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L to R: Bob "BJ" Gruling, Mary Robinson, Tim Gruling, and Kay Gruling/Buttke, the children of Bob and Eppie Gruling, pose by playground they sponsored in honor and memory of their parents. **Submitted photo.**

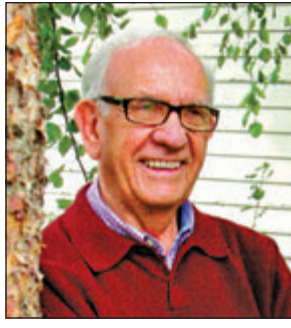


The new small playground provides little ones with something to do during events held at the Agra Pavilion and when families visit the River Bend Trail or Rotary Park in Merrill. **Tina L. Scott photo.**

City representatives, the Gruling family, and the Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce all gathered for a celebratory ribbon cutting. **Tina L. Scott photo.**



Eppie Gruling
Submitted photo.



Bob Gruling
Submitted photo.



The Gruling Family Playground was created by the children of, and in memory of, Bob and Eppie Gruling of Merrill, in conjunction with the Merrill Area Park & Recreation Department. **Tina L. Scott photo.**

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Gruling Family Playground now open at Agra Pavilion

BY TINA L. SCOTT
 EDITOR

On Sept. 25, 2024, an official ceremony and ribbon cutting was held at the new Gruling Family Playground located next to the Agra Pavilion at

Rotary Park near the River Bend Trail in Merrill. Members of the Gruling family gathered to share a few words and thank Dan Wendorf at the Merrill Parks and Recreation Department and the City of Merrill for helping

them honor their parents with the addition of the new playground, named in honor of their parents, Bob and Eppie Gruling, who were longtime Merrill residents and died in 2018 and 2023, respectively. Representatives from the

City of Merrill, including Mayor Steve Hass, and staff and ambassadors from the Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce were also

See **PLAYGROUND** page 9

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Friday - Fish Fry
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Join us for: games, food, music, beer tent, raffle baskets, bonfire, luminary walk, baked goods, concessions and more!!

Fall Fest for families to enjoy. Portion of proceeds goes back to the community and will support Raise Your Voice, who are dedicated to bring mental health awareness and suicide prevention.



2024 Large Business of the Year: Les & Jim's Lincoln Lanes.



2024 Legacy Award: Weinbrenner Shoe Company for 88 years of serving Merrill. **Photos courtesy of Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce.**

2024 Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Awards

BY TINA L. SCOTT
 EDITOR

The Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce held their annual celebration, banquet, and awards ceremony to recognize local area businesses and announce their Chamber Business of the Year Awards on Oct. 10, 2024. The banquet hall at Les & Jim's Lincoln Lanes was filled with Chamber members and local community leaders including Merrill's

Mayor, "gathering to celebrate the successes of Merrill's thriving business community," a press release from the Chamber said. The highlight of the event was the announcement of the Chamber Business of the Year awards, with all businesses nominated by and then voted on by their peers - the membership of the Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce. "This year's winners reflect the diversity and strength of Merrill's businesses and

organizations," the release said. The award for 2024 Large Business of the Year went to Les & Jim's Lincoln Lanes with Mark Bares accepting on behalf of the business. 2024 Mid-Size Business of the Year was awarded to Associated Bank; Merrill Branch Manager Emily Gibson and her team accepted the award. 2024 Small Business of the Year was awarded to the Lincoln County Humane Society; Board of Directors member

Katie Helmstadter accepted on behalf of the Board. The 2024 Hometown Business of the Year award went to Westside Market and Easy Wash Laundromat and owners Mark Raymer and Ryan Peacock and their employees accepted the award. The Merrill Police Association was named 2024 Non-profit Business of the Year, and Clyde Nelson accepted the award

See **AWARDS** page 10

Tall pines on Memorial Drive to be removed

BY TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

At the Oct. 8, 2024, regular City of Merrill Common Council meeting, a motion to remove the towering red pine trees located on the east side of the Merrill Fairgrounds along Memorial Dr. passed 7-1. The motion came at the recommendation of the Fairgrounds Committee and City Administrator,

City Engineer, and Public Works Director Rod Akey. Several factors were considered in recommending the removal of the tall pines, including the presence of "a three-phase power line next to the trees," and that "the trees shade Memorial Dr. which contributes to icing problems in the winter."

The Lincoln County Rodeo Association donated decorative fencing that

will be placed around the perimeter of the Fairgrounds, Akey said. And he recommended removal of the mature trees prior to installation of the fence.

Following a short

discussion at the Common Council meeting, the motion to remove the trees passed 7-1 on a voice vote. Alderperson Michael "Gus" Caylor, Jr. was the lone nay vote.



A view of the pine trees along the east side of the Merrill Fairgrounds taken from the sidewalk facing north. (The red roof of the Lincoln County Humane Society is just visible through the trees on the left.) Photo courtesy of the City of Merrill.



A view of the towering red pines along Memorial Dr., taken facing southwest. Just one of the trees falling or snapping off could take out the power lines.

Photo courtesy of the City of Merrill.

Pet of the Week



This stunning boy is **Renegade!** He is the sweetest boy who loves to get attention and is good with other cats! **Renegade** is great around people and is quite the love! **Renegade** is vaccinated, neutered, and micro-chipped, and he is ready to find his forever home!

Visit the Lincoln County Humane Society, 310 N. Memorial Dr., in Merrill. Hours: MON. - SAT. 12-4 PM & SUN. 12-2 PM. Call the shelter at 715-536-3459, or visit us on the web at www.furrypets.com.

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER

Reaching Beyond The Veil

Dear Reader,

In the quiet moments of reflection, when the world around us falls still, it is natural to wonder about those who have gone before us. They lived, they loved, they achieved noble purposes, and now, they dwell in the spiritual realm, a world that seems distant yet so intimately connected to our own. The question arises: Can we summon their guidance, their wisdom, to help us navigate the challenges of life and fulfill our own noble purposes?

It is a comforting thought to imagine that those we cherished in life could reach back across the divide to offer us support. We often think of them as watching over us, their presence felt in the whispers of intuition or the sudden, inexplicable clarity that descends upon us in moments of need. But is there a way to actively seek their counsel, to draw upon their strengths and love in a way that influences our own journey?

The idea of summoning those who have passed, much like Aladdin's three wishes, is a compelling one. Yet, unlike a magical lamp, the spiritual world operates on principles that we may not fully comprehend. Perhaps it is not a matter of summoning, but rather of aligning ourselves with the higher purposes they embodied. When our goals are steeped in goodness and love, when we strive to add light to a world often shrouded in darkness, we may find that their influence naturally flows into our lives. It is as though the veil between the physical and spiritual world thins, allowing their energy to blend with ours.

This raises the question: Are we truly alone in our struggles, left to our own devices to fight dragons and defend the vulnerable? Or are we, in fact, accompanied by unseen forces—guardian angels assigned to us in childhood, perhaps, or angelic warrior guides who step in as we mature? These beings, if they exist, could be seen as extensions of the love and guidance from those who have departed. They are the guardians of our souls, nudging us toward the right path, helping us bear the burdens that life inevitably places upon us. As hybrids of the



physical and spiritual realms, we walk a unique path. Our souls, tethered to this world by the body, are still deeply connected to the spiritual plane. In our imperfection, we long for the perfection that our souls might achieve once freed from the body. But what if we could draw upon that spiritual perfection even now? What if we could channel some of the purity and wisdom from the other side into our daily lives?

It is possible, perhaps, to reach out and connect with the spiritual world more intentionally. Through prayer, meditation, or simply living a life aligned with higher principles, we might open ourselves to the influence of those who have gone before us. In doing so, we are not only connecting with them but also drawing from the eternal into the finite. We become conduits for the love and wisdom that transcends this earthly existence, allowing it to flow through us and into the world around us.

Ultimately, life may indeed be a test, a proving ground for the soul. But it is also an opportunity—a chance to blend the physical with the spiritual, to draw upon the resources

of both worlds as we strive to fulfill our purpose. And in this endeavor, we are not alone. The spiritual world, with all its love and wisdom, is closer than we think, ready to support us as we walk our path.

So, as we move forward, let us do so with the knowledge that we are supported by those who have gone before us, by guardian angels, and by the very perfection that awaits us in the spiritual realm. We are here for a reason, and with the help of the unseen, we can fulfill that purpose with grace and courage.

PATRICK J. WOOD
Publisher
Author of "Reflections" a new book now available on Amazon.

