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FREE | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025 | VOLUME 69, ISSUE 19

School board candidates share their views

Editor's note: There are eight candidates for the School District of Rhinelander Board of Education on the April 1 ballot. The top four vote-getters will be elected. Here are the candidates' (unedited) answers to questions posed by the Star Journal.

ROBERT SHELLY (CHALLENGER)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for a seat on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: I would like to participate on the school board and be able to give back to the community. I believe that high school is the last chance for our kids to have a chance to experience what they are passionate about before committing to an expensive college. I would like to work with the school district, Nicolet College, and local businesses to provide these apprenticeship opportunities. If elected, I would like to review teachers and staff to understand what can be improved to offer our kids the best education. I believe that teacher pay needs to be reviewed and be merit based. This merit needs to be based on their student's involvement and GPA averages.

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: The school district owns a large sum of land

throughout the county. This land should be reviewed to whereas harvesting the timber can be an asset generating income. The state of Wisconsin needs to review the current benefits per child they are subsidizing and this needs to be increased. The state has a budget surplus currently in the billions. We need to lobby these law makers for review of benefits. We need to review outside contractors and decide what is the best use of taxpayer money. Many of these services currently used are extremely expensive so putting these services out on bid again should be reviewed.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: The parents should be offered the option to decide where their child attends school, and this money should follow the child.

JUDY CONLIN (INCUMBENT)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for another term on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: I decided to run for another term on the School District of Rhinelander School Board because I want to continue the gains in academic achievement

See **SCHOOL BOARD** page 4

Luck of the Irish

A spot of rainy weather couldn't dampen the spirits of those gathered in downtown Rhinelander Saturday, March 15, 2025 for the city's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade. **Dave Melancon photo**

Referendum vote, school board election April 1

BY HEATHER SCHAEFER
EDITOR

Tuesday, April 1 promises to be a pivotal day for the future of public education in Rhinelander.

School District of Rhinelander voters will find the names of eight candidates for the district's board of education on their spring election ballot (the top four vote-getters will be elected) as well as an operational referendum question district officials have framed as essential to "sustaining excellence" in local public schools.

The referendum question is: "Shall the School District of Rhinelander, Oneida, Lincoln and Langlade Counties, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$3,000,000 per year for the 2025-2026 school year and the 2026-2027 school year and by \$7,000,000 per year for the 2027-2028 school year and 2028-2029 school year, for non-recurring purposes consisting of ongoing operational expenses?"

In a March 20 interview with the Star Journal, district superintendent Eric Burke stated that the language of the referendum question is final and cannot be changed. His statement came just before it was announced that President Donald Trump had signed an executive order directing his Education Secretary, Linda McMahon, to take "all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education and return education authority to the states."

Burke said the district would await further infor-

See **REFERENDUM** page 3

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I ONEIDA COUNTY WARRANTS OF THE WEEK I

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Alt: Stacy L. Beals, 52, Waupun. Fail to pay. BOND: \$144.50.



Courtney M. Palutsis, 32, Rhinelander. Fail to appear. BODY ONLY



Jamain K. Lee, 20, Waupun. Fail to pay; BOND: \$388.



Edgar Camacho Gutierrez, 38, Menasha. Fail to pay. BOND: \$388.



Heriberto Marrufo Estrada, 35, Milwaukee. Fail to appear. BODY ONLY

ONEIDA COUNTY COURT REPORT

MARCH 13 - 19

Yvonne Margaret Morman, 81, Lake Tomahawk, three charges violation of harassment restraining order, \$1500 signature bond, AIA, May 5.

Jason Vincent Mcglone, 48, Rhinelander, ignition interlock device tampering/failure to install/ violate court order, \$500 signature bond, AIA May 5.

Lisa Monique Olivas, 37, Phoenix, AZ, resisting or obstructing an officer, \$500 signature bond, AIA April 14.

