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Everett Baumann (4 years old) at Rondele Ranch Saturday for the Red White and Boom party is a picture of patriotism. His parents are Jordan and Emily (Schmidt) Baumann, who are originally from Merrill. Everett's grandparents live in Gleason and Merrill. Submitted photo.

Youth counselor dies after being attacked at Lincoln Hills School

Second counselor injured, two youth charged with Felony Murder

TINA L. SCOTT
 EDITOR

Two youth counselors were attacked at Lincoln Hills School in Irma Monday night, June 24, 2024, and one counselor has now died from injuries sustained in the attack. Corey Proulx, age 49, was pronounced deceased at 3:39 p.m. on Tuesday, June 25. He was declared brain dead and the family donated his organs to extend the gift of life to others. "There were brain injuries that were incompatible with life sustained," said Lincoln County Coroner Valerie Caylor. An autopsy will be completed after organ donation, she said.

According to the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), the Lincoln County 911 Dispatch Center received a call from Lincoln Hills School staff at approximately 7:47 p.m. indicating a student had assaulted two staff members and one of the staff members



Flags throughout Wisconsin flew at half mast on June 27, 2024, in memory of Corey Proulx, the youth counselor killed in the attack at Lincoln Hills School in Irma. Tina L. Scott photo.

had collapsed. On-site, the emergency response team went into action and performed CPR on Proulx until law enforcement and

medical first responders arrived, a source said. He was then airlifted to Aspirus Wausau Hospital due to critical injuries. He never

regained consciousness. A 25-year-old unidentified female staff member was also transported to Aspirus Merrill Hospital where she was treated and released and is expected to make a full recovery, the LCSO said.

A June 25 press release from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) said, "One staff member was assaulted in the residence hall when the youth returned from outdoor recreation. The youth shortly thereafter encountered and assaulted a second staff member, causing the staff member to hit their head on the concrete."

It also confirmed: "The 16-year-old youth who was involved did not have any injuries requiring medical treatment."

"Lincoln Hills School is currently operating normally though some youth were moved to

See **LINCOLN HILLS** page 5

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Dunphy sues Lincoln County to try to stop sale of Pine Crest Nursing Home

TINA L. SCOTT
 EDITOR

On May 16, 2024, Donald Dunphy, District 7 Lincoln County Supervisor (elected in April of this year), filed a lawsuit against Lincoln County seeking an injunction to halt the sale of Pine Crest Nursing Home that was at that time set to close the end of June. Earlier this month, on June 18, the Lincoln County Board approved a resolution moving the Pine Crest sale closing date from June 30 to Sept. 30 of this year for logistical reasons. Dunphy said his lawsuit against the County is not related to Lincoln County's decision to extend the closing date for the sale of Pine Crest.

In the Complaint filed May 16, Dunphy asked

the Court for a judgment "forbidding Lincoln County and any of its officers from signing a deed transferring the subject properties to the buyer," the return of the earnest money to the buyer, and "an order declaring the Asset Purchase Agreement null and void."

"I was opposed to the decision to sell Pine Crest from the beginning," Dunphy said in a recent interview. "When I ran for [Lincoln] County Board, I told everyone I talked to that I would do my best to reverse that decision. The lawsuit is my vehicle to keep Pine Crest from being sold. My goal is to have the court declare the sales contract null and void."

The basis for Dunphy's lawsuit are his allegations that Lincoln County had failed to follow the best

practices set forth in a previously created Lincoln County resolution detailing the best practices to be followed for selling high value property, and that by failing to do so, this resulted in the County signing an agreement to sell Pine Crest Nursing Home and the Health and Social Services building for less than they are worth. He also alleged the Lincoln County Code of Ordinances "vests jurisdiction" of the subject properties in the Lincoln County Board's Forestry Committee.

Lincoln County Corporation Counsel Kerry Johnson responded to the allegations in the Complaint with a written Answer filed with the court on June 13. In that response, she said the previously passed resolution

provided "suggestions and recommendations for the sale of certain high value property," however, "the County Board was not required to follow such suggestions or recommendations." Johnson's Answer denied the allegation that the Board's Forestry Committee has jurisdiction over the sale.

Dunphy further alleged that "a substantial consideration in the County's decision to sell Pine Crest was the operating deficit experienced by the nursing home in the years prior to 2023." And "that an increase to the Medicaid reimbursement rate paid to public nursing homes eliminated Pine

See **DUNPHY** page 3

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Art's Popcorn Wagon returns to downtown

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Art's Popcorn Wagon has returned to downtown Merrill and will move around Merrill for various special events, selling fresh popcorn along with candy apples and rope licorice, the same treats Art's Popcorn Wagon sold years and years ago. Back then this particular popcorn wagon was primarily located at the corner of East First and Mill Streets near what is now Ana Blair's Boutique. Now it's back in action thanks to the Lokemoen brothers (Pete, Dick, and Jim), Michael "Gus" Caylor, Mike Janssen, and Alix Clark.

The history of Art's Popcorn Wagons

According to local Lokemoen historian, Richard "Dick" Lokemoen, his uncle Art Lokemoen became the Merrill popcorn man some 80 years



Art's Popcorn Wagon many years ago was located on the corner of East First and Mill Streets. Photo courtesy of Dick Lokemoen.

ago. "In the early 1940's, Art Lokemoen added a popcorn machine to his business called Grand Avenue Billiards located at 314 Grand Avenue on Merrill's West Side," Dick said. "A few years later he purchased a turn of the century C. Cretors horse drawn popcorn wagon to

operate on South Mill Street north of the Citizens Bank." "With the success he had operating this 'wagon,' he later decided to close the pool hall and expand the popcorn concession business by having his cabinet maker cousin, Harry K. Johnson, and Art's neighbor, tinsmith John Waldburger, construct a more portable popcorn wagon for use at City Band concerts and the swimming beach at Stange's Park and also baseball and football games at Athletic Park. Later he located it at the corner of First and Mill Streets where it is long remembered being."

"Desiring a larger portable unit, Art added a popcorn truck in about 1951 which he used extensively for many years until it was sold in 1963. The old C. Cretors wagon was sold in 1958 to a collector of horse drawn wagons from Chicago," Dick said.

After Art opened another new business, Art's Sport

Shop, in 1959, "he retained the popcorn truck but sold the home built wagon to Frank Zastrow whose son, Dale, operated it for a period before Dale's parents Esther and Frank Zastrow; Esther's sister, Margaret Kopanski, and her husband, Alex Kopanski, continued the operation for many years," he said.

"My brothers and I purchased the wagon in the later 1980's from Marvin and Darlene Hinz in memory of our Uncle Art," Dick said. "For most of last 30+ years it resided at our family cottage at Lake Pesobic."

Restoration and a return to service

Fast forward some 30 years or so, and Michael "Gus" Caylor started making inquiries. He remembers Art's old popcorn wagon being stored on the Lokemoen property at Lake Pesobic "and this thing sat out there for years, just at the end of the road,"



Alix Clark and Mike Janssen pose by Art's Popcorn Stand, newly refurbished thanks to all their hard work. Tina L. Scott photo.

Gus said. "And, you know, here comes 4th of July, they'd fire it up and make some popcorn and then fill it in for the neighborhood kids." So it was occasionally used but not very regularly. It got put into storage at some point and Gus would always tell the Lokemoen brothers that if they ever wanted to get rid of it, he would love to get it and see if he could put it back in service. "I often told Jim that I would take that off his hands some day because as a child we all were enchanted by the 'popcorn stand,'" Gus said. "In the fall of 2023 he took me up on my offer." One day just out of the blue Gus got a call that if he still wanted it, he could come and get it.