Park City Gardens 2024

It was another great summer for Park City Gardens. The skies above provided plenty of rain to keep the beautiful city gardens looking great, and the community truly enjoyed all of the blooms and pops of color in the community. A special thanks to all the gardeners who are dedicated to planting and maintaining the 20 gardens throughout the city. Also, a special thank you to all of the donors that help to fund all the beautiful plants, flowers, soil, etc.

Many, many people have commented on how beautiful Merrill is in the summer with all the gardens.

Park City Gardens is always looking for additional gardeners and board members to assist in keeping this program

growing in the future. If you are interested in either role, please call Katy Weckwerth at 715.218.5092.

A donation to Park City Gardens is also a wonderful way to remember a loved one or honor someone with a birthday or anniversary donation. Going forward, these donations will be

acknowledged in the *Foto News* and on the Positively Merrill Facebook Page. Donations will live on in the beautiful gardens throughout Merrill. Donations (and in honor of or in memory of information) may be sent c/o: Lynn Reindl, PO Box 317, Merrill, WI 54452.

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Fall Brush Clean-up NOTICE City of Merrill Residents

The City of Merrill Street Department will be having a Fall Brush Clean-up. All City of Merrill residents will be allowed to place brush on the boulevard, on their regularly scheduled garbage day, during the week of **October 28-31, 2024.**

Please place brush, butt ends toward the street, next to your garbage and recyclables.

Your brush pile must not exceed 4' high by 6' wide.

Your brush must be on the boulevard by 7:00 AM. We will not pick up any brush that is not out by 7:00 AM on your regularly scheduled garbage day. We will still collect bundled brush throughout the year, as usual.

Dustin Bonack - Street Superintendent

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Merrill Area United Way



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Merrill Area United Way • Dee Olsen, Executive Director

This has been a tragic month for the United States. Hurricane Helen has ravaged the eastern U.S. states, and the incredible damage done in Florida by hurricane Milton is more than most people can handle. The loss of family, home, destroyed forests, lands and infrastructure is unfathomable. Even if you are not in those areas, you are and will be affected by loss. Watching news reports shows how we cannot rely on government to provide the aid needed, but we can all be touched by the incredible people who have gone to volunteer and help others through this horrific time. God Bless the American people. While the distance between Merrill and the Eastern coastal states is great, the heartfelt compassion for what those people are going through is very, very near and dear to our heart. If you can support the efforts in any way possible, please do it.

On the home front, United Way is in the middle of our annual campaign to raise dollars to help our local families. Hundreds of families are faced with a vast number of struggles. These can be financial struggles, childcare struggles, putting food on the table, preparing for the inevitable heating bills that are around the corner with winter nipping at our heels. Some severe needs are in dealing with homelessness, mental health concerns, transportation and medical needs. There are many programs that exist to help people, yet we know not all needs are being met. The agencies that receive United Way funding rely heavily on the dollars they are allocated to carry out the programs they offer. It is so important that we reach our campaign goals, so that these relevant programs continue to help people and not fall by the wayside.

The campaign is still underway. Once it is concluded, we then go through the allocation process to determine how much we have available to fund our agencies and then ultimately, how much each agency will receive based on the success of the campaign. We can only give out, what we have coming in. In 2024 United Way disbursed \$219,280 to agencies that provide services in the focus areas of immediate basic needs, health and education.

The United Way campaign runs through early November. These donations come from individuals, families, retirees, and companies. So far, this year's campaign seems to be off to a little slower start. We remain hopeful that more donations will come in so we can sustain the same level of giving as the prior year, allowing us to support all 19 agencies. All donated dollars stay local to help your neighbors, family, and friends. To donate send checks to Merrill Area United Way, at P. O. Box 813, Merrill 54452. Our website is www.merrillareunitedway.org. There you can also find a QR Code to make an online donation through Stripe. For further information email us at Delores.Olsen@merrillareunitedway.org or call our part-time office at 715-536-2016.

MERRILL Foto News

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CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL

OBITUARIES

Steven James Sharon



Steven James Sharon of Pelican Lake, passed away unexpectedly on October 8, 2024, in Marathon County while hunting with long-time friends following a sudden health incident while in the woods. He was 68 years old.

Steve was born on January 14, 1956, in Antigo, Wisconsin, to the late James Sharon and Mildred (Magnuson) Seidlitz. He attended grade school in Antigo until his family relocated to Merrill where his father operated the Chevrolet garage. He graduated from Merrill High School with the class of 1974.

It was there, in Merrill, on graduation day when he met his future wife, Jane Borchardt. Following high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force where he worked as a mechanic on B-52's. While serving in the Military, he asked Jane for her hand in marriage. The couple were married on June 24, 1978, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill. He and Jane lived in California after they were married where he was stationed. They were blessed with a son, Chad Sharon. Steve loved spending time outdoors, hunting and fishing, cherishing every moment spent with his late son and father.

Steve worked various sales and delivery jobs in the Merrill area to include Merrill Candy, Seeger Dairy, Hostess and GB Vending. In 2005 Steve suffered a heart attack ultimately leading him to new careers. In 2002, he and Jane relocated to Pelican Lake where they made their forever home. He drove school bus for several years and later decided to go back to school where he earned his certificate as an EMT, thus beginning his second career spanning 15 years. He also worked at the Rhinelander Hospital as an IV Tech. Steve and Jane enjoyed traveling, both by car and on their motorcycle. When he retired in 2019, they started traveling to Surprise, Arizona, initially renting a home and eventually purchasing their own home where they would spend the winter months. Steve was a kind-hearted, caring man, he will be deeply missed by his family and many close friends.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Jane, brother, Tom Sharon, sister-in-law, Sandy (Glenn) Frank, nephews, Jim (Brenda) Frank, Jason Frank, niece, Pam (Jon) Wolford, and great niece, Sadie Wolford.

Steve is preceded in death by his son, Chad Sharon, parents, and brother, David Sharon.

Per Steve's wishes, no services will be held. Weber-Hill & Packard Funeral Home of Crandon is assisting the family with arrangements.

William Herbert Cohrs



William Herbert Cohrs passed peacefully to his heavenly home on October 10, 2024.

He was born on January 2, 1939 in Merrill to Herbert and Irene (Boettcher) Cohrs. He attended St. John Lutheran School and graduated from Merrill High. William married Carolyn (Barney) on October 1, 1966. They recently celebrated 58 years of marriage. He joined the Army National Guard and was active for ten years spending time in Washington state. He helped organize annual reunions for years for the Guard and was very proud of his service. He took part in the Honor Flight in 2022.

Willie and Carolyn ran the family farm which has been in the family for more than 140 years, raising dairy and beef cattle, horses, sheep, chickens, emus and peacocks. As a farmer, he could build, remodel, and repair almost anything. He was a skilled electrician, spending more than 30 years at Wausau Papers where he made many lifelong friends.

He especially enjoyed deer hunting, boating, playing Sheephead and cribbage, biking, walking, and fishing in the family pond. His passion was spending as much time as possible with his family and friends - especially his grandchildren.

Together Willie and Carrie enjoyed traveling - having visited all 50 states, the ten Canadian provinces, and five continents.

He was a charter member and past-President of the Friends of Council Grounds State Park where he was responsible for completing many projects including the beach shelter.

He was an active member of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church a third degree member of the Knights of Columbus.

Willie is survived by his wife, Carolyn, two sons, Keith (Shelley) Cohrs, and Kevin (Tammy) Cohrs, five grandchildren, Evan, Hays (formerly Hanna), Ian, Ava, and Lauren Cohrs, sisters, Doris Wanless, Helen (Harry) Wallace, and Margie (Paul) Zimmerman, sister-in-law, Nancy Cohrs and many nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents, his brother Philipp, brothers-in-law Leonard Wanless and Donald Sturm, and nephew Michael Sturm.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at Bell Tower Chapel on Friday, October 18, 2024 at 11:00 am. A visitation will be held on Friday, October 18, 2024 from 9:30 am until the time of service in the Assisi Hall at Bell Tower Residence. Fr. Maria Vallabhaneni will officiate. Inurnment will take place immediately after mass at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to St. Vincent De Paul and/or the Food Pantry in Merrill in loving memory of Willie.

The family would like to thank the staff at Bell Tower Residence and Interim Health Care for their loving care while he was with them. We will miss Willie greatly and are grateful for the many memories he gave us.

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

Dennis W. 'Denny' Ebner



Dennis W. 'Denny' Ebner, 73, of Merrill, peacefully passed away at his home under the care of his loving daughters and Compassus Hospice on Saturday, October 5, 2024.