Donnie Jerome Thompson, 19, Woodruff, bail jumping-misde-meanor, two charges disorderly conduct with PTAC modifiers, \$1000 signature bond, AIA March 20.

Nicholis A. Marks, 42, Rhinelander, vehicle operator flee/elude officer, disorderly conduct, resisting or obstructing an officer, \$5000 signature bond, AIA May 5.

Danielle C. Tosi, 36, Rhinelander, five charges bail jumping-felony with repeater modifiers, possession of THC (2nd+ offense) with PTAC modifier, \$100 cash bond, AIA April 15.

Amanda A. Greguire, 44, Rhinelander, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of THC, bail jumping-felony, \$2500 signature bond, AIA April 2.

Michael Anthony Leo, 64, Rhinelander, bail jumping-felony, possession of methamphetamine, possession of THC, possession of drug paraphernalia, \$2500 signature bond, AIA April 22.

Justin Wayne Hayner, 37, Eagle River, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug

paraphernalia, bail jumping-felony, \$5000 signature bond, AIA April 29.

Dondrequez Lamar Woodruff, 33, Cameron, OWI (1st with passenger <16 years old), \$2500 signature bond, AIA April 14.

Michael K. Firmiss, 68, Minocqua, ignition interlock device tampering/failure to install/violate court order, bail jumping-misde-meanor, \$500 signature bond, PTC May 6.

Kyle C. Wittkowske, 33, Rhinelander, two charges bail jumping-felony, \$1000 signature bond, PH March 27.

Robert K. Faga, 60, Woodruff, retail theft -intentionally take (>\$500-\$5000), \$1000 signature bond, AIA May 5.

Chad Nathan Radmann, 43, Irma, possession of methamphetamine, resisting or obstructing an officer, disorderly conduct, possession of drug paraphernalia, \$500 cash bond, AIA March 21.

Derek C. Pagel, 36, Rhinelander, three charges bail jumping-felony, possession of drug paraphernalia, all with repeater modifiers, \$1000 cash bond, AIA March 28.

Damen Ryan Thompson, 28, New London, disorderly conduct with domestic abuse-threat modifier, guilty due to no contest plea, 6 months WHS/POP.

Arthur C. Wilmot, 79, Rhinelander, battery with domestic abuse modifier, disorderly conduct with domestic abuse-threat modifier, disorderly conduct, all charges dismissed on prosecutor’s motion.

Grace Elisabeth Ziesmer, 28, Rhinelander, resisting or obstructing an officer, deferred prosecution or sentence.

Chad A. Lockhart, 38, Rhine-

lander, resisting or obstructing an officer, dismissed on prosecutor’s motion, disorderly conduct with domestic abuse modifier, guilty due to no contest plea, 5 days jail, \$250 fine.

Kaylee E. Bauman, 36, Lac du Flambeau, theft, guilty due to no contest plea, must pay restitution.

Kenneth Earl Czoschke, 41, Rhinelander, attempt of 2nd degree sexual assault of child, dismissed on prosecutor’s motion, use a computer to facilitate a child sex crime, guilty due to no contest plea, 10 years WSP, sex offender registration.

Melissa J. Noe, 44, Rhinelander, two charges of theft-business setting (<=\$2500), both charges dismissed on prosecutor’s motion.

Wanda Y. Pauer, 59, Rhinelander, OWI (7th, 8th, or 9th), operating with PAC (7th, 8th, or 9th), both charges found guilty at jury trial, 4.5 years WSP, \$1200 fine, 3 years driver’s license revocations, 3 years IID.

ABBREVIATION KEY:

DPA - Deferred Prosecution Agreement

DEJ - Deferred Entry of Judgment

WSP - Wisconsin State Prison

ES – Extended Supervision

PAC - Prohibited Alcohol Concentration

IID - Ignition Interlock Device

DL – Driver’s license

AIA - Adjourned initial appearance

PTAC - Party to a crime

WHS/POP - Withhold sentence/period of probation

DRI – Dismissed but read in

PTC – Pre-trial conference

PH – Preliminary Hearing

Human remains found in wake of house fire

FOR STAR JOURNAL

Human remains were found inside a residence in the Town of Bradley last Thursday, according to the Lincoln County sheriff’s office.