"The time had come for the wagon to have new caretakers," Dick said, "and upon inquiry by Michael 'Gus' Caylor, the wagon was donated by my two brothers, Peter and Jim Lokemoen and myself to use once again for charitable functions in our city."

"The wagon was in dire need of restoration," Dick said.

"I dropped it off at Mike Janssen's [Janssen Heating & Cooling in Merrill]," Gus said, He asked Mike to mount two propane tanks on the front of the cart, because the popcorn maker runs on propane. He didn't think it would take very long.

But "He [Mike] never got back to me, never got back to me. So I finally went over there," Gus said, "And Mike is the guy who likes to restore things ... so he's like, you know what? I really can't let this go. I really want to do more for it."

"After looking it over, we decided to do an overhaul on the machine," Mike said. "We started with a list of things to do and checked them off as we went."

Gus said it needed new tires and the trailer it was mounted on was rough and the receiver where it hooked onto the trailer hitch "was shot."

"We couldn't tow it," he said. Gus figured they would just move it to one place for the summer and park it and use it there. "But Mike said, 'I got some ideas,' Gus said. "And he had a brand new trailer sitting there that he had picked up and he's like, ah, that'll work just fine."

Mike's granddaughter, Alix Clark, who also works at the shop, got involved in the project and together they mounted the popcorn stand on the new trailer, cleaned everything top to bottom, put in a new floor, and repainted the entire thing, and, of course, mounted the propane tanks.

"It was not in the best shape," Alix said. "You could tell it was a little run down."

"Then once we did one thing, we kind of just needed to do the other thing, because otherwise it didn't look finished to us," she said.

Alix really took pride in the project, Gus said.

"The other guys at the shop, my dad - Jimmy Clark, and then also his other daughter's fiance, Brandon Graap, helped a little bit too with stuff," Alix said.

"This very extensive work was carried out with all labor and materials donated by Mike Janssen of Janssen Heating & Cooling of Merrill," Dick said. "Thank you very much, Mike!"

Gus was also very appreciative of their work. "It's a part of Merrill history that's being returned," Gus said. "If you saw this thing sit at the end of Lake Pesobic Road all those years, you never would have figured this would end up back alive like it is, and it's beautiful."

"We're glad to do it," Mike

See **POPCORN**

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Left: Valerie Caylor prepares to take bags of freshly-popped popcorn over to Kindhearted Home Care in Merrill as a treat. Gus just finished making the popcorn and bagging it. The popcorn wagon first started out behind the Trophy Bar (Gus's business) while he got it up and running.

Tina L. Scott photo.

Right: A woman and child cross the street in front of Art's turn of the century C. Cretors horse drawn popcorn wagon.

Photo courtesy of Dick Lokemoen.



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Gleason Heritage Days



Left: While the rain put a damper on some of the planned activities for Gleason Heritage Days, it was a great day to come together as a community for a shared meal inside the Lions Club in Gleason. **Right:** One young man peruses all the sweets available for purchase at the bake sale at Gleason Heritage Days. **Joseph Frederick photos.**



DUNPHY from page 1

Crest's operating expense deficits beginning in the first quarter of 2023." In Johnson's Answer, she admitted the operating deficit was a factor in the decision to sell Pine Crest but said the County Board considered numerous other factors in reaching their decision, as well. She denied the allegation that the increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate eliminated Pine Crest's operating expense deficits beginning in first quarter 2023 and that the change in circumstances as a result of the Medicaid reimbursement rate were ignored "because it was focused on selling Pine Crest to the exclusion of all other considerations," as Dunphy had alleged in his Complaint.

Dunphy made various other allegations in his Complaint which the County denied in their Answer, as well.

In their June 13 Answer, the County also made a motion to dismiss Dunphy's Complaint on several grounds, including that he had failed to comply with statutory Notice of Claim requirements, had brought a Certiorari Complaint which is not permissible for review of a resolution passed by a County Board of Supervisors, that the Complaint is barred by the statute of limitations, and that the Complaint was filed outside the time period specified for Certiorari actions, among other reasons.

A hearing date has not

yet been set on the motion for dismissal.

On June 4, Dunphy also filed an official Notice of Motion and Motion for Temporary Injunction barring the sale of Pine Crest Nursing Home.

Due to a conflict of interest in having a Lincoln County Judge handle this matter, though it is required to be filed in Lincoln County, in May Dunphy also filed a Notice of Motion to have the matter assigned to an out-of-county judge, and Judge LaMont K. Jacobson of Marathon County was assigned the case. Johnson subsequently filed a request for substitution of the judge to be Scott M. Corbett but that Application and Order for Specific Judicial Assignment was declined.

Dunphy's proposed Order for Temporary Injunction was also declined at the June 25 hearing last week. According to Dunphy, it was declined "because it called for Judge Jacobson's signature."

"I am waiting for a new Judge to be assigned," he said.

No additional hearings on the matter are currently scheduled on the court calendar.

Dunphy's plan - if his lawsuit succeeds

Dunphy alleges in his filed Complaint "that an increase to the Medicaid reimbursement rate paid to public nursing homes eliminated Pine Crest's operating expense deficits beginning in the first quarter of 2023," and he recent alleged in an interview that "Pine Crest's circumstances have changed for the better.

Pine Crest ended 2023 in the black and revenues continue to exceed operational expenses this year. These two factors give us some breathing room to consider our options."

However, Dunphy also said, "If I succeed in stopping the sale, I want a referendum to be held asking the voters if they are willing to increase property taxes by \$2 million per year for 10 years to keep Pine Crest."

In a somewhat contradictory statement, he said: "The increased revenue will ease the property tax burden." However, a referendum would also be put on residents' property tax bills, so it would increase the amount residents pay for that 10-year period.

He also then suggests that he would ask the community to further fund the nursing home's maintenance expenses.

"The biggest expense involved in keeping Pine Crest is the deferred maintenance needs of about \$12 million," Dunphy said. "These can and should be addressed systematically at a rate of \$1 million per year over the next 10-15 years. Some of the required maintenance is more urgent than the rest. We should decide which need has the most urgency and launch a community-wide fund drive do deal with it like we did when the library addition was built. This measure may pay for some urgently needed maintenance but, if not, whatever donations come in will help."

"We can increase Pine Crest revenues even more if we implement an idea

the Ad Hoc Committee on Pine Crest identified - converting one of Pine Crest's existing wings to a dementia ward. There is a demand for nursing home beds of this type and the conversion would require little more than installing a security door," Dunphy said. However, months ago North Central Health Care administrators and proposed new owners, Grant and Andrea Thayer, have said this plan is already in the works.

"It's the democratic thing to do," Dunphy said of holding a referendum.

"If the referendum fails, we can put our nursing home up for sale and you will hear no complaints from me," he said.

Of course, such a referendum would take time to orchestrate and if the referendum fails, there is no guarantee the current buyer would still be interested in purchasing Pine Crest in light of such delays and expenses already incurred in moving forward toward a Sept. 30, 2024, closing date, and there is no guarantee a broker would be able to find a new buyer that meets the County's requirements at such time as that might occur.

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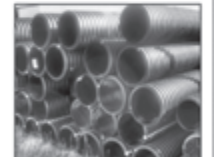
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OBITUARIES



Brent Bennish Schweigert, age 33, of Gleason, passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at his home. He was born on January 7, 1991 in Wausau, WI and was the son to Guy Schweigert and Barbara (Bennish) Albright. Brent attended and graduated from Merrill High School.