Denny was born January 15, 1951, in La Crosse, WI, the son of Walter 'Walt' and Patricia 'Pat' (Sutton) Ebner. Denny grew up in Wausau and graduated from Wausau East High School and was active in many sports. He completed welding training at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau. Denny married his best friend, Sandra 'Sandy' Baumann on October 21, 1972, in Merrill. He also served his country in the United States Army Reserves. Denny began his career as a welder at Marmet Corporation in Wausau. During his career, he also worked at Goetsch's Welding and retired from Northern Wire in Merrill.

Denny was a well-known taxidermist in the Merrill and surrounding areas. For 32 years, he operated 'Denny's Taxidermy' and shared his skill with many avid fishermen and hunters. He enjoyed both rifle and bow hunting and the great outdoors. In his later years after retirement, he enjoyed using his crossbow. Denny and Sandy enjoyed spending time outdoors, especially at their favorite fishing holes. While the girls were growing up, the family would take annual vacations to Pitlik's Resort in Eagle River. Denny loved being busy and enjoyed taking care of his house and yard. He cherished spending time with his family and friends and will be remembered for his comical personality.

Denny is survived by two daughters, Michelle Skidmore, Wausau and Angela (John) Chatham, Cedar Grove, TN; grandson, Justin Feck of Wausau; granddaughter, Cassandra Feck of Wausau; and granddaughter, Tyler Chatham (fiancé Hunter Walker) of Jacksonville, FL; sister, Penny (Alan) Will of Wausau; nephew, Chad (Katie) Will of Wausau; and niece, Ami Johnson of Wausau. He lost the love of his life, Sandy, on August 31, 2020, he was also preceded in death by his parents.

Per Denny's wishes, a private family service will be held to lay him and his wife to rest in union at a later date. Taylor-Stine Funeral & Cremation, Merrill is assisting the family.

Online condolences may be made at www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com.

Karen I. Diels



Karen I. Diels, age 84, of Merrill, WI, passed away peacefully, while surrounded by family, on Friday, October 4, 2024. Karen, a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend was born on August 17, 1940, in Merrill, WI, to the late Herman and Ivy (Gartmann) Hoffman.

In her late teens, Karen met Allan "Butch" Diels, the love of her life, and they were married on October 11, 1958. Together they raised two wonderful children, Tim and Scott. The family enjoyed a happy life in Merrill after relocating from Two Rivers, WI. Karen was employed at Lincoln Wood Products where she was the first female employee ever hired and she was very proud of that. Karen's quick wit and determination showed everyone that women could make it in a "Man's world". Karen started her employment with Lincoln Wood Products in 1967 where she worked until her retirement.

Although she was proud of her accomplishments throughout her career, Karen also dedicated herself to caring for her children and her family. It was important to Karen that she was close to her family. She would spend Friday nights going out to eat with her family, having craft days with her grandchildren, delivering her sugar cookies that everyone loved, calling her family on their birthdays so that she could sing "Happy Birthday" to them, creating themes for Christmas celebrations (she was willing to do anything that her grandchildren asked her to do), and hosting her famous annual "Farm Party" for over 30 years. It was rare that a day went by that Karen and Butch did not spend time with their children or grandchildren. Karen's legacy of love and the importance of family will forever remain in the hearts of those who knew her.

Karen leaves behind her husband, Allan "Butch" Diels; her children, Tim (Sherri) Diels, and Scott (Mary Jo) Diels, both of Merrill, WI; her grandchildren, Keith Diels, Kristina (Zach) Patterman, Courtney (Dan) Diels-Osness, Derek Diels, Hunter (Kaylin) Diels, and Chantelle (Zack) Anderson; and her great-grandchildren, Cayden Diels, Adein Diels, Kaylee Patterman, and Riley Patterman.

A celebration of life gathering was held on Friday, November 15, 2024, from 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM, with a late lunch served at 3:00 PM, at the Agra Pavilion at 404 S. Park Street in Merrill. Generations Funeral Home & Crematory of Tomahawk is assisting the family. View Karen's obituary and leave online condolences at generationsfuneral.com.

www.merrillfotonews.com

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OBITUARIES

Vernon Fenney



Vernon Fenney, 91, passed on peacefully in his sleep the morning of Sunday, October 6, 2024, at his home in Merrill, WI.

Vernon (Sonny) was born in Kingston, NY, on May 22, 1933, to Vernon S and Dorothy E Fenney. Vern was the oldest of four sons and held a unique relationship with each one of his brothers. He grew up hunting in the Catskill Mountains, road motorcycles (well into his eighties), drove semi trucks all along the east coast, and served in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve from 1951-1961. After his discharge and with the support of the GI Bill, Vern attended the Allied Institute of Technology in Chicago where he became a master machinist. Chicago is also where he met the love of his life, Fernande Cardin (1927-2011), and they married on July 18, 1958. After camping at the Council Grounds State Park, the family fell in love with the area and decided to move to central Wisconsin in 1969. In the Town of Harding, Vern and Fernande built a small farm, Vern served as town supervisor for multiple years, and he was elected as union president of the Boilermakers during his employment at Loed Company. He and his wife loved to travel visiting most of the US, along with multiple trips to France to see the family of Fernande.

He is survived by his daughter Doreen (Alan) Renken, Merrill; brothers Robert Fenney and Alfred Fenney, both of Agawam, MA; granddaughter Heather Young, McFarland; step son-in-law Dennis Wrzesinski, Portage; step grandchildren Crisy Wrzesinski, Portage; Cindy (Kraig) Hanig, Merrill; Robert Cwiklik, South Elgin, IL, Jenny (Colin) Hudler, Alsip, IL, Steven Wrzesinski, Merrill, along with their families.

He is preceded in death by his parents Vernon and Dorothy Fenney, wife Fernande Fenney, brother Bruce Fenney, stepson Michael Cwiklik, stepdaughter Sylvie Cwiklik-Wrzesinski.

A memorial gathering will be held at the home of Doreen and Alan Renken at noon on November 2nd, 2024, W6945 Edward Drive Merrill.

Roy Timothy Thiel



Roy Timothy Thiel, 65, of Merrill, WI passed away at Marshfield Medical Center, Weston on October 8, 2024, with immediate family by his side.

Roy was born to Roy Henry and Jacquelyn Carol (Colling) Thiel on March 18, 1959, in Appleton, WI where he attended elementary school before moving to Merrill, WI. Roy graduated from Merrill High School in 1977 where he met his wife, Laurie (Annis). His high school years were spent not playing traditional sports, but instead competitively racing motocross and competing in local and surrounding area ice drags with friends and brother Mike (Herbi).

He married Laurie Annis on May 26, 1979, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill, WI. They had a wonderful family and life together until his untimely passing.

In his later years, he loved spending time with the family he created with Laurie and tinkering away in his garage & shed. Motorcycles continued to be a fixture throughout his life, and he had an immense love for all things WI sports, a love he shared with his wife and passed down to his sons. However, he preferred to listen to the iconic voices of Mr. Uecker, Mr. Larrivee, and Mr. Lepay on the radio in lieu of watching games on TV.

Roy is survived by his wife, Laurie; children, Tyler (Nicole) Thiel, and Lucas (Elizabeth) Thiel; grandchildren, Harper, Grayson, Beckett, Lennox, Ellianna, and Josephine; brother, Michael (Jayne) Thiel; sisters, Linda (Greg) Berlin, Jennifer (Timothy) Mueske, and Lisa Hinz; in-laws, Joni Annis, Tim (Lynn) Annis, Sara (Dave) Wendorf, Lisa (Bruce) Duginski, along with many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

He is preceded in death by his sister, Cynthia; father, Roy; mother, Jacquelyn and father-in-law, Philip Annis.

The family wishes to thank the wonderful and caring staff at Marshfield Medical Center - Weston, for the care and compassion they had shown to Roy and his family during his last days.

Taylor-Stine Funeral & Cremation, Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made at www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com.

Matt G. Mensching



Matt G. Mensching, age 58, of Stoughton, passed away on Wednesday, October 2, 2024. He was born on March 16, 1966, in Merrill, the son of Leonard and Elaine (Geils) Mensching.