According to a sheriff’s office press release, the dispatch center was notified of a residential fire shortly after 6 a.m. Thursday, March 20.

“The Tomahawk, Nokomis, and Cassian fire departments responded to extinguish the fire,” the release said. “When firefighters arrived the residence was fully engulfed. Human

remains were later located inside the residence while the fire was still being extinguished.”

The state fire marshal’s office, Wisconsin Department of Justice Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office were continuing to investigate this incident as this edition went to press.

The identity of the victim was not immediately released.

As of March 20, the cause of the fire and the cause of death had not been determined.

Town of Pelican residence destroyed by fire

FOR STAR JOURNAL

A home on Riverbend Road in the Town of Pelican was destroyed by fire on March 17 but the occupants escaped harm.

According to a post on the Pine Lake Fire & Rescue Facebook page, the department was dispatched to the residence just after 4 p.m. March 17 to provide automatic aid to Pelican firefighters.

Pelican FD also requested mutual aid from the Rhinelander Fire Department as well as the Crescent and Monico volunteer departments, according to the post.

“Firefighters arrived on scene to a single story structure with walkout basement showing heavy fire on the main level,” the post said. “Firefighters initiated interior fire attack on both levels of the structure. The structure suffered heavy fire, water and smoke damage. The occupants were able to escape the fire however a family cat did not survive.”

Firefighters were on scene for more than two hours, according to the post.

The Oneida County Sheriff’s Dept and Ambulance, along with WPS, also responded to the call.

Groundbreaking ceremony set for SDR construction project

FOR STAR JOURNAL

The School District of Rhinelander will hold a groundbreaking ceremony to kick off its “transformative” construction project at Rhinelander High School and James Williams Middle School. The ceremony is scheduled for 4 p.m. April 7 at Rhinelander High School and all community members are welcome to attend, organizers said in a press release.

This project will enhance educational spaces across both schools, including:

- High school: Upgraded technical education and science classrooms
- Middle school: New and improved art, music, family and consumer science, special education, health, and office areas.

These enhancements will provide students with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, fostering hands-on learning experiences that prepare them for future success, the release states.

“We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering support of our community in making this project a reality,” said district superintendent Eric Burke. “This investment in our schools reflects our shared commitment to providing the best possible learning environment for our students.”

“Join us as we celebrate this exciting milestone and the bright future of Rhinelander students. It’s a great time to be a Hodag!”

VOTE for JUDY CONLIN for School Board - April 1 Leadership and Experience



Priorities:

- **Students:** academic achievement, emotional/ social/behavioral supports and mental health
- **Staff:** Attract and retain high quality staff, provide professional development to continually improve classroom instruction and collaboration to address the learning needs of students
- **Fiscal responsibility:** wise decision making in budgeting, aligning budgets to priorities, helping the community understand why we must go to referendum for operating expenses
- **Open and honest communication and consensus building,** listening, valuing differing viewpoints

Leadership

- Board Vice President; Chairperson Instruction and Accountability Committee; member of Employee Relations Committee
- WI Association of School Boards (WASB) representative on the WI Council on Special Education 2020-2024 (State Superintendent's Special Education Advisory Council); co-chair for 2 years; recently recognized by WASB for my commitment to public school students and participating in professional development opportunities
- Director of Instruction: Tomahawk (6 years)
- Professional development provided to school and district teams in our area and throughout the state; mentor to school improvement teams (9 years)

- Represent the board testifying before the legislative Joint Finance Committees in 2014, 2019 and 2021 on the impact of the funding formula and proposed state budgets on our district and the need to increase funding for Special Education
- Board of Directors for Camp Manito-wish YMCA in Boulder Junction

Experience

- 18 years serving on the board
- Bring a variety of perspectives to board discussions and decision making
- Working as a board we elevated the importance of technical education & put it on par with academic programs
- Teacher in Rhinelander: Special Education (16 of 19 years); elementary (6 years)
- Presented with district staff at the WASB convention on our tech ed programs and business partnerships, to Leadership Oneida County on Board member perspectives, and to students as part of the business sponsored Mad Money
- Rhinelander Community member for 50+years; member of Nativity of Our Lord Parish

School Board elections are non-partisan by design; I would appreciate your vote. Working together we build the future for our students and our community.