Brent was a fun-loving, caring and giving man, that also had a goofy side. He had a pure heart and a kind soul. Brent was a very intelligent person that would enjoy learning and trying new things. He was a deep thinker and liked to experiment, especially if it meant blowing things up! Brent's passing leaves a lot of broken hearts, but memories of him and his laughter will live on.

Brent leaves behind his mother: Barbara (Greg) Albright, father: Guy (Sheryl) Schweigert, sons: Axel and Anton Schweigert, daughter: Margaret Schweigert, sister: Alexis Schweigert (Jay), step-grandparents: Gary (Vicky) Albright, half-sister: Rhea (Myron) Oestreich, half-brothers: Kris (Sarah) Bjarnason and Joel (Jody) Schweigert. He is further survived by many cousins, aunts and uncles, as well as his fur-baby, his cat, Paul. He was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents: Margaret (Anton) Bennish and paternal grandparents: Harry (Doris) Schweigert.

A Celebration of Life for Brent will be held at a later date. 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.

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

Echoes

Dear Reader,

What is the meaning of life? I don't think the question can be answered in any universal sense. But each of us is faced with a more personal question: What is the meaning of my life?

Recently I spent some time pondering this question, and came up with some conclusions that try to answer it, at least for myself. My answer came to me in verse. If you are with me this far – the big question of meaning in life, whether short or long, whether sweet or sour – then I hope you will enjoy this poem.



PATRICK J. WOOD
Publisher

- Ephemeral Echoes -

In fleeting moments, our lives unfold,
A whisper of time, so brief, so bold.
We gather treasures, build empires high,
Yet dust and shadows claim them, by...and by.

What worth are riches, amassed with pride,
When we depart, we leave them slide.
The houses of stone, the gold we glean,
Fade into whispers, a forgotten dream.

For in this world, our stay is brief,
A tale of joy, of pain, of grief.
We grasp at moments, clutch to hold,
Yet time slips by, relentless, cold.

We journey onward, beyond the veil,
Where earthly gains cannot prevail.
No wealth or power can cross that gate,
Only warmth and kindness we create.

So ponder not on what we own,
But on the seeds of care we've sown.
For in the end, what truly remains,
Are the hearts we've touched, the love that reigns.

Let go of burdens, the worldly chase,
Embrace the light, the higher grace.
For in the end, we all must see,
There's something beyond you and me.

And as we leave, with nothing in hand,
We find our place in a promised land.
So live with purpose, love with might,
For what we leave is pure and bright.

USDA, DNR: Wolves depredate beef calf, injure adult cow in Lincoln County

Wolves recently depredated (i.e., killed) a beef calf and injured an adult cow on a farm located in the Town of Pine River in Lincoln County, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services verified the depredation and injury on Saturday, June 8, 2024.

DNR said non-lethal abatement options are being discussed with the livestock producer.

DNR partners with USDA Wildlife Services to investigate reported conflicts with wolves.

Interactive maps, past reports, and damage payment information are available on the DNR's website at tinyurl.com/f89rsbw5.

Livestock producers who suspect a wolf or bear has depredated or is harassing livestock can contact USDA Wildlife Services at 1.800.228.1368 (northern Wisconsin) or 1.800.433.0663 (southern Wisconsin).

Geiss Meat Service receives grant from DATCP

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) announced in June that 38 meat processors will receive grants through the 2024 Meat Processor Infrastructure Grant Program. Of the 70 applications received, requesting a total of \$3 million for projects, Geiss Meat Service in Merrill was one of the 38 to receive funding. The grants awarded this year totaled \$1.8 million, and each recipient's request could not exceed \$50,000.

"Grant recipients were selected through a competitive review process and are required to provide a match of 100 percent of the grant amount," a DATCP release said.

Andy Geiss, owner of Geiss Meat Service, said they've now received grants from the program two years in a row. "In 2023 the award was for \$150,000 and in 2024 the award was \$50,000," he said. "In each year this was the maximum award amount."

"Geiss Meat Service is using the grant awards to upgrade our electrical system, opened a new retail store, and added several additional coolers and freezers," Andy said. "In addition, we will be

purchasing a meat grinder-mixer combination unit to increase our capacity and efficiency of processing ground meat, a metal detector to detect both ferrous and nonferrous metals to protect our customers, and adding a meat aging cooler to meet the demands of our customers for aged meats and specialty items such as pepperoni, salamis, etc."

"With these grants, Geiss Meat Service added five additional employees, increased our retail sales by over 35%, and increased overall production by approximately 25%," he said. "We have been honored to have received these grants back-to-back years. The grants have allowed us to grow, expand, and increase our efficiency in the meat industry."

The goal of the program, in its third year, is "to grow Wisconsin's meat industry and improve the long-term viability of the state's livestock industry," a press release from the DATCP said.

The Meat Processor Infrastructure Grant Program is available through the 2023-25 biennial state budget. As part of the biennial budget, an additional \$200,000 in grants will be available in 2025, a release from the DATCP said.


BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

JUNE 4, 2024: Boy, Owen Jerome, born to Dani Breaman and Dave Breaman of Merrill.

JUNE 11, 2024: Girl, Josie Joan, born to Megan Spoon and Michael Spoon of Ringle.

JUNE 15, 2024: Boy, Elijah Daniel, born to Skylin Harris and Joshua Harris of Merrill.

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POPCORN from page 2

said. "It's part of Merrill's history and needed to be preserved."

Get your popcorn here!

Art's Popcorn Wagon will have a semi-permanent spot this summer in the empty lot next to Ana Blair's Boutique downtown on East First Street where the bakery used to be. That lot is now owned by East Hill Farms and is used to sell their Christmas trees and wreaths in November and December, but they welcomed Gus using the

lot for the popcorn wagon during the summer months. The beauty of it is, it's now located just a very short distance from where it was once a fixture all those years ago. "Hopefully we will be open 3-4 days a week," Gus said. "Then on Thursdays for sure the Masons are going to take it up to the park [Normal Park] ... for Gazebo Nights. ... Now we have a mobile popcorn wagon to bring back memories and help some non-profits, too."

"Please think of Art and the good times of years past when enjoying 'Fresh, Hot Seasoned Popcorn' when you visit 'Art's Wagon!'" Dick said.

Movie Reviews

BY CHRISTOPHER STAMM
GUEST MOVIE
REVIEWER

Hector and the Search for Happiness

(Now showing in theatres)

★★★★☆

This film is rated R - not sure why

Hi, everyone - long time no see. I know its been a while, but life is life and it, as we all know, can get hectic. But rest assured, I am still out there in that

dark theatre watching the films and, more often than not, shaking my head in disbelief that some of these movies get made.

There have been some bright spots in the cinemas this year, but sadly they are now the exception rather than the rule. Some notables are *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, which was spectacular, *Godzilla Minus One*, and of course, *Dune part 2*, but those were the stand outs; another decent one would be *The Fall Guy*

So while Disney does its best to explain how they hate their audience and the major studios prowl



through their basements looking for anything to remake or reboot (plenty of those on the horizon) since they are now officially devoid of any new ideas, I have started doing deep searches for gems that got

missed. And success! I found one for you. *Hector and the Search for Happiness*, released in 2014, vanished a few days later, and I am here to tell you, this film got a raw deal. Simon Pegg plays

Hector, a decent and caring psychiatrist who concludes that he is not helping his patients because he does not understand what happiness is exactly. Much to the

See **MOVIE** page 16

LINCOLN HILLS from page 1

a different residence hall due to the ongoing investigation," the release said. That initial release also said, "No other youth were involved in this isolated incident." However, a second youth has now been identified and charged in relation to the attack.