Matt graduated from Merrill High School. He was employed as a truck driver for his entire working career. Matt enjoyed gambling, playing cribbage and horseshoes, and cheering on the Packers. He was always a good friend to everyone. Matt will be missed by his brothers, Mark (Dawn Osness) Mensching and Mike Mensching; nieces, Krista (Scott) Ward and Jennifer Hanson; great-nieces, Elizabeth Ward, Cali Hanson and Krystine Mensching; and great-nephew, Cole Hanson. He was preceded in death by his parents, Leonard and Elaine Mensching.

A celebration of life was held at OREGON BOWL, 214 Spring St., Oregon, from 2p.m. until 6p.m. on Saturday, October 12, 2024.

Online condolences may be made at www.gundersonfh.com.

THE CLASSIFIEDS

SMALL ADS BIG DEALS

LEGAL NOTICES

Legals 7700 Legals 7700

DATE SIGNED: October 10, 2024
Electronically signed by Becky S. Byer
Probate Registrar
STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY
Notice to Creditors (Informal Administration)
Case No. 2024-IN-40
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF VALENCIA GRUNENWALD
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:

1. An application for informal administration was filed.
2. The decedent, with date of birth March 29, 1928 and date of death August 9, 2024, was domiciled in Lincoln County, State of Wisconsin, with a mailing address of N1297 Fairview Road, Merrill, WI 54452.
3. All interested persons waived notice.
4. The deadline for filing a claim against the decedent's estate is January 26, 2025.
5. A claim may be filed at the Lincoln County Courthouse, Merrill, Wisconsin, Room Probate Office. Craig J. Nienow N5041 County Road JJ Irma, WI 54442 715-536-7185 Bar Number: 1015178 Published October 17, 24 & 31, 2024 WNAXLP

DATE SIGNED: September 30, 2024
Electronically signed by Becky S. Byer
Probate Registrar
STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF ERIC JAMES NORTON
DOD 09/24/2024
Notice to Creditors (Informal Administration)
Case No. 2024 IN 36
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:

1. An application for informal administration was filed.
2. The decedent, with date of birth 06/24/1966 and date of death 09/24/2024, was domiciled in Lincoln County, State of Wisconsin, with a mailing address of 112 S Foster St., Merrill, WI 54452.
3. All interested persons waived notice.
4. The deadline for filing a claim against the decedent's estate is 01/10/2025.
5. A claim may be filed at the Lincoln County Courthouse, 1110 East Main Street 2nd Floor, Merrill, WI, 54452 Room Probate Office. Dana Jane Wilson 3911 Moen Lake Rd Rhinelander, WI 54501 715-367-0094 Published October 10, 17 & 24, 2024 WNAXLP

The October 8, 2024 Council Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next scheduled meeting. The minutes are available for viewing in the City Clerk's Office and on the City of Merrill website. Complete Ordinances are available on the City of Merrill website: <https://www.ci.merrill.wi.us/> Published October 17, 2024 WNAXLP

Liquor and Beer License Application
Town of Russell, Lincoln County
October 16, 2024 - June 30, 2025
Class B Combination License
Ma's Place
Jennifer McCurry, Agent
N5375 State Highway 17
Gleason WI 54435
Published 10/17/24 WNAXLP

PAID LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters to the Editor, a chance for members of the community to comment on issues of concern to them. All letters must be original, not duplications of letters addressed to public officials or written by others. The views and opinions expressed are those of the letter writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of this publication, its publishers, Editor, or staff.

To the Editor:

I probably would not know either Elizabeth McCrank or Calvin Callahan if not for their participation in the last two terms of Lincoln County's Board of Supervisors. Various issues have forced me to pay attention, and that has given me an understanding of their participation and votes during that time.

So, let me explain why I am not voting for Calvin Callahan for State Assembly.

Mr. Callahan often was not present at local meetings, both at committee level and at Board meetings.

At one point, he chaired the Broadband Committee which met only once during his tenure.

Mr. Callahan asked to be taken off and was removed from all County Board committees, possibly due to his being down state. While sitting in the State Assembly, his few pieces of legislation focused on fluff recreational bills, anti-wolf measures, and taking away more rights from the poor and disenfranchised - basically those without lobbyists.

Perhaps it is his inexperience that led him to promote those bills. My understanding of his work experience shows him going from school into politics without much, if any, real-life experience in the real-world work force.

Mr. Callahan, when he was present at Board meetings, voted twice against the question of Pine Crest Nursing Home going to referendum. He also voted for eliminating UW-Extension, against the much-needed wheel tax, and supported selling Pine Crest Nursing Home.

I am voting for Elizabeth McCrank because of

her impressive resume, extensive work history, and her votes at County Board.

Elizabeth McCrank has earned various degrees from various universities and also taught at university level for several years. Her experience is not limited to just academics but also shows a number of years at carpentry and construction, and more recently, as adult reference librarian at the T.B. Scott Free Library and outreach specialist for the UW-Extension.

Her consistent presence at meetings, her comprehensive take

on several issues before the County Board, her pragmatic suggestions to make Board decisions more workable, her willingness to work with others, and her community involvement earn my vote for the 35th District State Assembly seat.

- Diana C. Smith
Tomahawk, Wis.

The cost for Paid Letters to the Editor is \$40.00 per letter of up to 250 words, plus \$10.00 per additional 50 words, and must be prepaid prior to printing.

EARLY IN PERSON VOTING NOTICE

Early voting for **TOWN OF MERRILL** residents for the November 5th, 2024 General Election, will begin at the Town of Merrill Community Center, W4594 Progress Ave. on Tuesday, October 22nd.

Voting hours are:
Tuesday • October 22nd 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Thursday • October 24th 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday • October 29th 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Thursday • October 31st 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Friday • November 1st 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Mitzi Flegner, Clerk
Published October 10 & 17, 2024 WNAXLP

EARLY IN PERSON VOTING NOTICE

Early voting for City of Merrill Residents for the **November 5th General Election** will begin at City Hall (1004 East First Street) on **Tuesday, October 22, 2024.**

In-Person Early Voting hours are:
10/22 - 10-25 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
10/28 - 10/31 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
11/1 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

In-Person Early Voting may be completed in the City Clerk's office or at the Treasurer's office window. Please have a photo ID available. Early voting is not permitted on Monday, November 4, 2024.

Lori L. Anderson-Malm
City Clerk
Published October 17, 2024 WNAXLP

Correction to article in last week's edition

Correction: In Last Week's Article Entitled "The Price Of Progress: Demolition Of The Holy Cross Chapel To Make Way For Expansion Of Aspirus Merrill Hospital," Sister Pat McCormack's Name Was Spelled Incorrectly. Our Article Read "Sister Pat McCormick" Which Was Incorrect.

Also, Sister Pat, who was the former Provincial for the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross USA Province (2000-2006, 2012-2021), was incorrectly identified as the archivist for the Sisters. The archivist is Sister Pam Hodgson.

Our apologies for the errors.

FFA MEMBER OF THE MONTH

Sophie Koehler, a Junior at Merrill High School (MHS), has been named FFA Member of the Month for September 2024. Sophie joined FFA in her Sophomore year. "I joined FFA because I loved 4-H and have been actively involved in 4-H for 11 years now," she said. "I wanted to learn more about agriculture and be more involved in general." She enjoys FFA and participates in fundraisers and field trips to World Dairy Expo and the Midwest Horse Fair, she said.

Sophie and her sister, Grace, have owned a pumpkin patch in the Town of Pine River for 12 years. She also works part-time at Fleet Farm in the Farm and Auto Department.

At school, Sophie is involved in SkillsUSA and was recently elected State Treasurer.

In her free time, "I enjoy welding and spending time with my friends and family," she said.

The daughter of Jessica and Mike Koehler of Merrill, Sophie has a 3.1 GPA. "After graduating, I plan on attending NTC for a degree in Agricultural Business Management," Sophie said.



Sophie Koehler



Independently Owned and Operated

Congratulations from this sponsor:
Gail Abegglen
715-551-8016
2402 E. Main St., Merrill

FFA Members highlighted in this feature are selected by the Executive Committee of the FFA, not by the sponsor.

STEPPIN OUT

WEEKLY BRIEFING - OCTOBER 17TH - 21ST

THURSDAY - BROASTED CHICKEN
 FRIDAY - COD & WALLEYE
 SATURDAY - CORDON BLEU
 SUNDAY - BROASTED CHICKEN
 MONDAY - CHEF'S SPECIAL

CONFERENCE ROOM & HALL RENTAL AVAILABLE
 Open at 4pm Mon. & Thurs. • Open at Noon Fri.
 Open at 11am Sat. & Sun. • Closed Tues. & Wed.