Authorized and Paid for by Judy Conlin

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VOTE APRIL 1

BILL FREUDENBERG

For

Rhineland

School Board

Authorized and Paid for by Bill Freudenberg

RECYCLE REUSE

REFERENDUM *from page 1*

mation and direction related to the executive order, but the question to be put to the voters on April 1 will not be affected.

“It definitely creates challenges,” he said of the order, which was not yet official at the time of the interview. “I guess I’m optimistic in thinking that we’re going to find a way to make sure that our students and our families are fully supported.”

“I don’t think (the order) changes anything with what we’re doing here (with the April 1 referendum),” he continued. “We’re asking the voters to support a referendum that will put us in a place, despite what the state is doing, to be able to continue what we believe is excellence in our school district.”

“This is definitely a need and not a want,” he added.

In a pair of community informational sessions, school officials explained that districts across the state are continuing to go to referendum because state officials are allocating less funding to public schools, particularly those in rural areas.

As a result, the only option districts have available to them is to go to referendum.

During a March 12 public informational session on the referendum, Burke noted that 131 school districts held referenda in 2024 and 91 districts have referendum questions on the ballot April 1.

“The state hasn’t been doing its part,” he said.

According to materials distributed during the informational sessions, in 2005 the state provided 43 percent of school funding, leaving local taxpayers to provide the remaining 57 percent. Today, property taxpayers are being asked to cover 76 percent of the cost to fund public schools while the state contributes only 24 percent.

This is despite a \$4.3 billion surplus sitting in state coffers. The surplus, along with a “rainy day fund” with approximately \$1.9 billion, remains unspent because state elected officials have been unable to agree on how to use it.

Complicating matters further, school districts have been hit with rising costs since students returned to in-person learning following the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Prices have changed dramatically and the needs of students have changed dramatically (since the pandemic),” the district’s business director, Bob Thom, said during the March 12 session.

In particular, special education costs are up 17 percent (approximately \$2 million), according to written materials distributed at the meetings.

“The biggest portion of where we’re at right now with our deficit is due to our special education costs,” Burke said, noting that back in the ‘70s the state pledged to cover 67 percent of special education costs but has never reached that mark. At present, the state is covering only 30.5 percent of the district’s special education costs.

“One student (in special education) may cost over \$100,000,” he said, noting that unlike private voucher schools public schools are required to provide special education services to every student who meets the criteria.

Another speaker, director of curriculum Ryan Ourada, explained that Rhinelander students have been posting impressive achievements, including the highest ACT composite score in five years, despite a myriad of post-pandemic challenges.

“To keep these things moving in this direction we’ll have to find ways to fund the programs, the people and the initiatives that are working for us,” he said.

If the referendum is approved, the projected tax rate for the 2025-26 school year would be \$7.92 per \$1,000 of home fair market value which would represent an increase of 52 cents in the first year. For the owner of a home with an equalized value of \$200,000, this would amount to an increase of \$104.

SCHOOL BOARD RACE

In addition to the referendum question, voters will be asked to choose four individuals to serve on the school board. There are a total of eight candidates for the four available seats. Incumbents Judy Conlin, Ron Lueneburg and Mary Peterson are seeking another term while Doug Artus, who was appointed in June 2024 following the resignation of former board member David Holperin, is seeking the public’s OK to continue on the board. Four challengers, Kurt Helke, Bill Freudenberg, Robert Shelly and Jacqueline Zivko, are hoping to unseat one of the incumbents. For more information on the candidates, see “School board candidates share their views” in this edition.

