:

- Trail 86 from Intersection #25 to the Taylor County Line.
 - Corridor 21 from Hwy. M north of Homestead Rd. to the Taylor County Line.
- All trails are closed to winter ATV use when the temperature is above 28 degrees F. Trails that are open may be rough and icy in some areas. Be aware of Trail Closed signs, stay on marked trails only, and respect private land.

Local snowmobile clubs remind riders to stay off lakes and rivers unless an officially open trail has been clearly marked by a club. If a water body is not marked, it is considered unsafe.

For up to date Lincoln County trail conditions, log on to: www.co.lincoln.wi.us or call the Trail Hotline at 715.539.1033.



St. John Lutheran School held an induction ceremony for three new students who were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society on Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023. The three new students—Joanna Szeto, Siobhan Schuetze, and Lola Klug— were selected based on the five pillars of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. The students serve as active role models, planning positive activities for students and raising funds for charity. The organization recently donated more than \$440 to the Autism Speaks organization. Shown from L to R: Addelyn Ineichen (Vice-President), Joanna Szeto, Siobhan Schuetze, Lola Klug, and Evan Voigt (President). **Frances Szeto photo.**

STATE from page 11

The Sectional Tournament was a tough battleground for all the wrestlers.

The top two competitors in the Boys Tournament qualify for State, and only the top girl qualifies for State from a Sectional from the Girls Tournament, Merrill Varsity Wrestling Head Coach Brian Suchocki said.

"Ryder finished the day in dominant fashion with his third pin of the day," he said. "Ryder has put so much work in, that he really deserves all his success."

"Ryder made it to State last year, and now he gets another crack at it," Suchocki said. "Ryder has been solid all year in his approach to practice and competition, and that will not change this week."

"Ryder will wrestle Nelson Lueke of Waukesha West for his first match," he said. "Ryder has some unfinished business. He is looking forward to this challenge. I'm confident in what Ryder will bring to the State Tournament."

"No matter what happens," Suchocki said. "I'm proud to be his coach. He is everything you want from a coaching standpoint. He is a good leader, hard worker, and has great character."

Only one other Merrill wrestler made it past the first round at Sectionals, he said. That was Noah Klug.

"I was very impressed with Noah throughout the competition," Suchocki said. "During the week leading up to Sectionals, we talked about showing courage even after some adversity. Noah is only a Freshman, but he didn't wrestle like that. In the first round, he came up big with a pin and then had two heartbreaking losses, but it wasn't because of lack of effort. I can't explain how much he improved in the final weeks of the season. Moving forward he will be a force."

"Jon Hart, Brett Suchocki, Brady Norton, Callum Wheeler, Brian Ball, and Austin Depies came up short of making it to State," he said. "All of them had an uphill battle going into the Sectional."

"Going in, we knew Brian would have a tough match-up," Suchocki said. "Brian had to take on the number two seeded wrestler in the whole state. Brian had a great week of practice, but it wasn't enough."

"I'm proud of his approach and leadership throughout the season," he said. "Brian accomplished many things this season and will have many more big accomplishments going forward. He will be missed as a Senior."

"All our underclassmen wrestlers gained some very valuable experience at Sectionals," Suchocki said. "They will all be back and hungry to improve off of this season. These are a great bunch of wrestlers with a bright future."

"Allison Hunter competed in the first ever Girls Sectional," he said. "Last year was the first year for the Girls State Tournament, and now this year girls had to qualify for State. The Girls State Tournament is now held alongside the Boys' at the KOHL center Feb. 23-25."

"Allison did a great job in her first match, getting the pin, but lost in the final," Suchocki said. "Going in, Allison knew she would have to wrestle her best, and she competed well, but it wasn't enough. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to get a wildcard spot either. Allison came up one spot short of being picked to advance to the State Tournament. She is a Junior that will get another chance to prove herself again next season."

"Overall, I'm proud of all our wrestlers and look forward to the State Tournament," he said.

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