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COSMO Theatre KIDS • \$5.00
 SENIORS • \$5.00
 ADULTS • \$8.00

Main St. • Merrill

MOVIES AND SHOWTIMES
 10/18/24 TO 10/24/24
 Mondays All Seats \$5.00

SMILE 2
 "R" (2HR 7MIN)
 FRIDAY: 7:00PM
 SATURDAY: 1:00, 3:30, 7:00PM
 SUNDAY: 1:00, 3:30 & 7:00PM
 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY

REAGAN
 "PG13" (2HR 21MIN)
 FRIDAY: 7:00PM
 SATURDAY: 1:00, 3:30, 7:00PM
 SUNDAY: 1:00, 3:30 & 7:00PM
 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY

THE WILD ROBOT
 "PG" (1HR 41MIN)
 FRIDAY: 7:00PM
 SATURDAY: 1:00, 3:15 & 7:00PM
 SUNDAY: 1:00, 3:15 & 7:00PM
 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY

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 Sun. 7am-2am, Mon.-Thurs. 11:30am-2am, Fri. 11:30am-2:30am, Sat. 7am-2:30am,
 Dine-in • Takeout • NO Delivery

Saturday & Sunday
 Breakfast 7am-11am
 Mimosas & Bloody Mary's

Mondays
 \$5 Burger & Home Fries
 Dine-in only & additional toppings are extra.

Sunday & Tuesday
 Broasted Chicken
 12 Noon-8pm

Friday
 Fish Fry 12 Noon-8:45pm

Red Granite Bar & Grill
 Order Online - Check wait times or just stop in!
 Find us on

Classifieds GET THE JOB DONE!
 Buy • Sell • Trade • Rent • Move

ALL YOU CAN EAT PANCAKE DINNER AND BAKE SALE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20 • 11A.M. - 1P.M.

Homemade Potato Pancakes and Buttermilk Pancakes served with Scrambled Eggs and Sausage.

- Adults - \$10
- Children 6-12 - \$5
- 5 years old and under - Free

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Faith Lutheran Church
 15425 Highway K South - Merrill
 715-536-5443

The Eagles Club
 1205 N Lake St. • Merrill, WI 54452
Open to the Public • (715) 536-7471
 NO FOOD SERVED: Sat. & Sun. - Special Events Only

DINNER SPECIALS FOR OCTOBER

TUESDAY NIGHTS
 OCT. 22ND - SPAGHETTI & MEAT SAUCE
 OCT. 29TH - BOURBON CHICKEN

FRIDAY NIGHTS
 OCT. 18TH - CATFISH
 OCT. 25TH - BLUEGILL

DINNER SERVED FROM 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Visit our Website! 584.localfoewi.com

PANCAKES All-You-Can-Eat (Potato and Regular)
 Drinks available

This Sunday, October 20, 2024 • 9am-1pm
 Adults \$10.00 • Children (6-10 years) \$5.00
 Children 5 and under are FREE
 (Carry-Out Available)

PROCEEDS WILL BE GIVEN TO **RUSS HARTWIG** TO HELP DEFRAY MEDICAL EXPENSES

"HELP WHERE HELP IS NEEDED"

SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER 3-5PM

FREE EVENT

- CRAFTS
- SNACKS
- BOUNCE HOUSE

TRUNK OR TREAT

Come dressed in costume!

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 715-536-6588 www.trinityberlin.net

TRINITY
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 Town of Berlin

"FALL INTO FUN" VENDOR FAIR!

OCTOBER 26, 9AM - 3PM
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 1500 O'DAY ST
 MERRILL WI

LOCAL VENDORS AND BUSINESSES LARGE AND SMALL!
 HELPFUL SERVICES AND AMAZING PRODUCTS.
 SHOP LOCAL AND JOIN THE FUN!

SEE YOU THERE!

Area Events & Entertainment Community Calendar

Oct. 17 - Open Mic Night at Sawmill Brewing Co.
 Oct. 18 - Haunted Sawmill "Blackout Night"
 Oct. 18-20 - Grace & Sophie's Pumpkin Patch
 Oct. 19 - Lincoln County's 150th celebration - in Tomahawk & at Merrill Fair Grounds
 Oct. 19-20 - Grampa's Farm
 Oct. 25 - Merrill Park &

Rec Halloween Hoopla at the MARC
 Oct. 25-27 - Grace & Sophie's Pumpkin Patch
 Oct. 26 - "Fall into Fun" Vendor Fair at Bell Tower Assisi Hall
 Oct. 31 - Grace & Sophie's Pumpkin Patch
 Oct. 31 - City of Merrill Trick or Treating from 4-7 p.m.
 Oct. 31 - St. Stephens UCC

Trunk to Trunk Treating
 Nov. 2 - Free meal for Veterans at Northwoods Veterans Post
 Nov. 3 - Gleason Lions Pancake Breakfast/Blood Drive

For more information, go to: merrillchamber.org/events or contact the event sponsor.

T.B. Scott Free Library to hold free movie event

The T. B Scott Free Library in Merrill will hold their October free Critic's Choice Movie Event on Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2024, at 1 p.m.

The Final Problem, a short story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is the basis

for this film starring Robert Downey Jr, Jude Law, and Jared Harris. The famous detective is at it again, but without his trusty sidekick? Watson is dissolving the partnership and getting married. However, arch enemy, Professor James

Moriarty, has other plans. Bring a friend and watch these two super sleuths in action! As always, free rides to and from the library are available via the Merrill Go Round, and freshly popped popcorn will be ready to enjoy.

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HOURS
 MONDAY • Noon - 6pm
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 SATURDAY • 11am - Close
 SUNDAY • 11am - 6pm

OCTOBER BOOZE OF THE MONTH
ALL CROWN WHISKEY
 \$6.00 - Double Pint

SAT. OCT. 19TH
CRIBBAGE TOURNAY
 Starts at Noon
 \$40 per team
 \$240 1st Place (based on 12 teams, 100% payout)
 Lunch Provided!

FRI. OCT. 25TH
LIVE MUSIC BY: GEOFF LANDON
 7pm-10pm

SAT. OCT. 26TH
MEAT RAFFLE
 Open 11am, Start 1pm
LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL FUNDRAISER



Shown presenting the check, from L to R: Kent Johnson, Greg Eichelkraut, Greg Hartwig, and Kelly O'Day. Submitted photo.

Triathlon event donates to Friends of the River Bend Trail

The Black Squirrel Scurry paddling triathlon recently donated \$1,400 to the Friends of the River Bend Trail for continued improvements and expansion. The triathlon was held in parts of the City of Merrill and surrounding

Merrill area on July 27, 2024. More than 50 volunteers made it possible for a record number of 72 registrants to compete in this annual event. Donations were also made to VFW Post 1638, the VFW Auxiliary, and Scout Troop 503.

CLOVERDALE COUNTRY STORE

2 miles South of Curtiss on Hwy. E 715-223-4797
 We accept: SNAP/EBT Cards

Bratwurst Cheddar Uncooked - Frozen 19 oz. ONLY \$2.99	Orange Juice No Pulp - Original 59 oz. ONLY \$1.29	Cranberries Fresh 5 lbs. ONLY \$2.29 a lb
Turkeys whole Frozen 16 lbs. ONLY 99¢ a lb	Butter Quarters Unsalted 16 oz. ONLY \$2.99	Celsius Kiwi Guava 12-12 oz. ONLY \$6.99

OPEN MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:30-6:30 • SATURDAY 8:30-4:00