Additional information on the referendum question is available on the school district website <https://www.rhinelanderk12.wi.us/district/referendum.cfm>.

Oneida County launches housing study

FOR STAR JOURNAL

The Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC), along with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), is conducting a housing study to assess the needs of Oneida County communities.

“With help from our partners at Nicolet College and the Oneida County Health Department, along with other community leaders, we have produced a housing study in response to growing concerns over housing affordability and availability,” OCEDC officials said in a press release. “We need your input! This public survey is open to anyone who lives, works, goes to school in, or spends time in Oneida County. Responses are anonymous and they are used to identify trends in what kinds of housing is needed and at what prices, along with any other housing concerns survey respondents may have. The responses help inform the housing study’s recommendations.”

The survey is open until April 11 and the results will be published in May.

Leading the study is Tony Pharo, OCEDC executive director, who, along with Sam Wessel from NCWRPC, will “analyze market trends, collect public input, and interview local employers to understand which housing types are most in demand.” The study will also identify challenges preventing an adequate supply of housing and propose solutions that individual communities can explore based on their unique needs, the release states.

“Housing affordability and availability continue to be a major concern in Oneida County,” said Pharo. “This study will provide valuable data to guide decision-making and help create solutions that benefit both residents and local businesses.”

To access the survey, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GGXF6RN>.

For more information, visit <https://www.ncwrpc.org/oneida-county-housing-study-2025/>.

Rhinelanderskatepark seeks artists for murals

FOR STAR JOURNAL

ArtStart and the city of Rhinelander are seeking three visual artists or artist teams to create digital murals to be installed at the future Rhinelander Skatepark.

The selection committee will prioritize artists that reside in Rhinelander and Oneida, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, and Vilas counties. Non-residents can apply but must describe their relationship to the Northwoods.

In round one, six artists or teams will be selected as finalists. Finalists will receive a \$150 stipend to create a concept sketch for a final mural.

In round two, three artists or teams will receive \$1,500 to create the murals that will be installed at the skatepark.

The stipend includes funds to cover supplies used to create the design. ArtStart will cover the printing

and installation.

The murals will be created digitally and then printed. Applicants need no previous graphic design experience.

Applications are due March 30.

Round one finalists will be selected on April 7, and round two on May 2. A mural celebration is planned for June at Hodag Park.

The skatepark project was initiated by local youth through the group Over It when they expressed a desire for a skatepark to the Rhinelander City Council.

In 2022, ArtStart began a partnership with the city to lead the community feasibility study, and in 2024, the city contracted with Hunger Skateparks for design and build.

For more information and to apply, visit artstart-rhinelanders.org.

What you need to know before voting on April 1

Wisconsin Watch, a nonpartisan, nonprofit newsroom with a statewide focus, has compiled a list of resources for voters ahead of the April 1 general election.

State Supreme Court

Candidates Susan Crawford, a Dane County judge backed by the court’s current liberal members, and former Attorney General Brad Schimel, a Republican judge from Waukesha County, are vying to replace longtime liberal Justice Ann Walsh Bradley, who is retiring.

What you need to know: This election will determine whether the Wisconsin Supreme Court maintains a guaranteed liberal majority until 2028 or shifts to a 3-3 split, with conservative-leaning swing vote Justice Brian Hagedorn holding the deciding vote.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Incumbent Jill Underly, backed by the Democratic Party, faces education consultant Brittany Kinser, who is supported by conservative groups advocating for private school voucher programs.

What you need to know: Underly has faced criticism from Republicans for adjusting the state’s proficiency benchmarks for standardized tests.

She argues the changes better reflect what students are learning. Kinser’s platform focuses on expanding school choice statewide.

Constitutional amendment

Voters will also decide on a proposed constitutional amendment that would require individuals to present valid photographic identification to vote, with exceptions allowed by law.

