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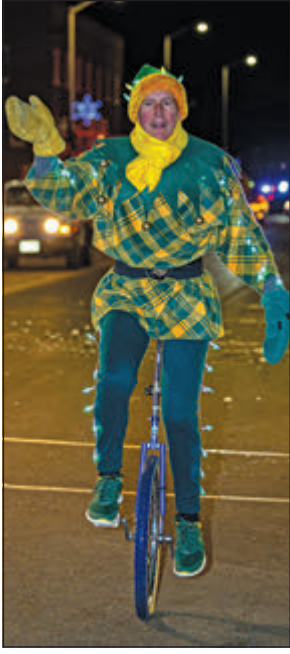
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# Merrill's annual Lighted Christmas Parade



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Children bundled up against the cold wave from a float in the parade. **More photos online merrillfotonews.com** Joseph Frederick photos.

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**Left Photo:** As is tradition in the annual Merrill Lighted Christmas Parade, Santa Claus rides in the bucket of Merrill Fire Department's Engine 63, high up where all the children can see him and he can assist with lighting the tree at the end of the parade. **Right Photo:** Santa waves at the children.



## Use salt sparingly, if at all, on sidewalks and roads

Prevent water pollution by opting for sand instead of salt

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

The Northcentral Wisconsin Storm Water Coalition (NWSWC) wants to remind area residents to use extreme caution when salting sidewalks and driveways to prevent water pollution. According to the NWSWC, it only takes one teaspoon of salt to pollute five gallons of water to a level that is toxic for freshwater ecosystems.

By adopting other practices, you can minimize your use of salt in winter and protect Wisconsin waters.

They offer these tips:  
• Shovel - Clear walkways and other areas before the snow turns to ice. The more snow you remove manually,

the less salt you'll have to use and the more effective it will be.

• Let the sun take over - If shoveled area gets some sun, you may not need to do anything else even if the temperature is below freezing.

• Sand - Sand is abrasive, so when applied on ice, it makes it safer to walk on the slippery surface immediately, so use sand instead of salt. If it snows again, you'll need to reapply more sand. Note: "Sandbox sand" is difficult to spread because it has smaller grains and sticks together easier. Look for "sand" or "masonry sand." Definitely use

See **SALT SPARINGLY** page 11

## 2024 Deer Hunting Season recap

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) last week provided preliminary license sales, harvest registration, and hunting incident numbers for the 2024 nine-day gun deer hunting season.

### Preliminary license sales data

According to a release from the DNR, preliminary figures indicate the number of deer hunters in Wisconsin

slightly increased compared to 2023.

As of 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 1, 2024, sales for deer hunting privileges (which include gun, archery, crossbow, conservation patron, and sports licenses) reached 791,023, up from 788,697 for the same time period last year. Of those, 553,652 were for gun privileges only, up from 553,479 in 2023.

See **HUNTING RECAP** page 5



Scene from Wisconsin state park  
Karel Bock

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**MERRILL Foto News**

To allow our employees time with their family for Christmas, the Merrill Foto News will not be published on December 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Early Deadlines for the January 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue**  
DISPLAY & CLASSIFIEDS:  
Fri., Dec 27<sup>th</sup> by 3 PM

Our office will be closed  
December 23 - 26  
and January 1

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## PUBLISHER'S LETTER

### The Joys and Blessings of Christmas

Dear Reader,

Christmas holds many meanings for those who celebrate this special day and the season that surrounds it. At its heart, Christmas signifies the birth of Christ, a moment of profound spiritual importance. But it also brings to mind the joy of giving, with gifts and presents for little boys and girls, each package wrapped with love and anticipation.

While we often find ourselves striving to be our best during the holiday season, the true magic of Christmas shines brightest in the eyes of a child. In their wonder and delight, we are reminded of the simple, pure joy that this time of year brings.

Merry Christmas to all.



**PATRICK J. WOOD**  
Publisher

Author of "Reflections" a new book now available on Amazon.

# DATCP: How to avoid holiday shopping scams

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is reminding consumers to be on alert for common holiday shopping scams.

"During the winter holidays, many Wisconsinites exchange gifts to bring joy and show their appreciation for others," DATCP said. "Unfortunately, scammers also know that gift buying and giving is a holiday tradition and will try to take advantage of consumers' good intentions."

#### Package delivery scams

"Have you received a text message about a failed or

delayed package delivery? Knowing that many consumers make their holiday purchases online, scammers send these texts and emails hoping you will click on the link they send," DATCP said. "But opening that link will direct you to a convincing copy of a real delivery company's website that asks for your personal information or an additional 'shipping fee.'"

**DATCP's tips:** To check the status of a delivery, go directly to the delivery company's or retailer's website. *Don't* click the links in a text or email.

#### Online marketplace scams

Online marketplaces

like Craigslist, eBay, or Facebook Marketplace allow users to buy and sell products directly with each other.

"Whether you are selling or buying, be wary if a user asks you to pay upfront, requests you move your conversation to text messages or another platform, or says they need you to send them a security code—which could give them access to your private accounts," DATCP said.

**DATCP's tips:** Keep conversations on the platform they started on. *Never* send anyone a security code sent to you, for any reason.

#### Fake website scams

DATCP said scammers create fake versions of common retailers' websites, then try to trick consumers into making "purchases" on the fraudulent platform.

"They may use ads, social media posts, or emails and text messages to draw users in," DATCP said. "By making a 'purchase' on a fake website, you are sending money to a scammer and giving them your payment information, which could lead to further fraudulent charges or even identity theft."

**DATCP's tips:** *Never* open a link you are sent, even for a familiar site. Instead type the address directly into your browser. Before entering any information, closely examine a website's address for unusual phrasing or incorrect spelling, and confirm that "HTTPS" (not "HTTP") is at the beginning of the address *before* entering personal

See **SHOPPING SCAMS** page 11

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**Location: the Gleason Mennonite Church**  
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**Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence with singing. Psalm 100:1, 2**

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# Galella sentenced after reaching plea agreement

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

On Monday, Dec. 9, 2024, in Lincoln County Circuit Court, 23-year-old Vincent Galella of Merrill was sentenced, after reaching a plea agreement with the State of Wisconsin, in separate charges brought against the defendant in 2023 stemming from two alleged incidents with two different women, one in 2023 and the other in 2018 when he was still a minor.

The Sentencing Hearing for Galella started with Galella withdrawing a previous plea agreement he had reached with the State earlier this summer and replacing it with a very similar but slightly different stipulated plea agreement, which the court accepted.

The new stipulated plea agreement combined charges previously brought against Galella, first in May 2023 alleging an incident to have occurred the night prior, and then in July 2023 alleging an incident previously reported and alleged to have occurred in March 2018 when Galella was 17 years old and the victim 14 years old.

In the first case, Galella was originally charged with attempted first degree sexual assault, operation of a firearm while intoxicated, and first degree recklessly endangering safety. In the second case, Galella was originally charged with attempted first degree sexual assault - intercourse with a person under age 16 - by use or threat of force or violence, second degree sexual assault of a child under 16 years of age, and false imprisonment.

Under the plea agreement, Galella pled No Contest to an amended felony charge of false imprisonment [replacing the charge of attempted first degree sexual assault] and was subsequently found Guilty by virtue of that plea by Judge Galen Bayne-Allison and also pled No Contest to the felony charge of first degree recklessly endangering safety and was also found Guilty by virtue of that plea by Judge Bayne-Allison. The misdemeanor charge of operating a firearm while intoxicated was dismissed but read into the record for sentencing, all in relation to the first case or set of charges. Per the plea agreement, Galella

also pled No Contest to an amended felony charge of 4th degree sexual assault [replacing the charge of attempted first degree child sexual assault - intercourse with a person under age 16 - by use of threat of force or violence] and was found Guilty by virtue of that plea by Galen Bayne-Allison, and the charges of second degree sexual assault of a child under 16 years of age and false imprisonment were both dismissed but read into the record for sentencing in regard to the July 2023 charges that date back to the 2018 incident.

Ultimately, Judge Bayne-Allison addressed the defendant directly during sentencing, saying, "You attempted to rape two women." While he acknowledged Galella's admitted problems with alcohol and substance abuse contributed to the situation, he also said those substances only serve to lower inhibitions and that the fundamental desire for such behavior needs to be addressed with the appropriate treatment. Bayne-Allison said he had reviewed and carefully considered all the documents filed in the case, including the AODA Evaluation and Doctor's Report; the State and Defendant's sentencing recommendation and defense sentencing memorandum; and the many character letters submitted on behalf of the defendant; and that probation is always the first consideration, however, he felt some level of confinement was warranted due to the seriousness of the crimes.

Judge Bayne-Allison then sentenced Galella to four years in state prison—three years incarceration with one year extended supervision—for the charge of false

imprisonment, and opted to withhold sentencing but gave Galella seven years on probation for the charge of first degree recklessly endangering safety, with that to run concurrently [at the same time] as his jail time.

For the amended charge of fourth degree sexual assault, Judge Bayne-Allison also opted to withhold sentencing but gave Galella an additional two years on probation, to run consecutively [after the first seven years on the other charge].

The judge declined to require sex offender registry but maintains the right to require such registration in the future,

depending on Galella's future conduct, he said.

Galella was given credit for three days already served in custody.

Judge Bayne-Allison ordered Galella to write apology letters to his victims but advised him to wait until he had been undergoing treatment and better understood the reasons for his actions before doing so, said letters to go through the District Attorney's office, as he is to have no other contact with the victims. He also cautioned Galella that he is to maintain absolute sobriety and spoke at length about his lapse in sobriety earlier this year—which had been a condition

of his release on bond—and the nine-year timeframe, which put his case and his family's resources at risk. Galella is not to consume or possess alcoholic beverages or controlled substances but may take prescribed medications in the prescribed dosages. During

the nine-year timeframe, he may not go on tavern/bar premises, beer tents, or any establishment where the main purpose is for the sale of alcohol except

See **GALELLA**  
page 11

**Pet of the Week**



Shadow is looking for a home to call her own where she can be the queen bee and get all the cat nip she can handle! This goofy girl is going to need to be the only pet but believe us Shadow will keep you entertained!

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# OBITUARIES

## Lana L. Droske

Lana L. Droske, of Van Dyne, died on December 6, 2024 at the age of 82 at Lakeshore Manor in Oshkosh. Lana was born on July 9, 1942 in Elcho, a daughter of the late Robert and Lila (Diemel) Vanduser. She married Vernon Stogbauer who passed away in 1990, later marrying John Droske who preceded her in death in 2008.

Survivors include daughter, Elizabeth (Jeffrey) Gundrum of Appleton; two sons, Robert (Marilyn) Stogbauer of Van Dyne and Christopher (Deborah) Stogbauer of Merrill; nine grandchildren, Matt Stogbauer, Christine Aurit, Jonathon Stogbauer, Andrew Stogbauer, Jeffrey Stogbauer, Russell Stogbauer, Kaitlyn Voss, Jacob Gundrum, and Zachary Gundrum; seven great-grandchildren; and a brother, Wallace Vanduser. She is also survived by many beloved nieces, nephews, and friends.

In addition to her parents and husbands, she was preceded in death by her sisters, Crystal Loring, and Marlene Belanger and a beloved niece, Doreen Weis.

Lana was raised in Bayfield, and cherished her years there. In their Franklin, Wisconsin years Lana and Vern were members of the Milwaukee Coast Guard Auxiliary. After raising their family, Lana and Vern operated the Gold Coast Inn Motel in Antigo. After Vern's passing, she relocated to New Mexico and then Oklahoma with John and they enjoyed many years there until his death. Lana returned to Wisconsin in 2008 where she was able to spend time with her children and grandchildren, entertaining them with her quick wit, ice cream eating prowess, singing of classics by artists like Tom Lehrer, and telling of never ending stories. She was often heard saying to a grandchild "Did I ever tell you about?" Although she often had, they all graciously listened to hear perhaps a new tidbit or twist to the story.

Throughout her life she had a love for antiques, garage sales, and auctions which she shared with Vern, John and many friends throughout her years, especially her dear friend, Dawn. Lana was an expert Cribbage, Scrabble and Yahtzee player in her day and was always proud when she held the "high score". She had a love of gambling slots that brought her hours of enjoyment, often claiming it as her "off to work" time. She and Vern were members of Bass Lake Country Club and enjoyed their years of golfing there. Lana lived her life on her own terms and was often a force to be reckoned with. She was a woman of firm faith and convictions. She raised her children in a strong Christian tradition. Lana has been a true blessing to her entire family, she will live on in many hearts and treasured memories.