Sweet Potato Fries Straight Cut - Frozen 80 oz. ONLY \$5.99	Cream Cheese 1/3 Less Fat 8 oz. ONLY 99¢	Snack Crackers Original 11.8 oz. ONLY \$1.89
Bacon Sliced Maple Brown Sugar Frozen 12 oz. ONLY \$2.69	Gouda Cheese Cubes 6 oz. ONLY 99¢	Sausage Sticks Original - Mini 4 oz. ONLY \$1.69
Ham Smoked Boneless - Frozen 6 lbs. ONLY \$1.29 a lb	Heavy Whipping Cream 32 oz. ONLY \$1.99	Baked Beans Homestyle 28 oz. ONLY \$1.29
Cheese Curds Breaded - Cheddar Frozen 16 oz. ONLY \$2.99	Shredded Cheese 3 Blend 5 lbs. ONLY \$8.99	Bacon Thick Cut Frozen 20 oz. ONLY \$3.99
Pork Chops Bone-In, Uncooked Frozen 32 oz. ONLY \$3.99	Mozzarella Cheese Shredded - Diced 10 lbs. ONLY \$1.79 a lb	Chicken Breast Chunks Seasoned Uncooked - Frozen 6 lbs. ONLY 99¢ a lb
Steak Uncooked New York Strip - Frozen 10 oz. ONLY \$8.99 a lb	Cream Cheese Original 4-8 oz. ONLY \$5.99	Sausage Sage Uncooked - Frozen 16 oz. ONLY \$1.99
Sausage Links Fully Cooked - Original Frozen 10 lbs. ONLY \$1.29 a lb	Reddi Whip Original 15 oz. ONLY \$2.49	Smoked Sausage w/Ched Cheese, Frozen 10 oz. ONLY \$2.29
Sausage Links Fully Cooked - Original Frozen 9.6 oz. ONLY \$1.29	Pizza Thin Crust Pepperoni - Frozen 23 oz. ONLY \$2.99	Sausage Crumbles Chorizo - Fully Cooked Frozen 5 lbs. ONLY 69¢ a lb
Chicken Tenderloins Uncooked - Frozen 3 lbs. ONLY \$5.99	Chicken Breast Fritters Breaded Fully Cooked - Frozen 5 lbs. ONLY \$1.49 a lb	Pepperoni Sliced - Frozen 32 oz. ONLY \$3.99

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OCTOBER 26TH & 27TH

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MARKED DOWN BELOW COST so we can move them out!

Also some odds & ends coffee tables, end tables, lamps, pictures, bedroom sets, bedroom dressers, chests & nightstands.

Watch next week's papers for more details or go to courtsidefurniture.com

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I can't wait! SUPER LOW PRICING!

Long-time Merrill resident, Kay Folsom, celebrated 100th birthday

BY TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

She was born Mary Kathleen Bornhofen on Sept. 1, 1924. The only daughter of Marbella and John Bornhofen, she started going by "Kay" and then married Dr. William Hilt and, after remarrying following his death, as of Sept. 1, 2024, on the occasion of her 100th birthday, she was known as Mrs. Kay Hilt Folsom.

In honor of her celebrated 100th birthday, Merrill Mayor Steve Hass recognized Kay with a personal letter that Kay cherished.

"On behalf of the City of Merrill, I would like to recognize your birthday milestone of reaching 100 years old," Mayor Hass said in his letter. "You and your family have made Merrill your home by operating a business, and being a part of the Merrill Community. The City appreciates all that you have done to make Merrill a better place. Your hard work and effort is a model that should be followed by our citizens. Please accept my gratitude and let me personally wish you a Happy 100th Birthday."

Being honored by the Merrill community was incredibly important to Kay as she neared her 100th birthday, as her time spent in Merrill and memories of those years were such an important part of her life.

Kay's adventure in Merrill began when her parents operated the Jeane Hats & Dress Shop in the 1940's, a ladies dress shop that was located on E. Main St., the second store west of the Courthouse, about where Courtside Furniture is located currently. Kay attended UW-Milwaukee and awaited the return of her high school sweetheart, William Hilt, who was serving in World War II. When William returned from his service as a pilot in the US Army Air Force,

the couple married and he attended college on the GI Bill and then went to the Illinois School of Optometry. Kay got a teaching job in Hammond, Ind., going into the homes of children with severe illnesses and disabilities who were not admitted into school settings, until she became pregnant with the couple's first child. "When my mother became pregnant, the Superintendent said that she must stop; however, when he could not find a replacement, he insisted that every parent must give written permission for her to continue coming to their homes," said daughter Kathleen Hilt Ponko who was the child in utero at the time.

"Everyone did," she said, "So she taught these children through the rest of her pregnancy." Each of the families gifted Kay with a layette in preparation for the birth in early June of 1948.

When William graduated, he and Kay moved to Merrill in 1948, starting out living with Kay's parents in an apartment above the dress shop. They settled into the Merrill community and put down their own roots here. Dr. William Hilt started an optometric practice that would last 30 years. And Kay started Lincoln County's first homebound teacher program, where



Kay Folsom, holding the letter from Merrill Mayor Steve Hass wishing her a Happy 100th Birthday. Submitted photo.

teachers would go into the homes of area children challenged by illness and disability, similar to the program she had been a part of in Indiana. "She traveled the county to visit all the children with severe disabilities or illnesses to ensure these young people get a formal education in their homes," Kathleen said. "It was innovative and critical to families and continued until public schools instituted bussing and more ways to incorporate handicapped children into the school

systems."

A second daughter, Jeane, was born to the couple in September 1949.

"On a Sunday morning of July 12, 1951, while my mother [Kay] was playing the organ at St. Francis Church, the [dress shop] building exploded along with two other businesses including an A & P store," Kathleen said. "Somehow, my father got the two little ones and my grandmother out, but my grandfather was trapped in the basement. He was terribly burned but survived the explosion."

"I don't think they re-opened the store in Merrill," she said. "Tragically, that same location was the site of the infamous JC Penney explosion that took the lives of eight people nine years later on July 18, 1960. In retrospect it was determined that a gas leak had caused both explosions."

During her years in Merrill, Kay and her husband Bill raised their two children and Kay was also active in community life. Kathleen said Kay was a founding member of the Hospital Auxiliary, Beta Sigma Phi Sorority, and Merrill Community Theater.

When Bill and Kay began to plan for retirement, they started a new adventure in Florida. Kay worked for numerous other ladies dress shops and Bill encouraged her to start her own store. It became her second career when, in her '50's, Kay opened a dress shop of her own in Naples, Florida, known as Kay's On the Beach.

Bill and Kay built a new home in Merrill on Tee Lane Drive and just a month later, Bill died suddenly in Merrill in 1984 at the age of 62.

"Mother has always maintained their home and relationships in Merrill, and over the years would go back and forth to Florida to attend her business,"

Kathleen said.

In 1986 in partnership with her daughter, Jeane, Kay and Jeane together grew the business into five boutiques on Marco Island and in the Naples area, Kathleen said. Today her grandson, Banks Seiple, is the third generation to work within the business Kay started there.

Kathleen said that even up to her last days, Kay maintained a deep love for her home in Merrill and the people she knew here. Kay celebrated her milestone 100th birthday in Marco Island surrounded by family, Kathleen said. Both of her daughters were there, along with her son-in-law, Bill Ponko; grandchildren Banks Seiple, Sarah Ponko, and Billy Ponko and Billy's wife, Rachel; and two great granddaughters, Rory Ponko and Reese Ponko.

But it was ever so important to her that the people of Merrill knew how much they meant to her, as well, and that they knew she was thinking of them on this momentous occasion and remembering her days in Merrill. "A big thank you to Kathy Wulf and Mayor Hass for recognizing a remarkable woman on this milestone day," Kathleen added.

Sadly, Kay died last week on Oct. 10, 2024, just weeks after her momentous birthday.

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PLAYGROUND
from page 1

in attendance to conduct the ribbon cutting. Tim Gruling, one of the four children of Robert "Bob" Gruling and Eppie Gruling and a resident of Merrill, said this park was a dream-come-true for their parents, who had long wished for a playground in the location so that children would have something to do during events held at the Agra Pavilion. All of Bob and Eppie's children - Mary Beth Robinson of Wausau, Robert John "BJ" Gruling of Whitefish Bay, Tim Gruling of Merrill, and Kay Gruling of Wausau - were in attendance for the occasion. Some of Bob and Eppie's grandchildren and great-grandchildren also attended.

Bob Gruling, who was born and raised in nearby Hamburg and the youngest of 20 children, graduated from Athens High School in 1949 and then went on to become a teacher in Merrill, teaching at the former Franklin Elementary School (beginning in 1953), the former Pine River Elementary School (as both teacher and principal), and then serving as principal at both the former Lincoln and Washington Schools in town.

Esther "Eppie" (Schulz) Gruling, a lifelong Merrill resident, was born in Merrill, twin sister to Edna, and also the youngest child - but of "only" nine children. She graduated from Merrill High School in 1951.

Bob and Eppie met in 1950 at a wedding dance, courted for five years, married in 1955 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill, and then raised their family on Merrill's west side. While Eppie worked a number of jobs over the years, including as an administrative assistant at the Merrill Ranger Station, her greatest joy was being a wife and mother and staying home during her children's young years to raise her family. The couple cherished 63 years of marriage together before

Bob passed away at age 87 in 2018; Eppie died at age 90 in 2023.