The attack

The Criminal Complaint against suspect Javarius Hurd gives a more accurate and complete description of what happened: "Victim 1 [female] was standing inside the Krueger Living facility near the doorway in the lower day room that lead (sic) to the outside courtyard. Hurd obtained a cup of a liquid substance, believed to be soap, from another youth and threw it at Victim 1's upper body/face area. Hurd then physically attacked and assaulted Victim 1 unprovoked by repeatedly punching Victim 1 in Victim 1's upper body/face area. Hurd then fled outside into the courtyard where other youth were present. Victim 2 followed Hurd outside to detain him."

Hurd then ran toward the basketball hoop in the fenced courtyard and Proulx approached him. "Hurd struck Victim 2 [Proulx] multiple times unprovoked in Victim 2's upper body/face area. Hurd maintained a fighting stance and punched Victim in the face two times," the Complaint read. It then refers to video of the incident from Lincoln Hills School surveillance. "The video appears to show that Hurd punched Victim 2 using full force by extending his arm outward, and routing his body to allow maximum force. After Hurd punched Victim 2 using full force the second time, Victim 2 became incapacitated and went limp." He fell to the ground and "struck his head on the pavement."

"Hurd proceeded to climb up the basketball hoop and sit on the hoop overseeing the courtyard," the Complaint said.

The Complaint further detailed that the attack was planned. "Hurd explained that he had built up aggression toward Victim 1 [female]." He said his built

up aggression stemmed from his belief that she was abusing her power and "treating him unfairly." He said he had planned to attack her and had asked another youth "to obtain the cup of soap from staff for him to throw" at her.

In the Criminal Complaint filed against Rian Nyblom, Nyblom confirmed he had obtained the cup of conditioner that Hurd ultimately threw in Victim 1's face. "Nyblom told investigators that he knew why JH wanted the conditioner," the Complaint said. "Early in the day, Nyblom and JH came up with a plan to physically attack Victim 1. For unknown reasons, the two of them abandoned the first plan and came up with another plan, which was the plan involving the conditioner. Nyblom stated he knew JH was going to 'splash' Victim 1 with the conditioner and then start swinging on her without warning."

Two in custody

Two suspects have now been taken into custody, both charged with Felony Murder, among other charges.

On June 26, Javarius Hurd, age 16, was charged with Felony Murder - Battery, Special Circumstances; Second Degree Reckless Homicide; and two counts of Battery by Prisoners. He is being charged as an adult and held at the Lincoln County Jail on a \$100,000 cash bond.

On June 27, Rian Nyblom, age 17, was arrested and charged with Felony Murder - Battery, Special Circumstances; and two counts of Battery by Prisoners in connection with the attack and death. Nyblom was incarcerated in the same unit as Hurd at the time of the assault. Nyblom is being held at the Lincoln County Jail on a \$20,000 cash bond.

Tremendous loss

The death of Proulx has left Lincoln Hills Staff and the Merrill community reeling.

Proulx had returned to serve as a youth counselor at Lincoln Hills School last spring after briefly leaving the school two years prior, according to a June 26 release from the DOC.

"It is with tremendous sadness and regret that I announce the loss of a dedicated professional,

colleague, and friend in the line of duty," said Jared Hoy, DOC secretary. "A career in corrections, with its dual mission to protect the public and guide individuals toward rehabilitation, can be demanding and requires so many sacrifices for our staff and our families, and Corey made the ultimate sacrifice. Our DOC family is mourning Corey's loss, and we are keeping all of his family members and friends in our thoughts."

Proulx's fiancée and daughter shared with Secretary Hoy that they would like everyone to know that Corey was an amazing partner, father, son and human being. At this time, the family does not wish to comment further and asks for privacy as they grieve.

In a message to staff at Lincoln Hills School, Superintendent Klint Trevino wrote the following: "Corey was a dedicated and compassionate member of our team, always striving to make a positive impact on the lives of the young individuals we serve. His commitment to our mission was unwavering, and he will be deeply missed by all of us."

Secretary Hoy traveled to Lincoln Hills School on Wednesday to support staff and deployed Peer Supporters from across the agency "to help staff process this tragic event."

Gov. Tony Evers ordered the flags of the United States and the state of Wisconsin to be flown at half-staff immediately on June 26 at the time of his Executive Order through sunset on June 27, in honor of Proulx. "Our hearts break for Corey, his family and loved ones, his colleagues at the department, and all those who knew and loved him. By all accounts, Corey was a dedicated public servant who led with kindness and compassion in his commitment toward helping and supporting the youth he worked with," said Evers. "Wisconsinites today are honoring Corey and his service as we mourn his tragic passing and keep Corey's family and loved ones, colleagues, and all those who knew and served alongside him in our hearts and our prayers."

Ongoing investigation

The June 25 DOC release

indicated the "incident" was referred to the LCSO. The LCSO confirms this is now a joint investigation by their agency and the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation, Wisconsin State Patrol, and the Lincoln County District Attorney's Office, and the investigation is still ongoing.

Local representatives call for accountability

Congressman Tom Tiffany (WI-07) called out Gov. Evers in a statement released after receiving the news. He expressed condolences to Proulx's family and friends but said, "The Evers administration has had five years to come up with a plan for Lincoln Hills."

"... Such an incident should have never occurred. Over six years ago, I warned the federal judge who sided with the ACLU that his decision would jeopardize the safety and security of staff at this facility. Despite this warning, the Evers administration failed to take necessary actions to protect the staff. As then-candidate Evers asked Governor Scott Walker in 2018, 'How many staff have been harassed and abused [at Lincoln Hills]? How many lives have been ruined?' I ask Governor Evers the same question today."

"The staff, who dedicate their time to making a positive impact on our youth, deserve a safe working environment. Their families also deserve to know their loved ones will return home safely."


He called for "responsible leaders who prioritize staff safety, not lenient policies that empower dangerous delinquents."

Rep. Calvin Callahan (WI 35th District Assembly R-Tomahawk) also expressed his sympathy and outrage, calling Proulx's death "the murder of a correctional officer at Lincoln Hills."

"I am saddened and angered to hear of the passing of Corey Proulx, a dedicated and loving person," Callahan said. "I am outraged by this current administration's inability to protect its employees. Now, an innocent man has been killed on their watch. This should NEVER have happened, and I will do

everything in my power as your state representative to make sure those who are responsible are held accountable. This will not stand; the staff at Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake and Corey's friends and family have my word."

Pet of the Week



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Visit all the adoptable animals at Lincoln County Humane Society, 310 N. Memorial Dr., in Merrill. Hours: Mon-Sat 12-4PM; Sun 12-2PM. Call the shelter at 715-536-3459, or visit us on the web at www.furypets.com.

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Published 6/27/24 & 7/4/24 WNAXLP

FOR SALE
Abandoned Property of Kenny Wiesman, from S & P Premier Investments, LLC. Property includes Miscellaneous items. Sale shall Commence at 9:00 a.m. on Monday July 8th, 2024, at N187 Brandenburg Ave., Merrill, Storage Unit #58. Call for update.
Published 6/27/24 & 7/4/24 WNAXLP

NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF TRUST ADMINISTRATION

STATE OF WISCONSIN, County of Lincoln, in the matter of the June E. Kriewald Revocable Trust dated April 30, 2024 (the "Trust"):

1. June E. Kriewald, with date of birth July 30, 1939 and date of death June 11, 2024 was domiciled in the Lincoln County, Wisconsin.
2. The deadline for filing a claim against the decedent, June E. Kriewald, is November 4th, 2024;
3. All claims must include detailed documentation and must be submitted to the Trustee of the Trust at the following address: S2630 County Road K, Reedsburg, WI 53959.
Date: June 24th, 2024
June E. Kriewald Revocable Trust dated April 30, 2024.
By: /s/Julie Ratajczk
Julie Ratajczk, Trustee
Craig J. Nienow, Attorney
Published July 4, 11 & 18, 2024
WNAXLP



THE GLEASON CORNER

BY TINA L. SCOTT, EDITOR

Prairie Dells Scenic Area: A hidden treasure near Gleason

The Prairie Dells Scenic Area is a unique destination located approximately 4.5 miles south of Gleason, or 6.5 miles north of Merrill, off Hwy. 17 on Prairie Dells Road. Located, as the name implies, on the Prairie River, large outcroppings of rock formations and the river itself, with its own rocks that create an area of rapids near where the dam used to be, provide a beautiful and unique setting.