A graveside service will be held at a later date at Woodlawn Cemetery in Mattoon.

A special thank you to Lakeshore Manor for their loving care of Lana over the past few years and to Preceptor Hospice during her last weeks. In lieu of flowers donations can be made in Lana's name to Lakeshore Manor, 711 Bayshore Drive, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 54901.

Bradley Funeral Home is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences at [www.bradleyfh.com](http://www.bradleyfh.com).

## Sherryl L. Westfall



Sherryl L. Westfall, 72, of Gleason, passed away Thursday, November 28, 2024, at her home surrounded by her family.

Sherryl was born February 5, 1952, in Rhinelander, daughter of Connie Bruns. She married Steven Westfall in 1997, he survives. Sherryl worked at the former Hurd Millwork, Merrill for over 20 years. After she retired from Hurd, she took a position with Innovative and was a caregiver for adults with special needs.

Sherryl and Steve enjoyed spending quiet mornings sitting on their porch drinking Folgers coffee. She loved their property in Gleason and the peace and quiet of the country. Sherryl enjoyed gardening and taking care of her plants. She had a green thumb and often nursed her daughter's plants back to health.

Sherryl loved hummingbirds and had collections of hummingbirds and angels. She and Steve enjoyed riding their Harley. Sherryl enjoyed shopping and was obsessed with QVC. She also liked reading magazines, picking strawberries and making jam, and canning. She adored her little great-grandchildren.

Survivors include her husband, Steve Westfall of Gleason; children, David Randall of Irma, Gary 'Tookey' (Mindy) Randall of Irma, Angela (Cortney Clark) Dupke of Wausau, and Charity Dupke of Merrill; eleven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and siblings, Sandy (David) Baker of Texas and Pennsylvania, Sheila Rogers of Illinois, Diane (Gene) Hegerman of Illinois, Faron Hecklinger (Kim) of Baraboo, and Chris (Mary Lou) Hecklinger of Illinois. Sherryl was preceded in death by her mother, Connie Hecklinger; infant daughter, Linda Randall; sister, Cathy Hecklinger; and brother-in-law, Roy Rogers.

A celebration of Sherryl's life will take place at a later date. Taylor-Stine Funeral & Cremation, Merrill, is assisting the family. Online condolences may be made at [www.taylorstine.com](http://www.taylorstine.com)

## Sandra A. Spears



Sandra A. Spears died peacefully with her family at her side on December 1, 2024. Sandy loved children, especially her grandchildren and great grandchild. She took care of many children during her life and was known to all as "Nana Sandy." She was an avid seamstress, sharing her talents with many.

Sandy was born in 1943 and lived in Merrill her entire life. She worked at Church Mutual as an audit specialist for 24 years.

She was preceded in death by her husband Ron Spears, her parents Herman and Ivy (Gartmann) Hoffman, a brother Harvey Hoffman, two sisters Susan Hoffman and Karen Diels, and her son, Todd Spears. She is survived by her son Dean (Jean) Spears, daughter Tammy (Trevor) LaRene, grandchildren Bennett and Ethan (Becca) LaRene, Tasha and Todd Spears, and great-granddaughter Ivy LaRene, as well as many beloved friends and relatives.

The family would like to thank the staff of Aspirus Merrill Emergency Department and the Aspirus Cardiac ICU staff in Wausau, as well as the Merrill Police Department.

Waid Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at [www.waidfuneral.com](http://www.waidfuneral.com). In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the American Heart Association, or in support of organ donation, or to St Stephen United Church of Christ in Merrill.

A celebration of life will be held at the Eagles Club, Sunday, January 12, 2025, from 1-4pm.

## Velda E. Johnson "Dolly"



Velda E. Johnson "Dolly", age 93, of Woodruff, formerly of Wausau, passed away on December 1, 2024 at Milestone Senior Living in Woodruff.

Velda was born on January 24, 1931 in Brokaw, Wisconsin to Elmer and Dora Gustavson. She graduated from Wausau High School. Velda married Floyd J. Johnson of Merrill on October 2, 1950.

While her son and daughter were in elementary school, Velda served for years as a dedicated Girl Scout Troop Leader and a Cub Scout Den

Mother; she regularly volunteered as a Grant Elementary School "room mother", assisting the classroom teachers with special events, fundraisers, and fieldtrips. When her children were in middle school, she returned to work at Hoffer's Glass of Wausau as a data processor.

Velda was a long-time member of Wesley Methodist Church in Wausau. She was an active member of the Shrine Auxiliary at the Wausau Masonic Lodge, YWCA and the YWCA Antique Study Club. Velda greatly enjoyed playing bridge with her circle of friends. She was a huge dog lover and owned three different miniature schnauzers over her lifetime.

After retirement from Hoffer's Glass; Velda and Floyd spent 18 years as antique dealers. She enjoyed finding beautiful antique glassware, china, and ceramic pieces for their shop in Merrill's Antique Mall.

Velda and Floyd enjoyed golfing and taking pontoon boat rides with family and friends at the family cottage on Bear Lake in Hazelhurst, Wisconsin and winter trips to Inverness, Florida. To celebrate their 50th anniversary, they celebrated in Hawaii.

She is survived by her children Ron Johnson, of Wausau and Sally (Mike) Young, of Chippewa Falls; granddaughter Dorie (Dr. Adam) Klassen of Oak Harbor, WA. She is further survived by other relatives and friends. She is preceded in death by her husband, Floyd and sister Ramona White.

A private memorial service will be held at a later date. Memorials in Velda's name may be sent to Shriner's Children's Hospital-Twin Cities ([www.shrinerschildrens.org/en/locations/twin-cities](http://www.shrinerschildrens.org/en/locations/twin-cities)) or Marathon County Humane Society (Make A Donation).

## Lawrence Paul (Larry) Kaderavek



age 75, of Tomahawk, WI formerly of Richland County, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, November 28, 2024 at Aspirus Hospital, Wausau.

He was born on December 13, 1948, in Richland Center Hospital, the son of Paul and Lois (Long) Kaderavek. He was married on July 18, 1970, to Catherine Ann Jones of Richland Center, Wisconsin. She preceded him in death. He was married to Kristine Komosa on

June 2, 2006. Larry graduated from Richland Center High School in 1967 where he was a champion wrestler and star football player. He graduated Luther College in 1971 where he played collegiate football and received a Magna Cume Laude degree in history. He had a successful, decades-long management career in the automotive industry throughout Wisconsin, and was most recently employed with Harley Davidson Security in Tomahawk.

His lifelong passions included walking, working out, fishing, watching nature and surroundings on the lake by their home in Tomahawk, hunting and spending time with family and friends. He especially loved enjoying time at the Kaderavek farm in Richland County, playing euchre with family and watching sports, enjoying the beauty of the area and visiting with neighbors that stopped in. His presence will be greatly missed at all the events at the recently awarded 100-year farm, especially the annual Farmegeddon.

Survivors include his wife, Kristine of Tomahawk, WI; son, LTC(R) Robert (Catherine) Kaderavek of Pewaukee and their children Sarah, Grace and Emma; son, Matthew (Laura) Kaderavek of Tomahawk; daughter, Larissa Kaderavek and her sons Kane and Kael Dahler of Sun Prairie. Stepdaughter Paula Aschbrenner (Todd) and their children Caitlin and Cole of Wausau, and a sister Diane Kaderavek (Robert Anglin) of Madison. Also, nieces and nephews and extended family members.

He was preceded in death by his Parents, Paul and Lois Kaderavek and by his first wife, Catherine.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 11:00 AM at Stafford Funeral Home in Richland Center with burial in the St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. Visitation will be at the funeral home from 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM.

Memorials may be made to Whitetails Unlimited Wisconsin Headquarters. Online condolences available at [www.staffordfuneralhomes.com](http://www.staffordfuneralhomes.com). The Stafford Funeral Home is assisting the family with the arrangements

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## In Memoriams

In Loving Memory of  
**JOHN DOE**  
Apr. 9, 1954-Aug. 6, 2014

It's hard to believe it's been 2 years already since you left us. We think of you every day.

Love & Miss You  
Jane, Sue & Bob

We can assist you in finding a heartfelt way to honor and remember your loved one.

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MERRILL Foto News

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Please send announcements, news briefs, photo submissions and letters to the editor to: [tscott@mmclocal.com](mailto:tscott@mmclocal.com)

## Taylor & Stine

Funeral Home and Cremation Services

**Leah D. Reist**  
Licensed Director/Licensed Pre-need Insurance Agent

**McKenna K. Meunier**  
Licensed Director

**Tammy Klade**  
Non-Licensed Support Staff Licensed Pre-Need Insurance Agent

903 E. 3rd Street • Merrill • 715-536-6244  
[www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com](http://www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com)

Preliminary 2024 Gun Deer Season Harvest Totals			
Deer Management Zone	2024 Gun Deer Harvested	Change From 2023	Five-Year Average Comparison
Northern Forest Zone	Antlered: 17,591	-1.8%	-7.9%
	Antlerless: 11,909	8.7%	-7.2%
Central Forest Zone	Antlered: 3,947	8.7%	11.1%
	Antlerless: 3,042	6%	9.9%
Central Farmland Zone	Antlered: 49,326	9.1%	8.2%
	Antlerless: 61,685	9.2%	1.9%
Southern Farmland Zone	Antlered: 18,923	-5%	-1.2%
	Antlerless: 23,199	-0.6%	-2.7%
Total Preliminary Harvest Registrations	Antlered: 89,787	3.6%	2.7%
	Antlerless: 99,835	6.6%	-0.2%
	<b>Total: 189,622</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>

Photo courtesy of Wisconsin DNR

## HUNTING RECAP from page 1

Deer hunting license and harvest authorization sales will continue throughout the remaining deer hunting seasons. Final license sales figures will be available in January, when DNR staff will perform a thorough analysis and interpretation.

# OBITUARIES

### Fred M. Reader



Fred M. Reader, 91, of Merrill, formerly of the Town of Schley, Lincoln County, passed away Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at Pine Crest Nursing Home, Merrill.

Fred was born January 14, 1933, in Chicago, son of the Harry and Nelli Reader. He met Dorothy Hulke and they married on April 14, 1956. She passed away on April 29, 2013. Fred was raised by his father, Harry and stepmother, Dorothy

Johnson in Chicago. At age 5, he went to his Aunt Jeanette Helms' farm in Rhinelander. In the fall, he traveled back down to Chicago for the school year. When he visited Rhinelander, he rode the train all by himself. He did this for two years. Shortly after his 7th birthday, his brother Keith put him back on the train and Fred headed back to Rhinelander for good. Fred really disliked Chicago and loved being on the farm.

By age 8, Fred was working in the woods. By age 10, he was skidding all the pulp out and cutting the logs with a two-man saw. Fred went to school in Gleason for nine years. In 1947, he left school to work on a farm in Gleason.

At age 22, Fred was drafted into the United States Army. He began his tour in 1956 at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. He had basic training at Fort Lewis in Washington and advanced training at Fort Richardson in Alaska. Fred was stationed at Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska until his honorable discharge and 'mustering out' on November 6, 1957.

He was home from the Army for three days, before he took a job at the cheese factory. He was offered a job at Page Milk Company in 1961 and worked there until they closed in 1973. Fred then worked at WCA for two years and then for Lunda Bridge Resurfacing for another two years. In 1978, he began working at Northern Wire in Doering. He retired for the first time in 1998. He then worked for Merrill Equipment for four years and Northern Wire for four years. Fred also worked occasionally for Polak's Maple Hollow. His final retirement came in 2006.

Fred's favorite pastimes included watching Westerns, playing slow pitch for Mosser's and NickElaines, and bowling with Dorothy. Every Wednesday night, Dorothy and Fred would make supper for their grandkids. After they ate, they would play several games of poker. This tradition continued on after Dorothy passed away and up until just a few weeks ago.

Survivors include his daughters, Denise (Dan) Dengel of Merrill and Melody (Richard) Cisar of Oconto, WI; son, Tim (Sandy) Reader of Merrill; grandchildren and great grandchildren, Kassi Jo (Joshua) Erickson of Merrill, Krista (Andy) Lewandowski of Merrill, Nikole (Kyle) Vergin of Oshkosh, Gregory (Kayla) Cisar of Howard, Megan Reader (John Suggs) of Merrill, and Mallory (Luke) Rose of Merrill; great grandchildren, Bella, Noah, Alaynah, Beckett, Hadley, Carter, Quniton and one on-the way; and stepbrother, Harold (Linda) Reader of Harshaw.