The Gruling family provided the funding for the playground and its installation as a gift to the community in memory of their parents. They broke ground on the project on June 11 with their extended family in attendance, after which they laid Bob and Eppie's ashes to rest - together - in a private family gathering at the cemetery.

Both Bob and Eppie were very active in the Merrill community and beyond, and beloved members of the community during their lifetimes. And both loved children.

With four of their own, seven grandchildren, and more than a dozen great-grandchildren, their family legacy will live on.

It is their children and family's hope that with the addition of the Gruling Family Playground, that legacy will also live on in Merrill - the community they both so loved and enjoyed throughout their lifetime together - and that their memories will be honored through the sound of the laughter of the children who enjoy this playground for many years to come.

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AWARDS from page 1

on their behalf in the absence of a representative from the association.

Weinbrenner Shoe Company was also honored with the 2024 Legacy Award, in recognition for their 88 years of serving the Merrill Community. President Jeff Burns accepted the award on behalf of the employee-owned company.

"We are incredibly proud of our local businesses and organizations that continue to make Merrill such a vibrant and welcoming community," said Clyde Nelson, Executive Director of the Merrill Chamber of Commerce, via the release. "These awards recognize not only their economic contributions but also their dedication to supporting and serving our community."

Celebrating Merrill business, nonprofits, and leaders

In his keynote address, "Celebrating You," Nelson said, "We're celebrating the entrepreneurs, the small business owners, the corporate leaders, the nonprofits, and the advocates of capitalism and free enterprise who keep Merrill thriving. You are the ones shaping the future of our community, and your leadership is what continues to make Merrill a place of opportunity, innovation, and growth."

MERRILL FOTO NEWS Student of the Week

This Week's Featured Student is **Morgan Webb**

Daughter of

Matthew and Megan Webb

Morgan is in the 4th grade at Trinity Lutheran School. She was nominated by Mrs. Handlin.



What is your favorite subject in school? Why?
My favorite subject is art because I like drawing and painting and doing projects.

What is your favorite part of school? Why?
My favorite part of the school day is recess or break because I like seeing my friends outside and it gives us a break from school work.

What would you like to do/become someday? Why?
I want to be an artist because my mom says that I'm very good at art.

Morgan is a kind hearted, respectful student. She is a hard worker and is always willing to help out.
~ Mrs. Handlin

Student of the Week Sponsored by:
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"Imagine the leadership exhibited in 1911 when a group of businessmen/entrepreneurs got together to form the Merrill Chamber of Commerce," he said. "The courage, the leadership, the innovation it took to get this off the ground. It wasn't that they could go to the internet and model themselves after other Chambers."

"At that time there were only nine other chambers in the entire state of Wisconsin," Nelson said. In existence, Chambers in: Metropolitan Milwaukee, Green Bay, Superior-Douglas County, Racine, LaCrosse, Beloit, Kenosha, Marinette, and Fond du Lac. The Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce is the 10th oldest Chamber in the state of Wisconsin, which currently has around 270 Chambers, he said.

"As John Quincy Adams once said, 'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.'"

"Just like those entrepreneurs, small business owners, and corporate leaders over 113 years ago when they formed the Merrill Chamber of Commerce," Nelson said. "They were the original advocates of capitalism and free enterprise. And that's what each of you represents. You continue to carry that torch. You are leaders - not only in your businesses and organizations, but in this community. By stepping up, taking risks, and inspiring others, you pave the way for growth and innovation."

Chamber Board of Directors, staff, updates

The members of the Board of Directors of the Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce were recognized at the event, including current members: Chairperson Andrew Polzin, Chairperson Elect Lora Bladow, Treasurer Kurt Rust, Emeritus Nancy Kwiesielewicz, Past Chair Dr. Kate Gress, Angela Bailey, Ryan Martinovici, Jen Schlaefer, Mark Raymer, Tina L. Scott, Heath Heidemann, Tony Kusserow, Jessica Gipp, Dawn Gapko, and Korey Bloch. Also recognized and in attendance: Chamber Executive Director Clyde Nelson, Program Director Cheryl Skoug, Marketing Director Sarah Sturm, Marketing Team Member Theresa Grund, and Ex-officio members Sara Guild, Steve Hass, Rod Akey, and Renee Krueger. Newly elected 2025 members of the Board of Directors were announced: Tricia Detert representing Merrill Area Public Schools, Melissa Wrycha representing Park City Credit Union, and Nancy Stadler representing

Nicolet Bank. And retiring Board members Kurt Rust and Ryan Martinovici were recognized and thanked for their service on the Board. Volunteer Deb Schleif was also recognized and thanked for all of her hard work and contributions over the course of the last year.

Chamber Ambassadors

Korey Bloch, Ambassador Chair, also recognized all of the many volunteer Chamber Ambassadors that contribute to the success of the Merrill Area Chamber including: Allyson English - Nicolet Bank, Bill Weston - Provident Insurance, Connor Sczygelski - Culver's of Merrill, Danielle Wilcenski - Park City Credit Union, Dawn and Tim Dunbar - DD Photography, Dawn Smith - City of Merrill Park and Recreation Department, Emily Gibson - Associated Bank, Jennifer Porath - Wipfli, Kevin Hill - Merrill Sheet Metal Works, Konnor Beyer - Associated Bank, Korey Block - Weinbrenner Shoe Company, Len Kats - Riva Merchant Solutions LLC, Molly Lyon - Church Mutual Insurance, Sasha Everett - In the Lite Electric, Shelly Storm - Park City Credit Union, and Sue Kunkel - Park City Credit Union.

Molly Lyon was honored as the 2024 Ambassador of the Year.

For more information about the Merrill Chamber of Commerce, go to merrillchamber.org or call 715.536.9474.



2024 Mid-Size Business of the Year: Associated Bank. Photos courtesy of Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce.



2024 Hometown Business of the Year: Westside Market and Easy Wash Laundromat.



2024 Small Business of the Year: Lincoln County Humane Society.



2024 Non-profit Business of the Year: Merrill Police Association.

ATTENTION HUNTERS

DO YOU HAVE A PARTICULAR HUNTING MEMORY OR EXPERIENCE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?
How about a particular photo of that trophy Whitetail Buck or other game? If so, we want to hear from you!

Please send your submissions to Merrill Foto News Editor Tina Scott at tscott@mmclocal.com by Friday, Oct. 25th.

Your submission(s) may be featured in the Merrill Foto News' Annual Hunting Guide in mid-November!

**Any hunting-related submission is welcome, regardless of how new or old. While e-mailed submissions are preferred, in-person submissions may be dropped off at the Merrill Foto News Office (2011. E. Main Street) between regular business hours of 8 a.m-5 p.m, Monday-Friday.*

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Caroline Durbin.

Blue Sky Photography/Peter Tesch photos.

Merrill Varsity swimmers take first place in four events, lose meet to Everest

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

On Thursday, Oct. 10, 2024, the Merrill Girls Varsity Swim Team hosted a dual against the DC Everest Girls at the Prairie River Middle School pool.

While DC Everest took the meet, a number of Merrill Varsity girls made a splash with first place times in their events.

The Merrill Girls took first place in the following events:

- Event 2 - 200 Yard Medley Relay - Addison Jirovec, Olivia Pajtach, Marissa Miles, Marissa and Claire Jirovec with a time of 2:01.15
- Event 8 - 50 Yard Freestyle - Marissa Miles with a time of 26.71
- Event 10 - 100 Yard Butterfly - Marissa Miles with a time of 1:02.48
- Event 20 - 100 Yard Breaststroke - Olivia Pajtach with a time of 1:17.85

Merrill Varsity girls

also had a number of second place finishes in the following events:

- Event 4 - 200 Yard Freestyle - Deylah Schulz with a time of 2:22.36
- Event 6 - 200 Yard IM - Addison Jirovec with a time of 2:32.63
- Event 12 - 100 Yard Freestyle - Claire Jirovec with a time of 1:01.52
- Event 14 - 500 Yard Freestyle - Olivia Pajtach

with a time of 5:55.78

- Event 18 - 100 Yard Backstroke - Addison Jirovec with a time of 1:08.30
- Event 22 - 400 Yard Freestyle Relay - Addison Jirovec, Caroline Durbin, Brenna Jirovec, and Olivia Pajtach with a time of 4:23.96

**Box Score
DC Everest 101 @
Merrill 69**



Claire Jirovec.



Emily Winter.



Addison Jirovec.

Business News & Tidbits

Hugo's Pizza supports local St. Vincent de Paul

Hugo's Pizza of Merrill has donated more than \$1,000 to St. Vincent de Paul over the past four years. Going forward, 10% of the sales on all Hugo's Pizza gift cards purchased will be donated directly to the St. Vincent de Paul Outreach Center of Merrill.