Prairie Dells Road dead ends into a small gravel turnaround/parking area. Visitors can park there and begin exploring on foot. Very near the parking area, a short trail leads to a handicap accessible overlook structure that provides a peek at the Prairie River below. Perched upon large rock formations and surrounded by ferns and natural wooded foliage, it's a peaceful and easy walk. During the summer months, the lush green canopy of the trees nearby and below leading to the river's edge can make it a little difficult to see the river from the overlook, but the peeks at the scene below are beautiful, and you can certainly hear the rushing of the river over the rapids area. If you are sure of foot, you can also follow the narrow primitive trail through the foliage down to the river's edge below. Brave souls who love to kayak the rapids area may be spotted in

colorful kayaks, and if it's a group of kayakers, you may hear them shouting to each other as they navigate the section of river which I've heard isn't necessarily fit for kayaking newbies. The Prairie River, a tributary of the Wisconsin River, is in total approximately 40 miles long, and the Prairie River Dells Scenic Area is adjacent to just one small section of the river that extends from Horseshoe Lake in northwestern Langlade County and runs mostly southwest through southeastern Lincoln County and through Merrill until it meets and joins the Wisconsin River not far west of the dam located in the city.

The Prairie River once had two dams controlling its flow in Lincoln County; both were removed in the 1990's.

The Prairie Dells Dam had been designed to produce hydroelectric power but, due to an engineering error when it was reconstructed circa 1905, it never actually generated a single watt of energy and simply sat there unused and unmaintained for about 100 years. When its infrastructure began to fail, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) removed it in 1991, but it took a lot of dynamite to do the job. Prior to its demise, Prairie River Pond was a two-mile pond in the area, but that no longer exists except on maps.

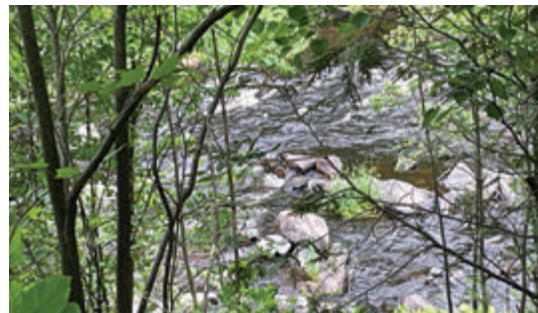
The Ward Dam, the second dam on the Prairie River, was operated and maintained by the Ward Paper Mill, but after the paper mill closed and, without an entity willing to maintain it structurally, it was also ultimately removed (amid protests) in late 1999. This drew down what had been a 118-acre lake above that dam.

With its removal, the next century was ushered in with the Prairie River returned to its former free run, back to the way it had been prior to the 1890's. It also restored the optimal habitat for trout, making the Prairie River one of the most popular areas in the state for trout fishing. Within just a few years after removing the Prairie Dells Dam, the reproduction of natural brook trout had increased 30-fold.

See Prairie Dells on page 11



Beautiful views from the Prairie Dells Scenic Area.



Tina L. Scott photos

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4th JULY

INDEPEND

★★★★★ 1776

Tomahawk's Mya Pankow wins 2025 Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo Queen title

Mya Pankow, of Tomahawk, was recently named the 2025 Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo Queen.

Pankow earned the recognition on Sunday, June 9, 2024, at the Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo in Merrill.

Madilynn Skic, of Gleason, earned the Rodeo Princess title.

The Rodeo Queen is selected based on performance in several areas: riding and

horsemanship, public speaking, interviews, rodeo knowledge, poster creation, and rodeo ticket sales.

In the upcoming year, Pankow and Skic will represent the Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo and the rodeo sport at various Midwest rodeos and local community events.

Pankow has been riding since she was three years old. She started barrel racing and pole bending in



2025 Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo Queen Mya Pankow and her horse, Katie.



Pankow and Katie participated in the Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo in Merrill earlier this month.

Photos courtesy of Dianne Lazear

2014 and in 2020 was named the Wisconsin Barrel Horse Association District 4 Outstanding Youth.

In 2022, she joined the Wisconsin High School Rodeo Association, expanding her events to include barrel racing, pole bending, breakaway roping, and team roping.

Pankow also runs her own horse training and riding lesson business, Ascent Equine.

Pankow is a Senior in Wausau Area Virtual Education. After she graduates in Dec. 2024, she will attend Five Star Horseshoeing School in Oklahoma to become a farrier, certified by the American Farrier's Association. In Aug. 2025, Pankow plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-

River Falls and earn a bachelor's degree in equine science while continuing to compete in rodeo.

Skic is a Senior at Merrill High School. She participates in Future Farmers of America, showing market animals and horse judging.

After graduation, Skic plans to attend Fox Valley Technical College to study farm business and production management.

"I am passionate about the equine and rodeo industries and think that an encouraging, knowledgeable, and welcoming role model, such as a rodeo queen, is important in growing the sport and encouraging people to participate as competitors or spectators," Pankow said.

Merrill Fireworks to be held July 5

Merrill's annual Independence Day fireworks display will take place this year on Friday, July 5, 2024, at dusk at the Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC). Due to a change in vendor, the fireworks celebration had to be moved to July 5.



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7/3/24 to 7/11/24
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THURSDAY 7/4: 7:00PM ONLY
FRIDAY THRU MONDAY: 1:00 & 7:00PM
TUESDAY & THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY
WEDNESDAY: 1:00 & 7:00PM

INSIDE OUT 2
"PG" (1HR 40MIN)
WEDNESDAY 7/3: 1:00 & 7:00PM
THURSDAY 7/4: 7:00PM ONLY
FRIDAY: 1:00, 7:00 & 9:00PM
SATURDAY: 1:00, 3:15, 7:00 & 9:00PM
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Area Events & Entertainment Community Calendar

- Jul. 3 - NO Merrill City Band concert at Normal Park
- Jul. 3 - 4th of July at the Rock with the Northwoods Skitchers at Rock Island Resort
- Jul. 3 - HYDE Rocks Athens 4th of July Event in Athens
- Jul. 5 - Merrill Fireworks

- at the MARC
- Jul. 5 - The Dukes at Rock Island Resort
- Jul. 5 - Jesse & the Medicine Men at Stoney Acres
- July 7 - Bingo at VFW
- Jul. 10 - Merrill City Band concert at Normal Park
- Jul. 11 - Bingo at St. Francis School

- Jul. 11 - Gazebo Nights Concert: BMAC, Brian McLaughlin
- Jul. 13 - Jason Michael Carroll concert at Z's Fork Horners
- Jul. 17 - Merrill City Band concert at Normal Park
- Jul. 18 - Banker's Square Concert Series - Mattea Joy performing

- Jul. 18 - Gazebo Nights Concert: Rev. Raven & the Chain-Smoking Altar Boys with Westside Andy
- For more information, go to: merrillchamber.org/ events or contact the event sponsor.