Fred was preceded in death by his wife, Dorothy Reader; daughter, Kerry Reader; parents; siblings, Mildred 'Millie' (Robert) Morris, Keith (Sara) Reader, Buehla 'Sis' (Donald) Bartlet, Charles Reader, Ardell Reader, and Earl Reader; and step-brother, Harry Reader.

The funeral service for Fred was held at 11:00 A.M., Monday, December 9, 2024, at St. John Lutheran Church, Merrill. Rev. David Szeto officiated. The burial took place in Trinity Church Cemetery - Town of Schley (Dutch Corners) with military rites conducted by V.F.W. Post 1638 - Merrill. The family received friends beginning at 9:00 A.M. Monday at church. Taylor-Stine Funeral & Cremation is assisting the family. Online condolences may be made at [www.taylorstine.com](http://www.taylorstine.com)

## Preliminary harvest totals

DNR said preliminary figures show hunters registered 189,622 deer during the 2024 gun deer season, including 89,787 antlered and 99,835 antlerless deer.

Compared to 2023, the gun season harvest total is up 5.2% statewide, with the antlered harvest up 3.6% and the antlerless harvest up 6.6%.

"Since the opening of the bow and crossbow seasons, Wisconsin hunters have registered 289,361 deer," DNR stated. "This harvest is 8.7% ahead of the same time last year."

Adams County in the Central Farmland Zone led the state with 12.4 deer registered per square mile. Vernon County led the Southern Farmland Zone with seven deer registered per square mile. Adams County also led the Central Forest Zone registering 4.2 deer per square mile. Florence County led the Northern Forest Zone with 2.9 deer registered per square mile.

The DNR's Wisconsin Deer Harvest Summary webpage ([tinyurl.com/42emd3wx](http://tinyurl.com/42emd3wx)) contains more information regarding preliminary harvest registration totals, including county-level numbers.

## Local harvest numbers

Locally, for the 2024 traditional nine-day gun season, in Lincoln County [in the Northern Forest Zone], hunters registered 981 antlered and 664 antlerless deer, for a total of 1,645 deer harvested, and in Marathon County [in the Central Farmland Zone], hunters registered 3,218 antlered and 3,519 antlerless deer, for a total harvest of 6,737 deer.

For the entire 2024 deer season, including bow/crossbow season, as of Dec. 3 at 6:03 a.m. in Lincoln County, hunters registered 1,824 antlered and 1,019 antlerless deer, for a total of 2,843, and in Marathon County, hunters registered 5,676 antlered and 5,019 antlerless deer, for a total harvest of 10,695 deer. In Lincoln County, more than half of the harvest of antlered deer occurred during the bow/crossbow season, prior to the gun deer hunting season.

## Deer hunting seasons continue

The regular gun deer season ran from Saturday, Nov. 23 through Sunday Dec. 1, followed by the statewide muzzleloader season from Monday, Dec. 2 through Wednesday, Dec. 11. The statewide antlerless-only four-day hunt follows Thursday, Dec. 12, through Sunday, Dec. 15, and the antlerless-only holiday hunt in select farmland zone counties runs Tuesday, Dec. 24. through Wednesday, Jan. 1. 2025.

## First harvest certificates available

Hunters of all ages who harvested their first deer are encouraged to highlight this significant occasion with a first harvest certificate ([tinyurl.com/yc4dv3yk](http://tinyurl.com/yc4dv3yk)).

## 2024 gun deer season hunting incidents

As of Tuesday, Dec. 3, the DNR reported only one nonfatal firearm-related hunting incident during the 2024 gun deer season, in Vernon County, Wheatland Township.

According to the DNR, on Friday, Nov. 29, at approximately 4 p.m., a 14-year-old male was sitting in an enclosed tower stand with his father, hunting on private property. The victim's father heard what sounded like a gunshot in the distance. Shortly after, the victim felt pain in his feet and found that he was shot through both the left and right foot. The victim was transported privately to the hospital and received medical treatment for his injuries. The shooter has been identified, and an investigation is pending.

## Safety reminders

With various hunting seasons continuing through January of next year, the DNR reminds hunters to always practice the four primary rules of firearm safety, known as TAB-K:

- T - Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
- A - Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
- B - Be certain of your target, what's before it and what's beyond it.
- K - Keep your finger outside your trigger guard until you are safe to shoot.

# LEGAL NOTICES

Legals 7700

**CLAIMS DEADLINE NOTICE IN THE MATTER OF THE MJS INCOME TRUST DATED APRIL 11, 2018**  
Pursuant to Section 701.0508, Wisconsin Statutes, Kerry Steinagel and Brian Steinagel, as co-successor trustees of the MJS Income Trust dated April 11, 2018, with power to pay the debts of Judith E. Steinagel, D.O.D. September 3, 2024, hereby provides notice that the deadline for filing claims for payment of debts of Judith E. Steinagel with Kerry Steinagel and Brian Steinagel, as Co-Trustees of the MJS Income Trust dated April 11, 2018, is April 13, 2025, being the date four (4) months after the date of the first insertion of the notice.  
By: /s/Houngum Law Firm, LLC  
305 S. 18th Avenue, Suite 200  
P.O. Box 1516  
Wausau, WI 54402-1516  
Published December 5, 12 & 19, 2024  
WNAXLP

Legals 7700

**DATE SIGNED: November 14, 2024**  
Electronically signed by Becky S. Byer  
Probate Registrar  
**STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF SCOTT A. PFAFF**  
DOD: 07/31/2024  
**Notice to Creditors (Informal Administration)**  
Case No. 2024 IN 46  
**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:**  
1. An application for informal administration was filed.  
2. The decedent, with date of birth 05/28/1965 and date of death 07/31/2024, was domiciled in Lincoln County, State of Wisconsin, with a mailing address of W5486 Park Avenue, Merrill, WI 54452.  
3. All interested persons waived notice.  
4. The deadline for filing a claim against the decedent's estate is 03/07/2025.  
5. A claim may be filed at the Lincoln County Courthouse, 1110 East Main St, Merrill, Wisconsin, Room Probate Office. Mary M. John  
Eaton Law, LLP  
513 Grant St, Wausau, WI 54403  
Telephone: 715-843-6700  
Bar Number: 1019515  
Published 11/28/24, 12/5/24 & 12/12/24  
WNAXLP

**STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT LINCOLN COUNTY Summons**  
Case No. 2024CV000128  
Judge Robert R. Russell  
**Foreclosure of Mortgage: 30404**  
AmeriSave Mortgage Corporation  
Attn: Mortgage Disposition  
1 Corporate Drive, Suite 360  
Lake Zurich, IL 60047  
Plaintiff,  
v.  
**Brian E. Cooke**  
402 North Prospect Street  
Merrill, WI 54452  
**Brian E. Cooke**  
112 S. Main Avenue  
Dickinson, ND 58601  
Defendant.  
THE STATE OF WISCONSIN,  
To each person named above as a defendant:  
You are hereby notified that the Plaintiff named above has filed a lawsuit or other legal action against you. The complaint, which is also served upon you, states the nature and basis of the legal action. Within 40 days after December 12, 2024 you must respond with a written answer, as that term is used in chapter 802 of the Wisconsin Statutes, to the complaint. The court may reject or disregard an answer that does not follow the requirements of the statutes. The answer must be sent or delivered to the court, whose address is Lincoln County Courthouse 1110 E. Main St., Merrill, WI 54452-2579, and to Codilis, Moody & Circelli, P.C., plaintiffs attorneys, whose address is 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 200, Burr Ridge, IL 60527. You may have an attorney help or represent you.  
If you do not provide a proper answer within 40 days, the court may grant judgment against you for the award of money or other legal action requested in the complaint, and you may lose your right to object to anything that is or may be incorrect in the complaint. A judgment may be enforced as provided by law. A judgment awarding money may become a lien against any real estate you own now or in the future, and may also be enforced by garnishment or seizure of property.  
Dated: December 9, 2024.  
Codilis, Moody & Circelli, P.C.  
15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 200  
Burr Ridge, IL 60527  
(414) 775-7700  
[pleadings@il.cslegal.com](mailto:pleadings@il.cslegal.com)  
50-24-01034  
**NOTE: This law firm is a debt collector.**  
Codilis, Moody & Circelli, P.C.  
Attorneys for Plaintiff  
Electronically signed by  
Shawn R. Hillmann  
WI State Bar No. 1037005  
Emily Thoms  
WI State Bar No. 1075844  
Published 12/12/24, 12/19/24 & 12/25  
WNAXLP

Legals 7700

**DATE SIGNED: December 2, 2024**  
Electronically signed by Becky S. Byer  
Probate Registrar  
**STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF LEE GORDON WEGNER**  
D.O.D. October 23, 2024  
**Notice Setting Time to Hear Application and Deadline for Filing Claims (Informal Administration)**  
Case No. 24PR49  
**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:**  
1. An application for informal administration was filed.  
2. The decedent, with date of birth Feb 19, 1942 and date of death Oct 23, 2024 was domiciled in Lincoln County, State of WI, with a mailing address of W1863 Burgener Ave, Merrill, WI 54452.  
3. The application will be heard at the Lincoln County Courthouse, 1110 E. Main St., Merrill, Wisconsin, Room Probate Office, before Becky S. Byer, Probate Registrar, on 01-23-2025 at 10:00 a.m..  
**You do not need to appear unless you object. The application may be granted if there is no objection.**  
4. The deadline for filing a claim against the decedent's estate is March 21, 2025.  
5. A claim may be filed at the Lincoln County Courthouse, 1110 E. Main Street, Merrill, Wisconsin, Room Probate Office.  
6. This publication is notice to any persons whose names or address are unknown.  
If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call 715-536-0342 prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.  
Atty. Richard Wm. King / King Law Offices, LLC  
1667 Capital Avenue, Suite A Madison, WI 53705  
(608) 233-9588  
Bar Number: 1004736  
Published December 5, 12 & 19, 2024  
WNAXLP

**DATE SIGNED: December 2, 2024**  
Electronically signed by Becky S. Byer  
Probate Registrar  
**STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF KATHLEEN ANN WEGNER**  
D.O.D. October 23, 2024  
**Notice Setting Time to Hear Application and Deadline for Filing Claims (Informal Administration)**  
Case No. 24PR48  
**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:**  
1. An application for informal administration was filed.  
2. The decedent, with date of birth Sept 3, 1945 and date of death Oct 23, 2024 was domiciled in Lincoln County, State of WI, with a mailing address of W1863 Burgener Ave, Merrill, WI 54452.  
3. The application will be heard at the Lincoln County Courthouse, 1110 E. Main St., Merrill, Wisconsin, Room Probate Office, before Becky S. Byer, Probate Registrar, on 01-23-2025 at 10:15 a.m..  
**You do not need to appear unless you object. The application may be granted if there is no objection.**  
4. The deadline for filing a claim against the decedent's estate is March 21, 2025.  
5. A claim may be filed at the Lincoln County Courthouse, 1110 E. Main Street, Merrill, Wisconsin, Room Probate Office.  
6. This publication is notice to any persons whose names or address are unknown.  
If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call 715-536-0342 prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.  
Atty. Richard Wm. King / King Law Offices, LLC  
1667 Capital Avenue, Suite A Madison, WI 53705  
(608) 233-9588  
Bar Number: 1004736  
Published December 5, 12 & 19, 2024  
WNAXLP

## CITY OF MERRILL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

### NOTICE OF BID

The City of Merrill Public Works Department will accept bids for the following equipment at the Merrill City Clerk's Office, 1004 East First Street, Merrill, Wisconsin 54452, until 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 9th, 2025. Bid specifications may be obtained from the Street Superintendent at (715) 536-4222 or can be found on the City of Merrill website <http://www.ci.merrill.wi.us>.

- One (1) - 1 Ton 4x4 Cab and Chassis Truck - 84" CA
- One (1) - 1 Ton 4x4 Cab and Chassis Truck - 60" CA
- One (1) - Dump Box for 1 Ton Truck
- One (1) - Service Body for 1 Ton Truck

The City of Merrill reserves the right to reject any or all bids or to accept any bid they deem advantageous to the City of Merrill.