Weinbrenner Shoe Company breaks ground on new \$14.5 million facility in Marshfield

Ellis Construction, a full-service construction company based in Stevens Point, recently broke ground on a brand-new, state-of-the-art Weinbrenner Shoe Company facility in Marshfield. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on Sept. 30, 2024. The \$14.5 million manufacturing facility will be located in Mill Creek Business Park and is expected to open in late 2025, coinciding with the 90th anniversary of Weinbrenner Shoe Company producing American-made, quality Thorogood® work boots in Marshfield.

The 70,000-square-foot building designed by Ellis Construction with a focus on employee health and productivity is expected to support more than 150 jobs in Marshfield. The production floor will be modernized to accommodate equipment with safety and technology upgrades. Weinbrenner Shoe Company made a point to solicit employee feedback with a vote on

the new building's exterior color, which will be red. The new facility is expected to bring 35 new jobs to the organization, expanding Weinbrenner's current workforce of 120.

"We're proud to be part of this new chapter for Weinbrenner Shoes," said Andrew Halverson, Executive Vice President of Ellis Construction. "With a similar long-standing history in central Wisconsin, we know that this building will be a lasting landmark for generations to come."

Reaffirming its longstanding commitment to supporting union labor, Weinbrenner worked alongside Ellis Construction to select contractors that ultimately resulted in union firms capturing nearly 80% of contracts when union labor was an available option.

"We manufacture Thorogood® boots for America's working men and women and believe in supporting the union laborers that are the foundation of our company," said Weinbrenner President Jeff Burns. "We invited both union and non-union trade partners to bid, and we are proud that union firms won the majority of the work."

Park City Credit Union helps secure grant for local business

In early September, Park City Credit Union (PCCU) announced it had facilitated the successful submission

of a grant application on behalf of First Street Coffee of Merrill. The grant was awarded through PCCU's partnership with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago (FHLB Chicago) as part of the Community First® Accelerate Grants for Small Business program.

The Community First® Accelerate Grants for Small Business initiative provides critical support to small businesses, helping them grow and thrive within their communities. First Street Coffee, a beloved local fixture, will use the grant funds to enhance its operations and continue serving as a vibrant gathering place for the community.

"We are thrilled to have played a role in helping First Street Coffee secure this grant," said Val



L to R: Val Mindak, President/CEO of Park City Credit Union (PCCU); Dawn Swan, Owner of First Street Coffee; and Danielle Wilcenski, Member Experience Manager with PCCU.

Photo courtesy of Park City Credit Union.

Mindak, President/CEO of PCCU. "Supporting small businesses is at the heart of what we do. These businesses are the backbone of our community, and we are committed to helping them succeed."

For more information about PCCU's commitment to supporting local businesses or how your

business can benefit from grant opportunities, visit parkcitycu.org.

PCCU is a member-owned financial cooperative providing financial services to over 24,000 members who live, work, or own land in Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Price, Rusk, Taylor,

or Vilas counties with offices located in Merrill, Tomahawk, Minocqua, and Rhinelander.

To submit news items for possible publication in the Business News & Tidbits column, submit short releases (no longer than 200 words) to tscott@mmlocal.com.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Erik Grunenwald, a Sophomore at Merrill High School (MHS), has been named Athlete of the Week for the week of October 17, 2024. Erik took individual first place in the recent Varsity Cross Country meet with Faith Christian Academy and Northland Lutheran School, and also contributed to the Merrill Boys Varsity Cross Country Team taking first place in that event. This is his second year on the Varsity Cross Country Team. Erik is a member of the EMU Varsity Hockey Team, having come up through the ranks of the Merrill Youth Hockey Association, starting as a Mite in the program. He also plays Baseball for MHS. Last year he was split between JV and Jv2 on the team; he started out playing t-ball at a young age and advanced through Little League and the Merrill Traveling Team.

At school, Erik's favorite class is history and he is a member of Raise Your Voice Club and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He also works part-time at a neighbor's farm. In his free time, Erik likes to be outdoors. When he isn't playing sports, he enjoys downhill skiing and camping with his family.

The son of Chris and Sarah Grunenwald, Erik has a 4.0 GPA and plans to attend a four-year college after high school graduation. His goal is to become a commercial pilot.



Erik Grunenwald

Congratulations from these sponsors:



Athletes highlighted in this feature are selected by the Foto News editorial staff, not by the sponsors.

Send direct comments or suggestions to fotonews@mmlocal.com



Grace Reimann is attacking the ball, Kaela Clerveaux is #12, and Brooklyn Harding #10 is behind her covering.
Blue Sky Photography/Peter Tesch photos.



Breleigh Raasch attacking with Ava Detert, Gabby Wheeler, and Grace Reimann covering.



Gabby Wheeler and Kaela Clerveaux surrounded by Miley Krueger, Ava Detert, and Grace Hoff.

Merrill Girls Varsity Volleyball Team celebrates despite 2-3 loss to SPASH

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Last Thursday, Oct. 10, 2024, the Merrill Girls Varsity Volleyball Team hosted SPASH for a Conference match-up on their home court and celebrated, despite losing 2-3.

"I know you might think it's crazy to say because we lost, but this game was a very big win for us," said Merrill Varsity

Girls Volleyball Head Coach Kasie Holt. "Do I wish we would have won? Absolutely. Do I think we could have won? Of course. However, a few weeks ago when we played SPASH for the first time, they swept us with scores of 19-25, 14-25, 14-25," she said.

"When I compare those scores and how we played tonight, I'd say that's something to be proud of. SPASH is a tough team, and

we truly fought for every point until the end. Our defense was on fire as Ava Detert picked up 21 digs, followed by Miley Krueger with 15, Maddie Robbins with 11, and Gabby Wheeler with 10."

"Put that together with our block getting several touches to slow down the ball and Brooklyn Harding leading with four stuff blocks on the right side; we were doing very well

defensively. Because our defense was running like a well-oiled machine, Kaela Clerveaux was able to end the night with 25 assists and spread the wealth along the net with kills coming from Grace Reimann (6), Kendell Klug (8), Brooklyn Harding (5), Grace Hoff (5), and Breleigh Raasch (5) - Kaela

was also a threat to SPASH, collecting 6 kills of her own, leading our team with her kill percentage of .417 on the night."

"If you read that back, every single starter was mentioned for having a great night, as it was truly a TEAM effort," Holt said. "Everybody did their job

and gave it their all, which I am so proud of. We are coming to the end of our regular season and peaking at just the right time before playoffs begin next week."

Box Score
SPASH 3 @ Merrill 2
SPASH won 25-14, 24-26, 25-19, 22-25, 15-12



Breleigh Raasch attacking with Maddie Robbins, Ava Detert, Kaela Clerveaux, Brooklyn Harding, and Grace Hoff covering.



The entire team sings Hail to the Blue with the crowd after the game.

2024 Merrill High School Fall Sports Schedule

Boys Football (Varsity, JV, and JV2)		
Thurs. Oct. 17	Rhineland (JV2)	Home 5:30 pm
Fri. Oct. 18	Rhineland (Varsity)	Away 7:00 pm
Mon. Oct. 21	Rhineland (JV)	Home 5:30 pm
Cheer Team (Varsity & JV)		
Fri. Oct. 18	Rhineland (Varsity)	Away 7:00 pm
Mon. Oct. 21	Rhineland (JV)	Home 5:30 pm
Girls Swim & Dive (Varsity and JV)		
Thurs. Oct. 17	Marshfield (Varsity & JV)	Home 5:30 pm
Thurs. Oct. 24	Wausau West (Varsity & JV)	Home 5:30 pm
Girls Volleyball (Varsity, JV, and JV2)		
Tues. Oct. 22	Rhineland-Regional's (Varsity)	Home 7:00 pm
Boys Soccer (Varsity and JV)		
Thurs. Oct. 17	Multiple Schools-Pool Play #3	Away 7:00 pm
Thurs. Oct. 24	Shawano-Regional's	Away 7:00 pm
Girls Cross Country (Varsity and JV)		
Sat. Oct. 19	Nine Mile Park (Varsity)	Away 9:30 am
Boys Cross Country (Varsity and JV)		
Sat. Oct. 19	Nine Mile Park (Varsity)	Away 9:30 am

For More Information On Playoff Schedules & Brackets
Please Visit www.wiaawi.org For Details

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