PRAIRIE DELLS

from page 6

The Prairie Dells Scenic Area is a unique destination located approximately 4.5 miles south of Gleason, or 6.5 miles north of Merrill, off Hwy. 17 on Prairie Dells Road. Located, as the name implies, on the Prairie River, large outcroppings of rock formations and the river itself, with its own rapids near where the dam used to be, provide a beautiful and unique setting.

Prairie Dells Road dead ends into a small gravel turnaround/parking area. Visitors can park there and begin exploring on

foot. Very near the parking area, a short trail leads to a handicap accessible overlook structure that provides a peek at the Prairie River below. Perched upon large rock formations and surrounded by ferns and natural wooded foliage, it's a peaceful and easy walk. During the summer months, the lush green canopy of the trees nearby and below leading to the river's edge can make it a little difficult to see the river from the overlook, but the peeks at the scene below are beautiful, and you can certainly hear the rushing of the river over the rapids area. If you are sure of foot, you can also follow the narrow primitive trail through the foliage down to the river's edge



Prairie Dells Scenic Area.

Tina L. Scott photo

below. Brave souls who love to kayak the rapids area may be spotted in colorful kayaks, and if it's a group of kayakers, you may hear them shouting to each other as they navigate the

section of river which I've heard isn't necessarily fit for kayaking newbies.

See **PRAIRIE DELLS** page 16

WEEKLY BRIEFING - JULY 4TH - 8TH

THURSDAY - BROASTED PORK CHOPS
FRI FISH FRY - HADDOCK & PERCH
SATURDAY - PRIME RIB
SUNDAY - BROASTED CHICKEN
BINGO - HOT TURKEY
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DINNER SPECIALS JULY

TUESDAY NIGHTS
JULY 9TH - PORK ROAST
JULY 16TH - CHICKEN ALFREDO
Dinner served: Tuesday 4:00-8:00 PM

FRIDAY NIGHTS
JULY 5TH - BAKED SALMON
JULY 12TH - SHRIMP
Dinner served: Friday 4:00-8:00 PM

CARRYOUTS AVAILABLE

- MONDAYS: Soup & Sandwich Available 3-7pm
- LUNCH AVAILABLE: TUES. & FRI. 11am-2pm WED. & THURS. 11am-8pm
- SPECIALS • Fish Fries • Homemade Soup & FRI. 4-8pm
- DINNER MENU: TUES. 4-8pm
- SATURDAY: Bar Open at 3pm
- SUNDAY: Bar Open From 11am-7pm

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Announcements 7005



Stephanie Dawn in Concert:
 Come to an evening of uplifting, sacred music by Stephanie Dawn on Sunday, July 7th at 6pm. Singer Stephanie Dawn has been performing since the age of three. She has been featured in solo performances at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. She has been a guest soloist on 3ABN, NBC, the Family Channel, SAFE-TV. **FREE admission. Rhinelander SDA Church, 203 E. Monico St. Rhinelander. Questions? Call 715-575-9855

Announcements 7005

WCAN (Wisconsin Community Ad Network) and/or the member publications review ads to the best of their ability. Unfortunately, many unscrupulous people are ready to take your money! **PLEASE BE CAREFUL ANSWERING ANY AD THAT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!** For more information, or to file a complaint regarding an ad, please contact The Department of Trade, Agriculture & Consumer Protection 1-800-422-7128 (WCAN)

Who took my Tilley Hat?: To the thief who took my hat at McDonalds in Merrill Tuesday June 25. Good news: It's a great hat. Bad News I have an incurable-but treatable scalp disease. See a Dermatologist - NOW. Ted

Rummage Sales This Week 7200

Huge Yard Sale July 1-12, 7am-4pm, N2195 Duginski Rd. Merrill. Just off County Road K. Antiques, household goods, tools and so much more! Fun mystery boxes also. we are moving!

Rummage Sales Upcoming 7202



GARAGE SALE KITS NOW AVAILABLE
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Firewood 7244

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Sporting Goods 7260

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Beyond Books: Community ArtShare Exhibit: LEGO! LEGO! LEGO!

Display features even more of the Dunbars' collection

TINA L. SCOTT EDITOR

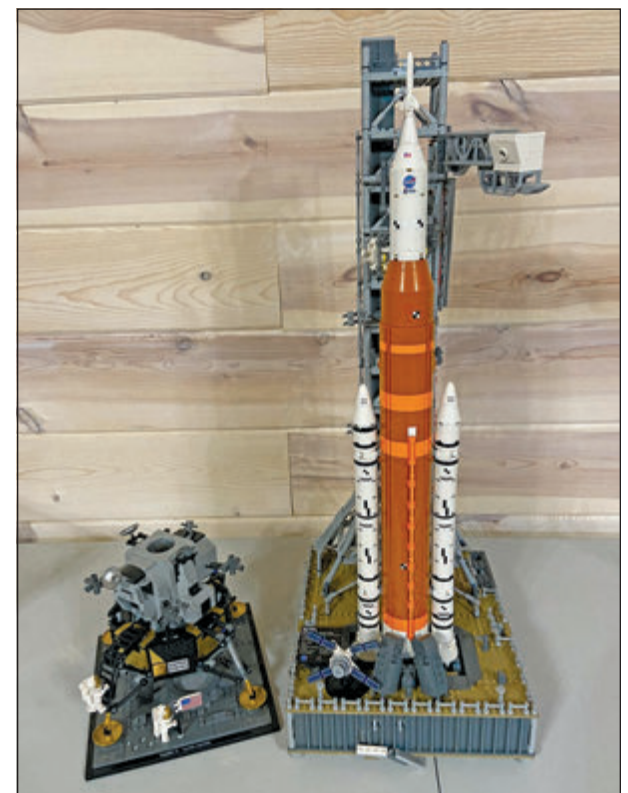
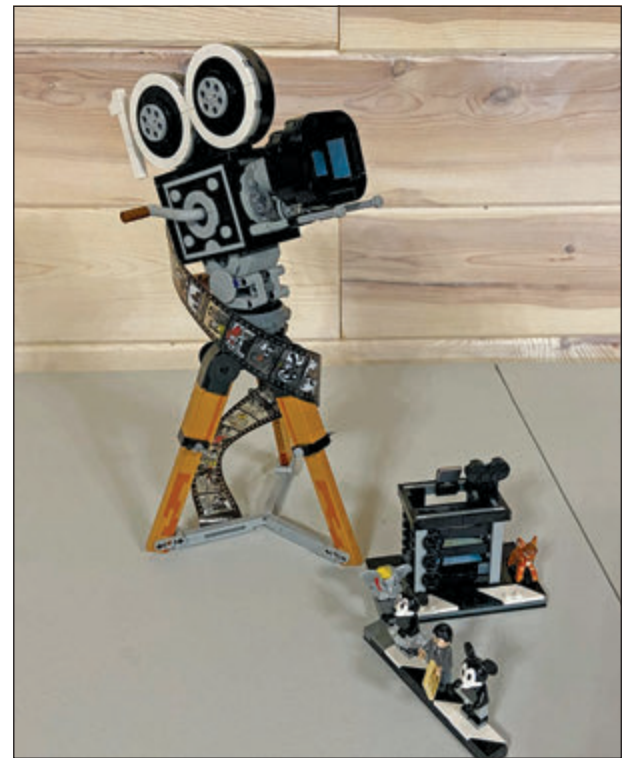
For the third year, Tim and Dawn Dunbar of Merrill will share their collection of completed Lego sets with the community. During the months of July and August, the T.B. Scott Free Library Beyond Books: Community ArtShare Exhibit will be: LEGO! LEGO! LEGO! and will feature a new selection of Lego creations from their collection.