Dustin Bonack  
Street Superintendent

Published December 12 & 19, 2024

WNAXLP



# Area Events & Entertainment Community Calendar

Dec. 11-12 - City of Merrill Tour of Lights Bus Tour/Judging  
 Dec. 12 - Open Mic Night at Sawmill Brewing Co.  
 Dec. 13 - Free Swing Dance Basic Lessons at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church  
 Dec. 13 - Singing Santa at Johnson's Gift Store  
 Dec. 14 - Santa in the Fire House at Pine River Fire Department  
 Dec. 14 - Free family movie at the Cosmo: STAR, sponsored by Trinity Lutheran Church  
 Dec. 14 - Free movie at the Cosmo: Moana 2, sponsored by the Optimist Club (Free for the kids; \$2 for adults)  
 Dec. 14 - Santa at the

Sawmill Brewing Co.  
 Dec. 14 - Living River Concert at St. John Lutheran Church  
 Dec. 14 - Christmas Movie Trivia at Sawmill Brewing Co.  
 Dec. 14 - Christmas Bingo at Plautz's Pub  
 Dec. 15 - Firm Foundation Ringers Christmas Concert  
 Dec. 15 - Santa at East Hill Christmas Trees  
 Dec. 18 - Trinity Merrill Christmas Concert Series: The Garms Family  
 Dec. 18 - Christmas Music Trivia and Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest at Sawmill Brewing Co.  
 Dec. 21 - Merry Merrill Market  
 Dec. 21 - Blacklight Bingo

at Bubba's Pub  
 Dec. 26 - Critic's Choice Free Movie at T.B. Scott Free Library  
 Dec. 27 - Live Music: Mattea Joy at Sawmill Brewing Co.  
 Dec. 28 - Bar Bingo at Bubba's Pub  
 Dec. 28 - New Year's Bingo at Plautz's Pub  
 Dec. 31 - Bingo at St. Francis  
 Dec. 31 - Bobby Darren & Sheila Marie REAL Country Concert including tribute to Hank Williams Sr at VFW  
*For more information, go to: merrillchamber.org/events or contact the event sponsor.*

**Plautz's Pub** LLC.  
 310 E. 2nd St., Merrill  
 715-536-4611  
**SERVING FOOD DAILY TILL 8PM**  
**HOURS**  
 MONDAY • Noon - 6pm  
 TUE. - FRI. • Noon - Close  
 SATURDAY • 11am - Close  
 SUNDAY • 11am - 6pm  
**DECEMBER BOOZE OF THE MONTH**  
**SMIRNOFF**  
 \$5.00 - 16 oz. Pint  
**SAT. DEC. 14TH**  
**CHRISTMAS BINGO**  
 Open 11am • Start 1pm  
 • 100% Cash Payout  
 • Drink Specials & Chili  
**SAT. DEC. 28TH**  
**NEW YEAR'S BINGO**  
 Open 11am • Start 1pm  
 • 100% Cash Payout  
 • Drink Specials

**RED GRANITE BAR AND GRILL**  
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 FOR A GOOD OLD TIME  
**11420 S. County Rd. K, Merrill WI • 715-536-9391**  
 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**  
 Braasted 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

**COSMO Theatre** KIDS • \$5.00 SENIORS • \$5.00 ADULTS • \$8.00  
 Main St. • Merrill  
**MOVIES AND SHOWTIMES 12/13/24 TO 12/19/24**  
**Mondays All Seats \$5.00**  
**KRAVEN THE HUNTER** "R" (2HR 7MIN)  
 FRIDAY: 7:00 & 9:15PM  
 SATURDAY: 1:00, 3:30, 7:00 & 9:15PM  
 SUNDAY: 1:00, 3:30 & 7:00PM  
 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY  
**MOANA 2** "PG" (1HR 40MIN)  
 FRIDAY: 7:00PM & 9:00PM  
 MERRILL NOON OPTIMIST MOVIE: \$2 ADULTS, KIDS FREE  
 SATURDAY: 10AM & 1:00PM  
 SATURDAY: 7:00 & 9:00PM  
 SUNDAY: 1:00, 3:15 & 7:00PM  
 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY  
**WICKED** "PG" (2HR 40MIN)  
 FRIDAY: 7:00PM  
 SATURDAY & SUNDAY: 1:00 & 7:00PM  
 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY: 7:00PM ONLY  
**THE STAR** "PG" (1HR 26MIN)  
 SPONSORED BY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
 FREE ADMISSION  
 SATURDAY: 3:30PM  
 www.cosmomovies.com  
**715-536-4473**

## Aspirus provides info on seasonal affective disorder

"Do you notice that your mood changes with the seasons, becoming gloomier as the days get shorter?" Aspirus Health asked in a

recent press release. "If so, you might be experiencing seasonal affective disorder (SAD)."  
 SAD is a type of depression marked by a recurring seasonal pattern, with symptoms typically lasting four to five months each year, from late fall to early spring.  
 According to the American Psychiatric Association, approximately 5% of adults in the United States experience SAD.  
 "While anyone can be affected, research indicates

that SAD is more prevalent in the northern states, largely due to reduced exposure to sunlight," said Aspirus St. Luke's Nurse Practitioner Courtney Shaw. "During the winter months, it's common to leave for work in the dark and return home after sunset, resulting in a significant lack of natural light."  
 Aspirus said one of the

See **ASPIRUS** page 11

**VISIT WITH SANTA** **Pets Are Welcome!**  
 Stop by the Christmas Tree Farm for FREE photos with Santa, cookies & hot cocoa by the fire and pet the reindeer donkeys!  
**Sunday, December 15th 1:00 PM until 3:00 PM**  
 W4298 Center Road, Merrill

**JOHNSONS DOWNTOWN MERRILL**  
**FACING A TIME CONSTRAINT?**  
 Shop Downtown Merrill Saturday, December 21st.  
 Johnsons will be extending its hours for your convenience!  
 Featuring:  
 • Refreshments  
 • Drawings  
 • Free Gift Wrapping  
 Huge parking lot in back.

**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  
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Left Photo: The pastor in his special Christmas suit poses with Santa Claus by the lit wreath. Center Photo: Families and kids gathered at Trinity Lutheran Church last Friday evening for music, fun, Santa Claus, and to celebrate the annual lighting of the Christmas wreath. Right Photo: The wreath at Trinity Lutheran Church all aglow after last Friday night's wreath lighting festivities. Joseph Frederick photos.

# Park City Cares Foundation supports food assistance for local children

## Donations support Food for Kids in Merrill and Food for Kidz in Minoqua

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

The Park City Cares Foundation (PCCF) was founded in 2022 with their primary purpose to support the communities that Park City Credit Union is a part of, through both financial contributions and volunteer hours donated by Foundation members and community partners. They also offer scholarships to high school Seniors in Merrill, Tomahawk, Rhinelander,

and Minocqua high schools who are going on to college and technical trade school, and they provide grants to community-based projects in those communities, particularly those that directly align with their mission.

The PCCF mission is: "We strive to enhance our communities by providing opportunities for financial support and educational growth." Their website goes on to say, "We embrace our commitment to deliver on our core values that

complement a valued culture of diversity. We believe diversity, equity, and inclusion are key fundamental values we foster within each of our communities we serve."

Very recently, PCCF emphasized its dedication to strengthening communities by extending its support to two local hunger relief initiatives: Food for Kids Merrill and Northwoods Food for Kidz in Minocqua, a press release said.

PCCF gave a \$500 donation to each

organization to help combat food insecurity among local youth and provided volunteers to assist with each program's essential meal-packing events, the release said.

In Merrill, PCCF volunteers assisted Food for Kids Merrill by packing bags filled with food for children facing hunger when school meals aren't available, such as on the weekends, and six volunteers assisted at a large meal-packing event in Minocqua hosted by Northwoods Food For Kidz. That event "brought together a total of 567 community members" and "produced an impressive 271,020 meals, packaged into 847 cases, for 19 local food pantries and backpack programs serving families across the region, the release said.

To join the Foundation's mission, learn more, or make a donation, go to: [parkcitycu.org/park-city-cares-foundation](http://parkcitycu.org/park-city-cares-foundation).



Park City Cares Foundation representatives (from L to R) Trish Collins and Jolene Draxler present a \$500 donation to Terra Holdridge, Treasurer of Food for Kids Merrill. Submitted photo.

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Merin Yates

### November Youth Optimist

Merin Yates, a Senior at Merrill High School, is the November Youth Optimist of the Month. "Merin embodies many of the statements from the Optimist Creed," said Ms. Katherine Holz in her nomination. "My choice for her is 'To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.'"

"Merin is the coolest cucumber I have met in a long time," she said. "She puts her all into everything she does, from school work, to farm work, to band, she is ready for anything! She is a quiet ship in the storm. I have never heard a negative word from her. She has never shown a sign of weakness or nervousness. She is organized, respectful, ready for anything, and has a zest for travel."

"With her personality traits and work ethic, she is bound to succeed in whatever she chooses!" Ms. Holz said. "The hard work that she has been doing in her young life is paying off now and will pay off in the future. If you need something done, Merin will do it with a smile and will not let you down. She is the one you want on your team, or to be your boss. She is amazing!"

At school, Merin is involved in Tri-M Music Honor Society (President), FFA, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, DECA, Drug Education Committee, Student Council, Merrill Women's Wrestling (Most Improved), Merrill Girls Basketball, Merrill Track and Field, Merrill Marching Jays (Section Leader), Wisconsin Northwoods Marching Band (performed in the Rose Bowl 2023 parade), and the Merrill High School Musical. When not in school Merin stays active in the community, scooping ice cream for the church stand and helping with servant events for church, Make A Difference Day, Merrill Marching Jays car wash, June Dairy Breakfast, and 4-H Dairy Day at the library.

The daughter of Jim and Melissa Yates, after high school graduation, Merin plans to attend college to earn a bachelor's degree in marketing with a minor in Spanish.

Aubrey Krombolz, an eighth grader at Prairie River Middle School (PRMS), is the November Youth Optimist of the Month. "Aubrey exemplifies the qualities of a dedicated and hardworking student, consistently engaging in all class discussions with enthusiasm and genuine curiosity," said Ms. Danielle Bloch in her nomination. "She approaches each lesson with a desire to deepen her understanding, never settling for the bare minimum. Instead, she actively seeks to grasp underlying concepts and their real-world applications, asking thought-provoking questions that encourage her classmates to think critically and explore new perspectives."

"Aubrey comes to class well-prepared, demonstrating a strong commitment to her studies. She is a natural leader, often taking initiative in group activities and fostering collaboration among her peers. Her positive attitude is infectious, creating an uplifting atmosphere that motivates those around her. Aubrey can always be trusted to do the right thing, whether that means supporting a classmate in need or upholding classroom expectations," she said.

"Whether she is collaborating on a project or participating in a discussion, Aubrey's enthusiasm and dedication truly shine through," Ms. Bloch said. "Her intellectual curiosity not only enhances her own learning but also inspires her classmates to strive for excellence. For all of the above reasons, Aubrey embodies all of the qualities of a true Youth Optimist."

At school, Aubrey is a WEB Leader and is on the PRMS Swim Team, she is an Honor Roll student, and she has earned 26 points in a year in Fastbridge. Outside of school, she attends Confirmation classes, belongs to Girl Scouts, and helps with the Kids Summer Lunch program. In her free time, she likes to write creative stories, draw cartoons, and is learning animation. Aubrey is the daughter of Kristi and Tyler Krombolz of Merrill.



Aubrey Krombolz



**Optimist Clubs: "Bringing Out the Best in Kids"**  
Merrill Noon Optimists - Wednesdays at 12:00 noon at the Eagles Club, 1205 Lake St., Merrill  
Adult volunteers join Optimist Clubs to conduct positive service projects in their communities aimed at providing a helping hand to youth. Their upbeat attitudes empower youth to be the best they can be. Optimists International, with 3,000+ clubs, conducts 65,000 service projects, serving more than six million youth annually. Locally, Merrill Noon Optimists serve 3,000+ area youth, contributing or organizing events and service projects in our Merrill community.

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Left Photo: These are the kinds of smiles that make people love Christmas and Christmas parades. A group of children await the start of the parade and the arrival of Santa. Right Photo: Adults and children bundle up and wait along E. Main Street, watching for the parade to begin. Joseph Frederick photos.

# 12 free fun family Christmas and December traditions

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

With the cost of inflation, rising grocery prices, and the ever-present challenge of trying to purchase presents and make the holidays special, it's easy to get caught up in the money factor when it comes to Christmas. Admittedly, it's a challenge for most families.

But it's also easy to forget that there are many fun family activities that can become traditions that don't cost a dime.

Families can reconnect with the season—and with each other—when they focus on shared experiences and all the fun things they can do for free, right here in Merrill or in neighboring communities. While some of these specific events have already occurred in our city earlier in December prior to this publication, most of the ones on this list come around every year and can become a part of annual family traditions beginning next year. Other events are still happening in our area.

Pick some of the ideas from this list of 12 free fun family traditions or create some of your own.

**1. Attend a Christmas or holiday parade.** Watch the parade, with all of the glowing lights and colorful Christmas scenes and characters, through the delighted eyes of a child.

**2. Visit a live nativity.** Listen to the

Christmas story. Pet the live animals with the kids. See actors playing the parts of Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and angels as they depict the story and image of that birth in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago.

**3. Attend a free church or school Christmas concert.** Many choirs have concerts, and some schools and churches even have Christmas pageants in December which are open to the public and free of charge. Let the music and pageantry celebrate the joy of the season.

**4. Go caroling.** Instead of just listening to others singing joyful Christmas songs, spread that joy by going caroling at the homes of friends and neighbors, either as a family or with a group of family and friends who love to sing. If you don't want to brave the cold, just have an old-fashioned singalong at home, as a family or with friends and neighbors.

**5. Go for a drive—or a walk—around town after dark** to enjoy the many homes and businesses decorated with lights, nativities, snowmen, blow-up characters, and other decorations. Homeowners who decorate their yards are proud of their displays and love it when others enjoy them, too. The annual Merrill Go Round Tour of Lights is a great way to tour the city's beautiful light displays for free. There are many beautiful displays located outside the Merrill city limits in the community, as well.

**6. Embrace your inner child and enjoy**

**the snow in Wisconsin!** Build a snowman and/or a snow fort. Make snow angels with the kids. Yes, adults too! Have a snowball fight. Go sledding. Go ice skating at one of Merrill's free outdoor ice rinks.

**7. Watch Christmas movies or read Christmas books together,** curled up in warm blankets. It's a great experience after an afternoon or evening outside in the cold.

**8. Make homemade Christmas decorations.** Cut out paper snowflakes, make construction paper chains, and add glitter to pine cones. String stale popcorn to decorate the tree. There are dozens of ideas for ornaments and decorations online, and many can be made with recycleables and other materials already on hand at no additional cost.

**9. Have a game night.** Pop some popcorn or grab some snacks in the kitchen, set up the board games, and make it a stay-at-home night. Leave the phones and electronic devices in another room and just spend time in the moment.

**10. Make handmade Christmas greeting cards** to hand deliver to the neighbors or friends and family. The cards can be as simple or as elaborate as the materials on hand.

**11. Take the kids to see Santa.** After the parade, at Santa breakfasts, at fire department events, and in stores, coffee shops, and even breweries in Merrill, Santa is all over the community just waiting to

listen to children's Christmas wishes and pose for pictures.

**12. Give the gift of time, as a family, to help someone else.** Whether it is everyone in the family grabbing their snow shovels and clearing the neighbor's sidewalks; cooking a meal together and then taking it to a neighbor; or offering to take someone else's kids for a play date so the adults can clean their house, do some baking, or go Christmas shopping, make it a family affair with everyone involved. Talk about why helping someone else in this way is a shared family event and how giving someone else the gift of time is important, because "gifts" given during the holiday season don't always have to be tangible presents wrapped in a bow.

The memories made spending time together as a family, especially doing things every year that become annual family traditions, will far outlast the holiday season and most of the presents beneath the tree. Many will become traditions for the next generation.

Don't have little ones at home anymore, don't have children at all, maybe you're single or widowed? Get together with a group of other adults to start your own Christmas or December traditions doing these same things or your favorites from this list.

[This article is a reprint from the Dec. 12, 2024, Merrill Foto News.]



Merrill  
Christmas

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**ASPIRUS from page 6**

best ways to combat this condition is by staying active and making sure you get enough light.

"Try to find an outdoor activity you enjoy, like walking, skiing, or fat-tire biking, and do it regularly during the day," Aspirus said. "You can also buy a light box or a dawn-simulating lamp and use it within the first hour of waking up to get the most benefits."

Other healthy lifestyle habits, such as eating a balanced diet and maintaining a regular sleep schedule, can also be

beneficial, Aspirus noted. In some cases, medication and counseling may be necessary to manage the condition effectively.

"Because the timing of the onset of winter-pattern SAD is so predictable, many benefit from starting treatment before the fall to help prevent or reduce symptoms," Aspirus said. "Talking to your primary care provider is a great place to start when making a plan to do this."

"People can be hesitant to talk about mental health concerns like SAD, but I want them to know that they don't have to be," Shaw said. "Everyone faces struggles at some point, and SAD is just one of them. With proper treatment, we can absolutely manage this condition so you can enjoy life—no matter what season it is."

If you've noticed changes in your mood or behavior whenever the seasons change, talk to your provider, or find one at [aspirus.org/find-a-provider](http://aspirus.org/find-a-provider).

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**GALELLA from page 3**

for employment purposes. He is to undergo AODA assessment and treatment w/any follow through and

must pay court costs and any applicable assessments, fees, and surcharges due the court, payable through the Department of Corrections, with the funds already on file to be applied to the court case for which it was

posted, and he is not eligible for Challenge Incarceration and Substance Abuse programs. The Court directed the Clerk of Court to return the passport to Defense counsel on this case.

Galella will be in state prison until early Dec. 2027 when he will be released and on extended supervision for an additional year, and he will remain on probation through early December 2033.

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**SHOPPING SCAMS from page 2**

information like your password or credit card number. The "S" stands for "secure."

**Safe online shopping tips**  
"No matter how you make your purchases this holiday season,

there are precautions any consumer can take to keep their money and identity safe," DATCP said. "Avoid making purchases over a public Wi-Fi network, since you never know who could be monitoring that data. Use a credit card, since this payment method has built-in fraud protection. Ask your credit card company if they offer additional protections, like

"virtual card numbers." For more information and consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP's Consumer Protection webpage at [ConsumerProtection.wi.gov](http://ConsumerProtection.wi.gov) or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800.422.7128 or [DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov).

**SALT SPARINGLY from page 1**

sand when temps become bitter. When pavement temperatures drop below 15 degrees, salt won't work at all, the NWSWC said. But sand still does. [Or you will need to switch to a different ice melter that works at lower temperatures, they said.]

**Use salt sparingly and scatter it**  
If you must use salt, scatter it. Be sure there is space between the grains. "Believe it or not, a 12 oz. coffee mug of salt is enough to treat 2 parking spots or 10 sidewalk squares," the NWSWC said.

If you contract for your snow removal service or to have your sidewalks/driveway/parking lot cleared, be sure your contract isn't based on salt usage, and ask your contractor if they are Smart Salting certified. If they aren't, encourage them to attend or send staff to a free Smart Salting workshop to get certified and to follow minimal salt application guidelines. Building owners and maintenance professionals should also consider attending one of the free Smart Salting workshops.

The training includes best management practices to keep paved areas safe, guidance on how to determine the right amount

of salt to use, benefits of liquids/brine applications, calibration to reduce salt use, model snow and ice policies and contracts, explores the benefits of mechanical brooms which typically reduce salt by 60% or more, and includes case studies from local applicators.

For more information, go to [stormwater-ducky.org/smart-winter-salting/](http://stormwater-ducky.org/smart-winter-salting/) or [WiSaltWise.com](http://WiSaltWise.com).

The Northcentral Wisconsin Stormwater Coalition coordinates and collaborates on education and outreach activities, and recommends policy and operational changes for cooperating local governments in order to comply with regulations

and reduce stormwater pollution in a cost effective manner so that residents of Central Wisconsin benefit from lakes and streams that remain swimmable and fishable.

WI Salt Wise is a coalition of organizations from across Wisconsin working together to reduce salt pollution in our lakes, streams, and drinking water. Their primary goals are to educate residents, leaders, and winter maintenance professionals on salt pollution and solutions, provide training, and promote best practices to reduce salt pollution and recognize those committed to minimizing their salt footprint.

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# O'Tannenbaum



The first thing guests saw when they walked into O'Tannenbaum were Christmas Angels. **Tina L. Scott photo.**



An array of decorated, often themed, lit Christmas trees creates a magical air in the background at O' Tannenbaum, while some of the more than 100 gift baskets are displayed on tables in the foreground. **Tina L. Scott photo.**



An aura of Christmas magic prevails at O'Tannenbaum.

**Tina L. Scott photo.**



One Christmas tree was decorated with a nutcracker theme, and the lucky winner also got to take home this nutcracker collection on display beneath the tree. **Tina L. Scott photo.**



In keeping with the theme, this tree was decorated with an array of angels. **Tina L. Scott photo.**



In keeping with the Christmas Angels theme for the year, volunteer Myrishah Taylor dressed as an angel. **Joseph Frederick photo.**



Mrs. Ament plays the harp as part of the musical entertainment at O'Tannenbaum. Playing the harp seems rather fitting for the Christmas Angels theme. **Joseph Frederick photo.**

**MERRILL FOTO NEWS**

## Student of the Week

This Week's Featured Student is **Judy Stutting**  
 Daughter of **Kimberly and Joshua Stutting**  
 Judy is in kindergarten at Kate Goodrich. She was nominated by Ms. Mattson.

**What is your favorite subject in school? Why?**  
 Heggerty (reading skills) because it helps us to learn and makes us know that we are super smart!

**What is your favorite part of school? Why?**  
 Everything! School is so much fun!

**What would you like to do/become someday? Why?**  
 A horse rider where I teach horses!

Judy is a kind, helpful and respectful kindergarten student. She is an all around star student who is very deserving of the recognition!  
 ~ Ms. Mattson

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## Congratulations

Merrill Foto News

# THANKSGIVING

### Coloring Contest Winners!

**Hudson Drott**  
Age 1

**Aria Hahn**  
Age 7

**Landon Smith**  
Age 10

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Each winner received a Fall Fun Gift Basket!



Hockey players (in no particular order) with Coach Chris Marlowe (in back): Elijah Fenske, Ethan Fenske, Aaron Swanson, Silas Bohn, Conner Gibson, Parker Eisner, Theo Fryklund, Jordyn Fryklund, Myles Taylor, Collin Taylor, Adrian Regaldo, Roman Regaldo, Sebastyn Kangas, Owen Smith, Sam Smith, Roger Brooks, Lucas Rominski, Garik Peterson, James Lee, Lincoln Zerbe, and Lucas Zerbe. Submitted photo.

# Merrill Youth Hockey collects items for food pantry

On Nov. 23, 2024, the Merrill Youth Hockey Association (MYHA) held a "Help with Hockey" community service project. Skaters from every level of the Association attended and donated nonperishable food items which were donated to the Community Food Pantry of Merrill. Donations filled three boxes and an entire hockey bag, with an estimate of 120 lbs of food for the Merrill community. It was a pleasure to give to the Community through the game of Hockey, a MYHA representative said.



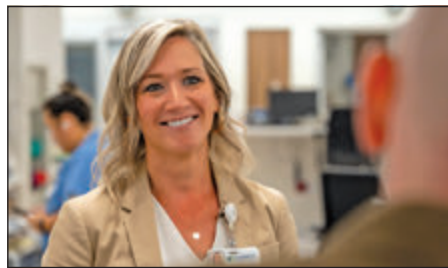
Twenty-one skaters attended, with Coach Chris Marlowe running some power skating drills, and some games with all levels.

Many thanks to all the skaters and their families, Coach Chris Marlowe, Coach Jesse Bohn, Coach Josh Fenske, Coach Dan Schaub, and Coach Matt Smith, and other volunteers from the MYHA family who made this a success.

# Aspirus provides information on antibiotic resistance

Aspirus Health recently provided information on antibiotic resistance.

"Every year, over 2.8 million people in the U.S. contract infections due to antibiotic resistance, resulting in more than 35,000 deaths," Aspirus said in a release, noting that the health system is "drawing attention to the escalating crisis of antibiotic resistance—a global public health threat that is putting the effectiveness of antibiotics at risk and making infections harder to treat."



Zander Photo courtesy of Aspirus

"Antibiotic resistance is considered an urgent global public health threat that is consistently getting worse by the day," said Kelly Zander, System Antimicrobial Stewardship Coordinator at Aspirus Health. "We're constantly learning about new infections that are becoming harder and harder to treat, and the drugs that we do have aren't working anymore."

Aspirus said this growing issue is felt across communities nationwide, and Zander noted that even in the Aspirus Health service area, "We do see these patterns emerging."

According to Aspirus, a major cause of antibiotic resistance is the misuse of

antibiotics, including taking them for illnesses like the common cold or flu, where they are ineffective.

"Additionally, failing to complete prescribed antibiotic courses contributes to the survival of resistant bacteria," Aspirus said. "The overuse of antibiotics in agriculture also compounds the problem."