On display, viewers can see the NASA Space Launch System sets, Walt Disney 100-year camera, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Pirates of Barracuda Bay, the Friends logging skidder, the Hocus Pocus Sanderson Sister's cottage, and more.

Part of the Dunbars' extensive collection of 686 Lego sets that they've built and have on display in their home, this year's selection features just a tiny fraction of the roughly 430,000 individual Lego pieces they own within those creations. "Finding space to display them all continues to be an issue," they said. The couple started collecting and assembling Lego sets in the 1980's and hasn't stopped since.

The variety in their collection is sure to delight young and old alike, as they marvel at how intricate many of these Lego creations are.

In addition, Tuesday, July 23, 2024, is Lego Day at the Library. Kids can enjoy Lego stations and other Lego-themed activities in the Youth Department and enter a drawing to win a Lego set of their own. Tim and Dawn will also be available from 4-6 p.m. that day to give tours of their sets, answer questions, and they will also be assembling a surprise Lego set. Stop by to see what it will be. "It's going to be a Lego-riffic day!" organizers said.



Just a few examples of the Lego sets that will be on display this year. Submitted photos.

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Church Mutual President and CEO Alan Ogilvie shared an update on Church Mutual at a combined meeting of the Merrill Optimists and Rotary clubs on Wednesday, June 12, 2024. He provided an overview of the company's corporate structure and information about the importance of diversification. He also explained how catastrophic weather events impact the insurance industry and, ultimately, insurance customers. Ogilvie assured the group that Church Mutual has no plans to move its headquarters out of Merrill.

Photo courtesy of Church Mutual Insurance Company.

Did you know ...

It's illegal to remove cicadas
(or any other insects or animals) from state parks

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

A recent press release from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds state park visitors that it is illegal to remove any insects or other animals from state park properties unless you are hunting or fishing with a permit to do so. While cicadas are largely confined to the southern part of our state, all the recent "buzz" about the simultaneous emergence of both 13- and 17-year cycle cicadas within the U.S. (an event that is said to happen only once every 221 years) has prompted a great interest in the sometimes noisy insects. That recent fascination has also led to park visitors collecting the insects, which is against the law. (Did you know some people even eat them, referring to cicadas as "tree shrimp" and cooking them similarly, while others eat chocolate-covered cicadas?)

Multiple reports of people harvesting cicadas at Big Foot Beach State Park in Walworth County prompted the DNR to craft their release, reminding park visitors that "state law prohibits the capture and removal of animals, including insects, from state park properties." "There are exceptions for hunting



A close-up look at a cicada.

Stock photo courtesy of Pixabay.

and fishing activities that are otherwise authorized by law," the release said, "but these exceptions do not provide for the collection and removal of cicadas."

"DNR park staff and wardens have

been instructed to make efforts to first educate the public on cicadas in state parks, and wardens may take enforcement action in response to violations," the release said.

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The three new inductees at this year's Merrill Baseball Hall of Fame ceremony, L to R: Dave Pyan, Mike Helmuth, and Jeff Beyer.



Six members of the 1990 and 1991 MHS Varsity Baseball teams were in attendance, representing their teams that were honored in Saturday night's program.



Mike Helmuth (new HOF inductee) is pictured with his father Bill (a past HOF inductee) and mother Jan. Submitted photos.

New inductees welcomed into Merrill Baseball Hall of Fame

BY TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

The Merrill Baseball Hall of Fame (HOF) night originally scheduled to take place on Friday, June

28, 2024, was moved to Saturday, June 29, due to inclement weather. Between the two American Regional Tournament ball games, the Merrill Baseball Program inducted new members into

the Merrill Baseball Hall of Fame.

Jeff Beyer, Mike Helmuth, and Dave Pyan were inducted into the Merrill Baseball HOF and their names join the list of

other elite Merrill baseball players engraved on the HOF plaque on the historic granite wall at Athletic Park. Beyer and Helmuth were recognized as players, and Pyan was recognized

as player, coach, and contributor.

Two teams were also honored: The Merrill High School (MHS) Varsity Baseball Team that won the 1990 Wisconsin Valley

Conference Championship and the MHS Varsity Baseball Team that won the 1991 WIAA State Tournament were recognized during the ceremony.

CAMPUS BRIEFS

Ament graduates from Marquette University

Hannah Ament of Merrill graduated from Marquette University in Milwaukee and earned a Juris Doctor degree in Law at the completion of the spring semester, one of 2,852 students to graduate from Marquette in May. The university celebrated its 143rd Commencement with a series of events, including Graduate Recognition Ceremonies at Fiserv Forum and a Baccalaureate Mass on campus.

Dengel named to Marquette University's spring 2024 Dean's List

Dawson Dengel of Merrill has been named to the Dean's List for the spring 2024 semester at Marquette University in Milwaukee. Dengel is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Information Systems. To make the Dean's List, students must have earned at least 12 credits for the spring 2024 semester and have no disqualifying grades. The grade point average (GPA) threshold varies by college - for the College of Education and the Klingler College of Arts and Sciences, undergraduate students must have at least a 3.7 to be named to the Dean's List.

UW-Eau Claire announces spring Dean's List

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire extends congratulations to the students with outstanding academic performance named to the spring 2024 dean's list. At the end of each semester, each of UW-Eau Claire's four colleges recognizes excellence in scholastic achievement by

publishing the Dean's List. Eligibility requires students to be in good academic standing, have a minimum 3.70 semester GPA, and completed at least 12 credits, with no incompletes, no courses below the 100 level, no repeats, and no Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory registrations (except in degree credit-bearing courses that are offered only on the S/U grading system in which a grade of S has been earned).

Students from our area who were named to the spring Dean's List are:

- Shauna Belter, Athens, College of Education & Human Sciences
- Cassandra Riehle, Athens, College of Business
- Kaitlyn Riehle, Athens, College of Business
- Ryder Depies, Merrill, College of Arts and Sciences
- Lydia McIntyre, Merrill, College of Education & Human Sciences
- Bailey Orzech, Merrill, College of Education & Human Sciences
- Matthew Palazzo, Merrill, College of Education & Human Sciences
- Allison Palecek, Merrill, College of Education & Human Sciences
- Tanaya Pillai, Merrill, College of Arts and Sciences
- Amelia Skoviera, Merrill, College of Arts and Sciences
- Macey Jo Weix, Merrill, College of Nursing and Health Sciences
- Amber Winter, Merrill, College of Education & Human Sciences

UW-La Crosse announces spring 2024 Dean's List

Area students were named to the Dean's List at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse for the spring semester of the 2023-24 academic year, which ended in May. To be eligible, students must have earned at least a 3.5 semester GPA and carried a minimum of 12 credits. Students on the Dean's List from this area include:

- Kellie Annala, Athens, Clinical Laboratory Science Major
- Nicole Zoellner, Gleason, Exercise and Sport Science Major: Exercise Science - Pre-professional Track
- Cody Depies, Merrill, Communication Studies Major: Media Studies Emphasis
- Breannon Herdt, Merrill, Psychology Major
- Angela Hinner, Merrill, Biology Major
- Kaitlin Kalafice, Merrill, Psychology Major
- Danyelle Kottke, Merrill, Accountancy Major
- Erin Kreamsreiter, Merrill, International Business Major
- Emma Marlowe, Merrill, Elementary/Middle Education and Special Education Major
- Aliyah Pillai, Merrill, Biochemistry Major with American Society for Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