To protect the power of antibiotics, Zander urges people to adopt simple yet effective preventive measures.

"Good hand hygiene, staying healthy through diet and exercise, and allowing your body time to heal naturally when you're sick can all help minimize unnecessary exposure to antibiotics," she said. "The

learn more about antibiotic resistance and how we can all help preserve the effectiveness of these life-saving medications.

For more information on antibiotic awareness, visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).

Aspirus said it encourages the public to

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11	12
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63					64				65				
66					67				68				

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### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Thou \_\_ do it
- 6. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 9. Brainstem part
- 13. Town in New York state
- 14. Little (Spanish)
- 15. Continent
- 16. Retch
- 17. Short-billed rails
- 18. Small period of time (abbr.)
- 19. Confused
- 21. A team needs one
- 22. Woman in ancient times
- 23. Republican Party
- 24. Spanish be
- 25. "The Godfather" character Johnny
- 28. Not around
- 29. City in Zambia
- 31. A type of beginning
- 33. Numb
- 36. Gurus
- 38. Small, gray-headed crow
- 39. Vehicle type
- 41. Disorders
- 44. One point east of southeast
- 45. Indian soldier
- 46. Tree type
- 48. Midway between south and southeast
- 49. It cools your home
- 51. Corn comes on it
- 52. Ship's deck
- 54. A way to bake
- 56. Improvised
- 60. Butterfly genus
- 61. Baseball fields have them
- 62. Designated space
- 63. Discharge
- 64. Two of something
- 65. Once more
- 66. Part of your face
- 67. Tax collector
- 68. Cassia tree

### CLUES DOWN

- 1. One-time Aaron Rodgers target
- 2. Wings
- 3. Overly studious person
- 4. They protect your valuables
- 5. The Volunteer State
- 6. Non-hydraulic cement
- 7. Horse mackerel
- 8. Jackson and Diddley are two
- 9. Splendid displays
- 10. Mountain in NE Greece
- 11. A daughter or your brother or sister
- 12. German surname
- 14. Having more than one husband at a time
- 17. Romanian city
- 20. Energy
- 21. Makes less hot
- 23. Gas diffusion electrode
- 25. Former CIA
- 26. Set an example for others
- 27. Support of a particular person

- 29. One from the Big Apple
- 30. Mountain range
- 32. Violate the sanctity of something
- 34. Supervises flying
- 35. Talks
- 37. Persian male given name
- 40. Born of
- 42. Forcibly take one's possessions
- 43. Discounts
- 47. Knockouts
- 49. Posh Colorado destination
- 50. Form of therapy
- 52. British rock band
- 53. Type of virus (abbr.)
- 55. The U. of Miami mascot is one
- 56. Volcanic crater
- 57. Middle Eastern nation
- 58. Sinn \_\_, Irish organization
- 59. Ethiopian lake
- 61. Bits per inch (abbr.)
- 65. Equally

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# 2024-25 WINTER SPORTS PREVIEW



## BOYS BASKETBALL

**HEAD COACH:** Troy Pieper (5th Year at Merrill/9th Season overall as a Varsity coach).

**ASSISTANT COACHES:** Mitch Osnes, Lisa Handlin, James Brogan, Steven Lewandowski, and Gavin Dinges.

**2023-24 RECORD:** 8-18

**2023-24 POST SEASON RESULTS:** 1-1

**RETURNING ALL-CONFERENCE:** E.J. Weix (Honorable Mention).

**KEY RETURNERS:** E.J. Weix (Senior), Kory Page (Senior), Jacob Schmeltzer (Senior), Aidan Houghton (Senior), Cooper Wendorf (Junior), and Tyson Ott (Sophomore).

**KEY LOSSES:** Carter Baade (Honorable Mention All Conference).

**KEY NEWCOMERS:** Carter Kaminski (Senior), Eli Burtman (Junior), Charles Kalinowski (Junior), Sebastian Trevino (Senior), Ivan Amador (Senior), and Jake Schwandt (Senior).

**2023-24 RECAP:** Last year was a season filled with adversity. From the very beginning, we faced adversity when we lost a couple key players for a stretch and one for the entire season. It felt like every time we found our footing, something else would pop up. To the players' credit, they showed up and worked hard each and every day. We found our stride down the stretch and won a home playoff game for the fourth year in a row. We were playing our best at the right time and adversity hit again, losing a starter to injury in the final minutes of our final practice. I'm proud of how the guys battled, and it made our returning guys a stronger unit heading into this season.

**2024-25 OUTLOOK:** It's an exciting group we have this year. This group has really put the work in during the offseason. This is one of the hardest working groups I've been around. We have a good mix of experienced players to go along with newcomers who are ready to make an impact on the program. This will be our last season in the Wisconsin Valley Conference before joining the Great Northern Conference next year. The Valley is loaded with talent and is going to be a great test for us to navigate through; however, those games will make us battle-tested come playoff time. We do lack some height besides Eli, but with the mix we have, we have guys who play bigger than they are, and it makes us able to do a lot of different things on defense and offense. I love our Senior group this year. Weix has been a Varsity starter since his Sophomore year, and I'm expecting he will be ready to make a huge



Front row L to R: Sebastian Trevino, Kory Page, Jacob Schmeltzer, Aidan Houghton, Ivan Amador, and Jake Schwandt. Back row L to R: Quinton Kurtzhals, Charles Kalinowski, Eli Burtman, Cooper Wendorf, and Tyson Ott. Missing from photo: E.J. Weix and Carter Kaminski. Seniors are in white jerseys. Submitted photo.

impact in his Senior year. Kory Page we get back this year, after missing last season; he was a Varsity contributor as a Sophomore and has been chomping at the bit to get out there and have a great Senior year. He's a great player on both ends of the floor. Jacob Schmeltzer, Aidan Houghton, and Sophomore Tyson Ott are also returning starters from last year's team. I'm excited to see the next step all three take this season. Tyson is one of the most skilled Sophomore basketball players that I've had the opportunity to coach. He is going to take a big step forward this year. We are a very deep team. Many guys will give big minutes for us this year. I think this could be one of the best shooting teams I've had in my five years here in Merrill. The guys I mentioned already can all shoot it from the outside, and we have others who can flat out shoot it as well. Cooper Wendorf and Charles Kalinowski are two who can really shoot it from the outside. Carter Kaminski is another sharp shooter who has decided to set the bowling ball down this winter and finish his high school career on the basketball court instead; he's put in a lot of work in the offseason to get caught up. Eli Burtman, our "big," has really progressed over the past year or so, and I'm really looking forward to

seeing the impact he will have on the game, both on the offensive end and defensive end of the floor.

**A FINAL WORD FROM THE COACH:** First I just want to thank Merrill for all their support for our program. Our community loves supporting high school athletics, and we hope to bring an exciting brand of basketball for you all to come out and watch. We will try to represent the community at a very high level both on and off the court. One big event I would like to mention is our Hall of Fame Night. This year it will be on Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025. Both the Boys and Girls programs will be hosting Antigo on Hall of Fame Night this year. Please plan to come out and help show appreciation for the three new inductees into the Merrill Basketball Hall of Fame. Those new inductees this year are former players Jessica (VanDerGeest) Truax and Jeff Ott, along with long-time youth coach for both the Boys and Girls programs, Jon Bezier. For more information on our program, I also suggest following us on social media. You can find Merrill Hoops on Facebook, Instagram, and X (twitter). We are excited to see all of you at some of our games this season. We will do our best to keep you entertained.



**Good Luck**

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# BOYS WRESTLING



Merrill Boys Wrestling Team 2024-25.

Katie Hanson photo.

**HEAD COACH:** Brian Suchocki (27th year with the Merrill wrestling program – 10th year as head coach).

**ASSISTANT COACHES:** Ben Natzke 17 years, Wally Skic 3rd year (Merrill High School), Isaac Buntrock 5th year, and Tanner Depies 2nd year.

**2023-24 RECORD:** 14-4 overall record and 5th place in the Conference, 2-4

Conference Record.

**2024 POSTSEASON SECTIONAL QUALIFIERS:** Remington Skic, Dusty Schmirler, Callum Wheeler, Austin Depies, Noah Klug, Mikal Plautz, Hunter Opper, and Carson Brooks.

**RETURNING CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS:** Remington Skic and Noah Klug.

**KEY RETURNERS FROM 2023-24:** Seniors Austin Depies, Callum Wheeler, and Carson Brooks; Juniors

Dusty Schmirler, Brett Suchocki, Greg Hart, Jace Olson, Hunter Opper, Josh Gustum, Noah Klug, Ryan Coates, Caden Parham-Stevenson, Preston Schuelke, Noah Clifford, and Ben Gruett; and Sophomores Remington Skic, Aidan Hardy, William Miemietz, and Abram Norton.

**KEY LOSSES:** Yandel Carrillo Vidal and Mikal Plautz.

**KEY NEWCOMERS:** Eli Lofink, Robert Rutkowski, Broc Suchocki, Bennett Jacobson, Mason Schenk, Tegan Drake, Marcus Slagoski, Jadon Van Der Nest, Carson Taunton, Trenton Klimek, Collin Hodgins, Marvins Downs, and Xander Carey.

**2023-24 RECAP:** During the 2023-24 season we qualified eight Merrill wrestlers for the Sectional Tournament. Hunter Opper, Austin Depies, Callum Wheeler, Carson Brooks, Dusty Schmirler, Noah Klug, Mikal Plautz, and Remington Skic all

qualified for Sectionals. Noah Klug was one match away from going to State, taking third at Sectionals. Remington and Callum both took fourth at Sectionals. *Games of note? Player performances.* Remington Skic winning Wisconsin Valley Conference as a Freshman, along with Noah Klug as a Sophomore, were definite highlights. Although we had a young team, we were able to push Wausau West and DC Everest in tight duals and get a win over SPASH and Wausau East. The duals against state powers Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield were a good experiences for us. *What were some low points? Strengths and weaknesses of the team?* We had some illness and injury in the middle of the season that really hampered our progress. However, the wrestlers regrouped and made a good push towards the end of the season.

See **BOYS WRESTLING** page 16



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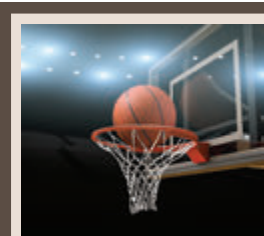
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# GIRLS WRESTLING



Merrill Girls Wrestling Team 2024-25.

Katie Hanson photo.

**HEAD COACH:** Scott Arneson, 35th year with the Merrill Wrestling Program, 1st year as Girls Head Coach.

**ASSISTANT COACHES:** Ali Natzke 1st year.

**2023-24 RECORD:** N/A. The Girls Team as a separate entity was newly formed for 2024-25.

**2024 POSTSEASON SECTIONAL QUALIFIERS:** Last year the team had four female wrestlers compete at the Sectional Tournament: Merin Yates, Adison Clark, Allison Hunter, and Kaylynn Allen.

**KEY RETURNERS FROM 2023-24:** Merin Yates, Adison Clark, and Kaylynn Allen.

**KEY LOSSES:** Allison Hunter.

**KEY NEWCOMERS:** Dezaria McDaniel, Gracie VanVuren, Brianna Schmirler, Katelyn Grawien, Sophie Koehler, Eliza Rodgers, Shelby Yates, Bryanna Doerr, Caroline Durbin, Liberty Fuchs, Mykenzie Hinz, Lauren Hoffman, Kylee Hoffman, Braxtyn Hulce, Madlyn Hunter, Ava Jozwiak, Kendall Klug, Avery Lassa, Gemma Malone, Marissa Miles, Sadie Schlief-Roberts, Sydney Schlief-Roberts, Natalia Woller, and Jenna Weiss.

**2023-24 RECAP:** During the 2023-24 season, four female wrestlers were able to move on to competition at the Sectional Tournament and we

are seeing greater interest in more girls joining the Merrill Wrestling Program.

**2024-25 OUTLOOK:** This is our first year with an all female Girls Wrestling Team. We are excited to see what our newly formed team will do in their first season.

**A FINAL WORD FROM THE COACH:** We are extremely excited that the number of girls competing in wrestling has grown into their own team for the first year ever in Merrill. This year we have more than 20 female wrestlers. This is an exciting time for the Merrill Wrestling Program!

## BOYS WRESTLING

from page 15

**2024-25 OUTLOOK:** We have some experienced upperclassmen that are ready to make their mark. Many of them will be looking to accomplish their own personal goals. We have a solid group this season. *What are some areas for improvement?* We have some wrestlers that need to make the next step, and we have a lot of new wrestlers. We have a huge group of

Juniors. *What will be the keys to success this season?* We need to continue building sound basics and concentrate on improvement. We need to control things that matter like conditioning, technique and preparing each and every day for competition. *What/Where will the strength of team be?* We have some Seniors that have been around for a while. They will lead by their work ethic, and now it's their opportunity to show what they can do. *Any thoughts or comments about particular*

*opponents or the conference?* As usual, the Wisconsin Valley conference and our particular Sectional will be very challenging. We will need everyone competing at a high level to perform well. We have three home duals this year. The home duals are against DC Everest, Marshfield, and Wausau West. Each dual will be tough and there should be some good individual matches.

**A FINAL WORD FROM THE COACH:** All the coaches and wrestlers are

looking forward to a new challenge. We want to put our stamp on the season. We have a few Seniors with experience and some nice Juniors and underclassmen that will compete hard. We have some exciting wrestlers looking to accomplish some goals they have set for themselves. This is a very exciting team of wrestlers to watch. The team has some very high level competitors who have experience. We will represent Merrill wrestling with class.

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# EAST MERRILL UNITED (EMU) HOCKEY

The East Merrill Newman Bluejacks Hockey Team is comprised of players from Wausau East, Merrill, and Newman High Schools. **Merrill players** are shown in bold.

**HEAD COACH:** Nathan Pagel 19th year with the program; 4th year as Head Coach.

**ASSISTANT COACHES:** Greg Glovinski, 4th season with EMU; Kyle Swan, 7th season with EMU; Chris Trantow, 4th season with EMU.

**2023-24 RECORD:** 3-21

**2023-24 POST SEASON:** Lost to Wausau West in 1st round.

**RETURNING ALL-CONFERENCE:** Zach Pagel (Honorable Mention).

**KEY RETURNERS:** Zach Pagel, Nick Bodner, **Parker Klebenow**, Brody Trantow, **Ryker Remington**, **Liam Zdroik**, **Jackson Pierce**, **Eric Grunenwald**, **Brody Benedict**, and **Brody Klebenow**.

**KEY LOSSES:** Vincent Newman-Knuckles, Isaac Kaczmarowski, and **Connor McCorkle**.

**KEY NEWCOMERS:** Bryce Jokinen, Chace Cerny, Michael Nichols, **Jack Taylor**, Kellen Burton, Noah Mayer, **Shane Gibson**, **Jayden Prentice**, **Jordan Prentice**, and **Lucas Seefeldt**.

**2023-24 RECAP:** Our season started off slow, as we had quite a few new players at Varsity and it took a little while for them to adjust to the speed of the game. Once we got to the Marathon Cup in the middle of December, we had a strong game against Mosinee and won our first Valley Conference game



EMU United 2024-25 Hockey Team. Front row L to R: Nick Townsend, Collin Gennrich, **Brody Klebenow**, **Jackson Pierce**, **Eric Grunenwald**, and Landon Thurs. Second row L to R: Lauren Rice, Kanin Jahnke, Brody Trantow, **Parker Klebenow**, Connor Burton, Chase Klebenow, Zach Pagel, **Liam Zdroik**, Nick Bodner, and Keeley Benedict. Third row L to R: Coach Trantow, Bryn Imhoff, Coach Pagel, Connor Zdroik, Will Mroczenski, Tony Stricklin, Landon Bennett, Owen Reeves, **Ryker Remington**, **Brody Benedict**, Hunter Renken, Alex Petrowski, Coach Swan, Ryleigh Golisch, and Coach Glovinski. **Katie Hanson photo.**

in six years against D.C. Everest. We played well against really good teams, but would fall off in the middle of the third period. Our second big win of the season came against Rhinelander in OT. It seemed like we were finally starting to finish games. We ended up playing in six overtime games last season. We finished off the season with Marshfield, where the game remained tied until the last three minutes of the game when we gave up a goal. It was a much more competitive season compared to the past years.

Unfortunately, our season came to an end against Wausau West in the first round of the playoffs.

**2024-25 OUTLOOK:** Our numbers have continued to grow. We are starting the season with 38 players and will be able to run a full JV and Varsity schedule. This year we will—for the first time in many seasons—

have more upperclassmen than underclassmen. We also only lost three players from our Varsity roster. That should help us to be more competitive when playing the bigger schools in our conference.

I would like to see us get better in the offensive zone—start to put more shots up, get better scoring opportunities, and win more puck battles.

A key to our success this year is staying together and working as team.

**FINAL WORD FROM THE COACH:** As we start this season, I am looking forward to seeing what we can accomplish since we are finally on equal playing field with the age of the players. This is a good group of players that have bought into what we are coaching and have worked hard in the offseason to strengthen themselves overall.

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# GIRLS BASKETBALL

Girls Basketball 2024-25 information was not available at the time of printing.



Joseph Frederick photo.



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# Merrill Boys are back on the mat

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

## SPASH dual

The Merrill Boys Varsity Wrestling Team was back on the mat in Stevens Point for a season-opening dual against Stevens Point Area Senior High School (SPASH) on Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024, and this time SPASH wrestled out the win, 49-30.

The Panthers overtook the Bluejays in this round, but five Bluejays came away with winning pins: Dustin (Dusty) Schmirler, Broc Suchocki, Remington Skic, Callum Wheeler, and Noah Klug.

“Dusty wrestled well for us,” said Merrill Boys Varsity Wrestling Head Coach Brian Suchocki. “After giving up an early takedown, Dusty battled back and settled in with some good technique. Dusty put in some work this offseason, and you can see it in his wrestling.”

“Broc also gave up an early takedown but turned the tables with a reversal and pin,” he said. “It was great to see Broc get his first win of his high school wrestling career.”

“Remington dominated start to finish,” Suchocki said. “Remington is fun to watch.”

“Callum came out strong, as well,” he said. “Callum had surgery after last season. For him, it’s about getting back out there and getting back to the level he was at last year. This win



Remington Skic at the 2024 Papermaker Invitational Tournament.

### Submitted photo.

was a good start for that.”

“Noah looked sharp in his first match,” Suchocki said. “The big takeaway for him is that he wrestled with control and solid position.”

“Overall, this was a tough start for us, teamwise,” he said. “It was our first competition of the season, and we need to learn some lessons and come back stronger.”

### Individual/Team Results

106 - Eldon Roth (SPASH) took the win by forfeit (no opponent) 6-0

113 - Dustin Schmirler (Merrill) took the win over Fritz Beversdorf (SPASH) (Fall 2:42) 0-6

120 - Sam Riddle (SPASH) took the win by forfeit (no opponent) 6-0

126 - Broc Suchocki (Merrill) took the win over Camden Mayek (SPASH) (Fall 1:11)

132 - Camden Fischer (SPASH) took the win over Brett Suchocki (Merrill) (Decision 14-8) 3-0

138 - Remington Skic (Merrill) took the win over Will Mlsna (SPASH) (Fall 5:02) 0-6

144 - Vince Marks (SPASH) took the win over Marcus Slogoski (Merrill) (Fall 0:50) 6-0

150 - Callum Wheeler (Merrill) took the win over Toby Klein (SPASH) (Fall 2:46) 0-6

157 - Nathan Bernstein (SPASH) took the win over William Miemietz (Merrill) (MD 12-0) 4-0

165 - Andy Weller (SPASH) took the win over Hunter Opper (Merrill) (Fall 0:31) 6-0

175 - Kyle Madlena (SPASH) took the win over Austin Depies (Merrill) (Fall 1:46) 6-0

190 - Connor Skarsten (SPASH) took the win over Preston Schuelke (Merrill) (Fall 0:46) 6-0

215 - Noah Klug (Merrill) took the win over Josue Mata (SPASH) (Fall 0:54) 0-6

285 - Josh Woznicki (SPASH) took the win over Joshua Gustum (Merrill) (Fall 2:38) 6-0

**Team Scores: SPASH 49-Merrill 30**

## 2024 Kimberly Papermaker Invitational

The Merrill Boys were up against competition from 16 other schools at the invitational meet on Saturday, Dec. 7: Appleton North, Menasha, Sun Prairie East, Ashwaubenon, Chilton/Hilbert, Coleman Cougars, Dodgeland, Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah, Kewaunee, Shiocton, Sturgeon Bay/Sevastopol,

Manitowoc Lincoln, Berlin, Bay Port, Kimberly, and Green Lake/Princeton.

Nine Merrill wrestlers attended. “It was good competition, and we stepped up,” Head Coach Suchocki said. “We had some solid results.”

“We had 6 wrestlers in the top 3, which is very good considering we had 9 wrestlers competing and that it was a 17-team tournament,” he said. “Overall we were fourth.”

“As a team, we came to compete,” Suchocki said. “We had some real solid performances. Remington [Skic] put together a real good day of wrestling. In the finals, he avenged a loss from last year when he beat Izaiah Sanchez (Shiocton) a two-time State place finisher. Remington is wrestling with confidence and solid technique. He puts a lot of extra time in, and it shows.”

“Dusty [Schmirler] competed really well and battled to the end in the finals,” he said. “He doesn’t give up takedowns easily because he battles through. Dusty is continuing to compete well.”

“Broc [Suchocki] managed to make the finals in his first high school tournament,” Coach Suchocki said. “He fights well in many situations and keeps himself in matches. As a Freshman, it’s great to see his competitiveness.”

“Noah [Klug] is strong and in control throughout,”

he said. “His matches leading to the finals were well wrestled. In the finals, unfortunately, he got caught in a rough position which cost him. Noah will continue to get better this season.”

“Austin [Depies] had a nice day,” Suchocki said. “We are working with Austin slowing things. He always gives everything he has. His approach was good, and in his third place match, he showed a lot of heart getting the win.”

“Mat time always benefits Josh [Gustum],” he said. “You can see his confidence grow throughout the day, and he moves better. Josh will figure things out, especially as he wrestles more.”

“Callum [Wheeler] lost some tough matches that will make him better going through the season,” Suchocki said.

“Will [Miemietz] continues to battle hard every time he steps on the mat,” he said.

“Preston [Schuelke] had a nice win at the end of the day,” Suchocki said. “He has the tools.”

“All of the guys competed well and it was a good tournament for us to start the season,” he said.

“We had some early injuries that are depleting our line-up to start the season,” Suchocki said. “Hopefully, we will get some of those guys back.”

### Individual Merrill wrestlers results

113 - Dustin Schmirler (41-

10) placed 2nd and scored 41.5 team points.

126 - Broc Suchocki (3-2) placed 2nd and scored 39.0 team points.

138 - Remington Skic (43-9) placed 1st and scored 49.5 team points.

150 - Callum Wheeler (35-13) placed 7th and scored 26.0 team points.

157 - William Miemietz (6-13) placed 10th and scored 18.0 team points.

175 - Austin Depies (37-16) placed 3rd and scored 38.0 team points.

190 - Preston Schuelke (17-24) placed 11th and scored 16.0 team points.

215 - Noah Klug (42-9) placed 2nd and scored 42.0 team points.

285 - Josh Gustum (18-12) placed 3rd and scored 38.0 team points.

### Final team tournament results

1. Coleman 561.0
2. Shiocton 444.5
3. Kimberly 314.5
4. Merrill 308.0
5. Chilton/Hilbert 302.5
6. Appleton North 294.0
7. Manitowoc Lincoln 266.0
8. Ashwaubenon 229.5
9. Elkhart Lk.-Glen./Howards Gr. 229.5
10. Kewaunee 215.5
11. Princeton/Green Lake 209.0
12. Sun Prairie East 207.5
13. Sturgeon Bay/Sevastopol 164.0
14. Menasha 155.0
15. Bay Port 121.5
16. Berlin 92.5
17. Dodgeland 72.5

# Merrill Varsity Girls compete in Kimberly Wrestling Tournament, Clark places first

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

## 2024 Kimberly Papermaker Invitational

The Merrill Girls Varsity Wrestling Team kicked off their competitive season on the wrestling mat in Kimberly, Wis. this past weekend, and one Lady Jay brought home a first-place finish.

The Merrill Girls were up against competition from female wrestlers representing 29 other schools at the Kimberly Papermaker Girls Wrestling Varsity Invitational Meet on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024. Competitors came from: Sun Prairie West, Appleton West, Appleton North, Fond Du Lac, Neenah, Menasha, Oshkosh West, West De Pere, Sun Prairie East, Brillion, Chilton, Dodgeland, Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah, Fox Valley Lutheran, Freedom, Manawa, New Holstein, Shiocton, Sturgeon Bay, Wittenberg-Birnamwood, Manitowoc Lincoln, New London, Berlin, Xavier High School, Bay Port, Green Lake/Princeton, Wrightstown, and Shawano Community, as well as the wrestlers from Kimberly.