- (ASBMB) Certification
- Alana Polak, Merrill, Elementary/Middle Education Major
- Jacob Schnabl, Merrill, Communication Studies Major: Organizational and Professional Communication Emphasis
- Lydia Schult, Merrill, Biology Major
- Logan White, Merrill, Marketing Major

Local student wins Sophomore Research Fellowship

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has awarded 51 Sophomore Research Fellowships, funded by generous grants from the Brittingham Wisconsin Trust, the Kemper K. Knapp Bequest, and the Provost's Office. The Fellowships are

See BRIEFS page 16

2024 Merrill Summer Baseball Schedule

<u>Merrill Rangers</u>			
Sun. July 7	Rhineland	Away	12:00 pm
<u>Merrill Post 46</u>			
Mon. July 8	Antigo	Away	7:00 pm
Tues. July 9	Plover	Away	7:00 pm
<u>Merrill Jr. Legion</u>			
Mon. July 8	Antigo	Home	7:00 pm
Tues. July 9	Plover (DH)	Home	5:30 pm

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The Merrill Free Masons - Virginia Falls 226 sold popcorn at the Gazebo nights in Merrill last year and split the money they raised between multiple organizations. One grateful recipient of funds was the Lincoln County Humane Society. The group recently donated \$500 to help the pets at the shelter. **Submitted photo.**



Lincoln County Humane Society (LCHS) would like to send a big thank you to Trinity Lutheran School Student Council of Wausau. They hosted a schoolwide penny war and chose LCHS as the place they wanted their donation to go to. They raised \$1,517.08 for the pets! How incredible is that! "Thank you so much for being so kind and choosing LCHS!" the staff and volunteers at LCHS said.

NWTFC highlights tobacco compliance checks, online training for retailers

The Northwoods Tobacco-Free Coalition (NWTFC) recently highlighted the positive impacts of tobacco compliance checks and provided information on training for retailers.

In a release, NWTFC said early all commercial tobacco use begins during a person's teens and young adulthood.

"While the legal purchasing age for tobacco products is 21 years old, many middle school and high school youth report nicotine use," NWTFC said.

"Preventing youth access to tobacco is crucial for the health and well-being of our communities," said Moriah Gross, Wisconsin Wins Coordinator for the NWTFC.

Wisconsin Wins is a statewide initiative that focuses on preventing youth access to tobacco products through retailer education, training, and inspections. NWTFC



coordinates the Wisconsin Wins program in six counties - Florence, Forest, Lincoln, Oneida, Price, and Vilas.

Year-round inspections, also known as compliance checks, help ensure underage individuals cannot purchase commercial tobacco products from local retailers. Tobacco retailers are subject to unannounced inspections from both the state's Wisconsin Wins program and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a condition of holding a tobacco license.

NWTFC said retailers are a "valuable line of defense in preventing youth access to commercial tobacco."

Free online training is available to educate retailers and their employees about tobacco laws. The training can assist retailers in further understanding their responsibilities and how to properly comply with the law.

"We are thankful for the support from our valuable retailers," NWTFC said. "Together, we can help ensure tobacco remains out of the hands of our youth."

Free online training and tools are available at WITobaccoCheck.org.

To learn more about Wisconsin Wins, visit wiwins.org or contact Gross at mgross@oneidacountywi.gov.

PRAIRIE DELLS from page 6

The Prairie River, a tributary of the Wisconsin River, is in total approximately 40 miles long, and the Prairie River Dells Scenic Area is adjacent to just one small section of the river that extends from Horseshoe Lake in northwestern Langlade County and runs mostly southwest through southeastern Lincoln County and through Merrill until it meets and joins the Wisconsin River not far west of the dam located in the city.

The Prairie River once had two dams controlling its flow in Lincoln County; both were removed in the 1990's.

The Prairie Dells Dam had been designed to produce hydroelectric power but, due to an engineering error when it was reconstructed circa 1905, it never actually generated a single watt of energy and simply sat there unused and unmaintained for about 100 years. When its infrastructure began to fail, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) removed it in 1991, but it took a lot of dynamite to do the job. Prior to its demise, Prairie River Pond was a two-mile pond in the area, but that

no longer exists except on maps.

The Ward Dam, the second dam on the Prairie River, was operated and maintained by the Ward Paper Mill, but after the paper mill closed and, without an entity willing to maintain it structurally, it was also ultimately removed (amid protests) in late 1999. This drew down what had been a 118-acre lake above that dam.

With its removal, the next century was ushered in with the Prairie River returned to its former free run, back to the way it had been prior to the 1890's. It also restored the optimal habitat for trout, making the Prairie River one of the most popular areas in the state for trout fishing. Within just a few years after removing the Prairie Dells Dam, the reproduction of natural brook trout had increased 30-fold. Both brook and brown trout are now abundant. [Sidenote: The Wisconsin record brook trout was set on the Prairie River in 1944 when a fisherman caught a 9 pound, 15 ounce brookie!]

Starting back at the parking area, there is another wider trail that, though a slightly longer walk, provides an even more impressive view and the opportunity to walk through the forest, along the river bank via tall wild grasses and flowers if you so desire - where you may

meet or see a fisherman en route to the river's edge, and ultimately to a large and picturesque outcropping of huge rocks you can explore. Navigating them carefully, you can then fully appreciate a gorgeous view of the Prairie River in the gorge below where it cuts through steep rock walls. This is a great place to sit and reflect, snap photos, and enjoy the natural beauty around you. Though sometimes marred by graffiti, the huge rock formations are fun to climb on - just be very careful!

Few would imagine the beauty that awaits them just a short way from the small gravel parking area, and the opportunities for exploration just beyond it. Other walking trails and natural wildlife trails in the woods also await exploration and may offer a glimpse at wildlife native to the area.

Many area residents consider the Prairie Dells Scenic Area a hidden treasure, but more visitors and tourists are beginning to discover the beautiful spot. Whether you're a kayaker or a photographer, enjoy trout fishing or hiking, or just want to explore all that the Prairie River has to offer in Lincoln County, you'll want to add the Prairie Dells Scenic Area to your list of day trips!

BRIEFS from page 15

awards of \$2,500 each to undergraduate students and \$500 to their faculty/staff advisors to work in collaboration on research projects. This year UW-Madison received a record number applicants. Two Merrill students have won fellowships:

- Carl Knaack, Merrill, Anthropology, Classical Humanities
- Izzy Sunby, Merrill, Political Science, Spanish

Zastrow named to Spring 2024 Dean's List at Carthage College

Jaye Zastrow of Athens was named to the Spring 2024 Dean's List at Carthage College. Dean's List honors are accorded to Carthage students who achieve a minimum 3.5 GPA while carrying at least 12 letter-graded credits in a given semester.

MOVIE from page 5

chagrin of his long-term girlfriend, Hector decides to hit the road in search of what happiness is and how to achieve it.

Along the way, Hector meets a billionaire businessman who has lost sight of what happiness is, a monk who finds happiness everywhere, a drug dealer who only wants his wife to be healthy and happy, a

medical doctor, an African warlord who is baffled at his quest, and a medical researcher who is seeking the chemical reaction to happiness. Along the way, he connects with each, all of whom play a part in helping Hector find happiness, both for himself and for those he loves and cares for.

This one is worth seeking out. It never seems contrived, and its only message is finding your own happiness. And it will have a

direct effect on those around you.

Hector and the Search for Happiness has a top-notch cast and we root for Hector on his quest. After all, are we not all in search of happiness?

Now streaming on Amazon Prime, *Hector and the Search for Happiness* is rated R for some strange reason and I give it a solid four out of five stars. It's just a damn good movie.