Three Merrill Girls Varsity wrestlers attended and did the Lady Jays proud, including Junior Adison Clark who took first place, winning all three of her matches by fall.

“This was the first competition for the girls this season,” said Merrill Girls Varsity Wrestling Team Head Coach Scott Arneson. “Kaylynn Allen (Junior), Kendell Klug (Freshman), and Adison Clark (Junior) competed in the Tournament.”

“All three individuals wrestled well,” he said. “They were aggressive, confident, and battled with GRIT.”

“They also all found areas to improve on,” Arneson said, “which should make for a great week of practice for them before they next compete.”

### Individual Merrill wrestlers results

• 126 - Kendell Klug (3-2) placed 6th.

Round 1 - Kendell Klug (Merrill) 3-2 won by fall over Natalia Lambrecht (West De Pere) 3-2 (Fall 1:41)

Round 2 - Kylee Kurszewski (Neenah) 27-5 won by fall over Kendell Klug (Merrill) 3-2 (Fall 2:49)

Round 3 - Kendell Klug (Merrill) 3-2 received a bye () (Bye)

Consolation Bracket - Kendell Klug (Merrill) 3-2 won by fall over Alivia Kasuboski (Berlin) 15-30 (Fall 1:20)

5th Place Match - Aubrey Hess (Shiocton) 15-22 won by fall over Kendell Klug (Merrill) 3-2 (Fall 1:46)

• 132 - Kaylynn Allen (9-7) placed 9th.

Round 1 - Sevanna Hoyer (Brillion) 4-1 won by fall over Kaylynn Allen (Merrill) 9-7 (Fall 1:27)

Round 2 - Kaylynn Allen (Merrill) 9-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Round 3 - Natalie Flohr (Menasha) 27-15 won by fall over Kaylynn Allen (Merrill) 9-7 (Fall 2:15)

Consolation Bracket - Kaylynn Allen (Merrill) 9-7 won by fall over Alyssa Zemple (Manawa) 2-3 (Fall 1:01)

9th Place Match - Kaylynn Allen (Merrill) 9-7 won by fall over Sarah McCarthy (Kimberly) 12-18 (Fall 0:55)

• 132 E1 - Adison Clark (5-1) placed 1st.

Round 1 - Adison Clark (Merrill) 5-1 won by fall over McCaylee Martinez (Bay Port) 1-2 (Fall 1:11)

Round 2 - Adison Clark (Merrill) 5-1 won by fall over Julia Rangel (Neenah) 10-19 (Fall 5:39)

Round 3 - Adison Clark (Merrill) 5-1 won by fall over Debora Flores (Menasha) 10-19 (Fall 0:56)

“The majority of our team will compete, Monday, Dec. 16, at the middle school and again at the Hodag Tournament in the Dome on Friday, Dec. 20,” Arneson said. “Then they will be off until the New Year. Since we have a large number of newbies, the coaching staff is holding the Girls out an extra week before competing to get just

a little better prepared. Hopefully, this extra week will give the Girls an edge over the competitions coming up next week.”

“It is not too late to join our awesome TEAM—Merrill Women’s Wrestling is

going to grow fast and be a force in the near future,” he said. “Come join the fastest growing sport in the USA—WOMEN’S WRESTLING!”

## 2024-2025 Merrill High School Winter Sports Schedule

Boys Basketball (Varsity, JV & JV2)			
Fri, Dec. 13	Wausau East (JV & JV2)	Away	5:45 pm
Fri, Dec. 13	Wausau East (Varsity)	Away	7:15 pm
Tues, Dec. 17	Shawano Comm. (JV & JV2)	Home	5:45 pm
Tues, Dec. 17	Shawano Comm. (Varsity)	Home	7:15 pm
Thurs, Dec. 19	Medford (JV)	Home	5:45 pm
Thurs, Dec. 19	Medford (Varsity)	Home	7:15 pm
Girls Basketball (Varsity, JV & JV2)			
Fri, Dec. 13	Wausau East (JV)	Home	5:45 pm
Fri, Dec. 13	Wausau East (Varsity)	Home	7:15 pm
Boys Wrestling (Varsity & JV)			
Thurs, Dec. 12	Wausau East (JV)	Away	6:30 pm
Thurs, Dec. 12	Wausau East (Varsity)	Away	7:00 pm
Girls Wrestling (Varsity)			
Thurs, Dec. 12	Wausau East (Varsity)	Away	6:30 pm
Boys Hockey (Varsity & JV)			
Thurs, Dec. 12	D. C. Everest (Varsity)	Away	7:30 pm
Sat, Dec. 14	Marathon Cup-Greenheck (Varsity)	Away	5:30 pm
Sat, Dec. 14	Marathon Cup-Greenheck (Varsity)	Away	7:30 pm
Tues, Dec. 17	Multiple Schools (Varsity)	Away	7:00 pm
Girls Hockey (Varsity & JV)			
Sat, Dec. 14	River Falls-Greenheck (JV)	Away	12:00 pm
Sat, Dec. 14	River Falls-Greenheck (Varsity)	Away	2:00 pm
Tues, Dec. 17	West Salem (Varsity)	Away	7:00 pm



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# EMU Hockey: Getting the puck in the goal in 50% of their games to date



A scene from the recent EMU hockey game against Marquette at the MARC. Joseph Frederick photo.

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

With about a dozen Merrill-area hockey players on the East Merrill United (EMU) Hockey Team this year, more Merrill residents are keeping a close watch on the team's progress. While we don't have in-depth details to share or game play-by-plays at the moment, we can share the team's scores as they're getting full-on into their season. As of Tuesday morning, Dec. 10, EMU had won three of the six games they've played, counting the Invitational in late November.

Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2024 at the Langlade County Memorial Building

**Box Score**  
**EMU 7 - Antigo 1**

Saturday, Nov. 30, Boys Ice Hockey Varsity Invitational at Edwards Ice Arena (Telfer Park) (Teams Stoughton, Beloit, Monroe, EMU)

**Box Score**  
**Game 1: Beloit Memorial 8 - EMU 5.**  
**Game 2: EMU 9 - Stoughton 1.**

Tuesday, Dec. 3, at Marathon Park Ice Arena

**Box Score**  
**EMU 6 - Waupaca 4**

Thursday, Dec. 5, at Marathon Park Ice Arena

**Box Score**  
**SPASH 18 - EMU 0.**

Saturday, Dec. 7, at the Merrill Area Recreation Center Ice Arena

**Box Score**  
**Marquette 6 - EMU 0**

# Merrill Boys Basketball Team wins 2 out of 3 games

BY TINA L. SCOTT  
EDITOR

The Merrill Boys Varsity Basketball Team took on the Boys at Newman Catholic High School in an away game, getting back out on the court to compete on Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2024, and brought home a win, celebrating a 74-37 Bluejays vs. Cardinals victory.

"It was a good season opener for us," said Merrill Boys Varsity Basketball Head Coach Troy Pieper. "The energy was good all night, I liked how we played for the first game of the year, the defense for the most part was on point, and we rebounded the ball very well on both ends."

"These are good games to have early in the season," he said. "All the guys get good minutes. It's good for everyone to get those first Varsity minutes for the ones who are experiencing that for the first time."

"We got good minutes from a number of guys," Pieper said. "I really like how Aidan Houghton filled the box score up. He did a little bit of everything. He finished with 9 points, 9 rebounds, and a handful of assists as well."

Tyson Ott (5 FG, 3 3pt, 6 FT, 6 rbd, 3 stl) was the high scorer of the game



Senior #11 EJ Weix is about to get one over the rim in the game against Crandon. Joseph Frederick photo.

for Merrill, putting up 19 points, followed by Eli Burtman (3 FG, 1 3pt, 5 FT, 6 rbd, 1 ast) with 12 points and Carter Kaminski (4 FG, 2 3pt, 5 rbd) with 10 points.

**Box Score**  
**Merrill 74 @ Wausau Newman 37**

The Merrill Boys Varsity Basketball Team landed a

decisive win over Crandon in their Thursday, Dec. 5, home game. But while the Bluejays beat their second set of Cardinals in as many days, again with a Bluejays' score of 74, Head Coach Pieper said he knows the boys could have done better, particularly on the defensive side of things.

"It wasn't our best effort



Senior #5 Aidan Houghton leaps into action. Peter Tesch photo.

especially on defense, however we did enough to get the job done," Pieper said. "It's probably the most frustrated I've been after an 18-point win."

"Don't get me wrong—I'll take an 18-point win any day of the week," he said. "It just felt like we were a little flat all night and just couldn't get the spark to really roll, and to me that starts on defense. Your defense can fuel your energy on a night like that."

"I'm happy the guys kept battling," Pieper said. "We are 2-0 and we did what we were supposed to do to start the season."

"Four guys in double figures it always a positive," he said.

"I liked how our Seniors played tonight," Pieper said. "A few of them that stood out to me with their energy and work on both ends were Jacob Schmeltzer—19 points (5 FG, 4 3pt, 5 FT, 2 ast, 4 stl), EJ Weix—15 points (5 FG, 1 3pt, 4 FT, 5 rbd, 4 ast, 2 stl), and Aidan Houghton—14 points (6 FG, 1 3pt, 1 FT, 10 rbd, 4 ast, 2 stl). Sophomore Tyson Ott—14 points (4 FG, 3 3pt, 3 FT, 3 rbd, 1 ast, 4 stl) was also in double figures tonight."

**Box Score**  
**Crandon 56 @ Merrill 74**

The Merrill Bluejays were back on the road on Friday, Dec. 6, to play the Mosinee Indians in Mosinee, but this time they couldn't quite bring home the win. By halftime, Merrill was trailing 32-19. Mosinee took the game 68-57.

"They came out with more energy and had a bit more of a sense of urgency than we did," Pieper said. "They got up early and it took us just a little too long to get settled in."

"I thought we did enough down the stretch of the first half to keep ourselves in the game," he said. "However, we started the second half the same way we started the first half and allowed them to go on a 7-0 run to start the half and we found ourselves down 20. Again, like the first half, we battled back, and I really liked how we played after the slow start in the second half. There were multiple times we had chances to cut it under 10 but just couldn't hit that big shot that I think could have really sparked us to complete the comeback."

"EJ Weix did his part all night trying to create energy for us and help lead us to a comeback," Pieper said. "He really laid it all out there tonight and played hard."

EJ Weix (6 FG, 1 3pt, 10 FT, 8 rbd, 3 ast, 3 stl) was Merrill's high scorer, putting up 23 points for the team, followed by Aidan Houghton (4 FG, 1 3pt, 2 FT, 4 rbd, 2 ast, 2 stl) with 11 points and Jacob Schmeltzer (2 FG, 3 FT, 8 rbd, 1 ast, 1 st) with 7 points, respectively.

"I will take some blame, as well," Pieper said. "I think I should have done better getting more of the bench in at times to give guys more of a break in both halves. Maybe if we had conserved some of the energy for the stretch run, we could have made the comeback complete. That is something I will be better at and be sure to try and not make that same mistake again moving forward."

"As a team, we can learn a lot from this game, and we will be better because of it," he said.

**Box Score**  
**Merrill 57 @ Mosinee 68**

## ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

**Aidan Houghton**, a Senior at Merrill High School (MHS), has been named Athlete of the Week for the week of Dec. 12, 2024. Aidan plays on the Merrill Varsity Boys Basketball Team, and Coach Troy Pieper said he "filled the box score up" and "did a little bit of everything," contributing "9 points, 9 rebounds, and a handful of assists" in the game against Wausau Newman. Aidan said it feels like he's been playing basketball forever, but he started playing in Merrill in sixth grade for both Prairie River Middle School (PRMS) and the Merrill Traveling Team, then played JV at MHS for two years and Varsity starting as a Junior. Aidan also played Merrill Varsity Football for two years, having started playing tackle football in third grade in Portland, Oregon, and then, after moving to Merrill in the fifth grade, on the Blue Team at PRMS. His favorite class at school is Bluejay Design and Manufacturing, and he is involved in the Co-op Program working at Festival Foods in Weston. In his free time, Aidan likes to work out at Riverside Athletic Club or the YMCA in Wausau, play video games, go shopping or just be home with family, and play video games or just hang out with friends at their houses. The son of Vanessa Houghton of Merrill, Aidan has a 2.7 GPA and is undecided about his career plans after high school graduation.



Aidan Houghton

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