What you need to know: Proponents argue it safeguards election integrity, while critics warn it could disenfranchise groups less likely to possess valid photo IDs, particularly marginalized communities. The outcome could have lasting implications for future elections in Wisconsin.

Polling location

To find your polling location and see what local positions are on the ballot, visit MyVote Wisconsin. All you need to know is your address — the site will guide you through the rest.





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Vote April 1

For Mary Peterson!

Experience Matters





Mary Peterson

SDR School Board Clerk

- 18 years School Board Member
- 38 years teacher in Rhinelander School District
- Instruction & Accountability
- Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Authorized and paid for by Mary Peterson.

4/2/25

SCHOOL BOARD *from page 1*

and supports needed for students to be successful. I am proud that we have advanced the college credit opportunities, especially in our technical education programs; we have gained statewide recognition for excellence in our college and career programs. I helped lead the capital campaign to build new technical education facilities; the skills learned will benefit students seeking degrees in technical education, and our local employers when they employ our graduates, many of whom completed apprenticeships with them. I know the importance of having highly qualified staff and am committed to their continuous learning and providing supports as they work to continually improve their instruction; our investment in them is paying off with greater retention. I am committed that we remain a leader in education and student success.

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: I testified before the Joint Finance Committee in 2014, 2029, and 2021 explaining the negative impact of the current funding formula on our district (and many other districts) that require us to divert funds to cover the shortfall in our budget as a result of inadequate funding from the state, and I advocated for increased funding for special education. I will continue to advocate for increased spending for special education because it would benefit all districts, it is the right thing to do for students, and could be accomplished using part of the \$4.6 billion surplus. As a Board, we will continue to push for increased and sustainable solutions. We must maintain a strong fund balance to avoid short term borrowing; this avoids paying interest that could be used for programs that benefit our students and community. We will continue to look for ways to reduce the budget without negatively impacting learning. We will continue to communicate about the impact of inadequate funding and the importance of investing in our schools. I am grateful for the community’s trust in me.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: I agree with the WI Association Boards opposition to vouchers because they divert taxpayer dollars away from public schools, which reduces the resources available for the vast majority of students. Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards, with no requirement to demonstrate better outcomes. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau reported in 2023-2024 the total statewide aid reduction was \$306.6 million for Parental Choice and Special Needs Scholarship programs; these were paid with taxpayer money. Family income limits for vouchers have increased each year; for the 2024-25 school year, the family income of a student new to a choice program for a family of 4 was \$66,000. Private schools are not required to serve all children. Public education must educate all students regardless of their abilities, language barriers, economic status, academic or behavioral challenges.

BILL FREUDENBERG (CHALLENGER)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for a seat on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: The desire to serve. I have attended many meetings, and I have decided to run with hopes of being a part of a board that will bring this district forward to help our students, teachers and support staff as well.

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: Budget problems are very challenging at times. You have the State of Wisconsin formula that is so outdated and the cost of everything.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: I believe the private school vouchers hurt public school funding.

KURT HELKE (CHALLENGER)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for a seat on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: I have been a community leader in Rhinelander for going on 27 years as a Sergeant with the Rhinelander Police Department and have been a single father raising two girls in this district. I have many experiences both personally and professionally with this school district and have positive rapport with many parents, teachers, and administrators. An important concept that led to this decision is that I have gone through my experiences, stresses, and struggles in my life to forge me into the man I am today and now I will use my life lessons to positively influence others.

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: The School District of Rhinelander should use all available resources to address its budgetary challenges. As the state funding formula has consistently disappointed this community, we must look beyond the consistent need for a referendum funded school district. This district should be fiscally responsible and be constantly working to funnel more state and/or federal funds to this district. We should also be brainstorming and looking outside the box for grants, donations, and other alternative forms of funding.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: For all intents and purposes private school vouchers are an idea with good intentions applied poorly. Most applications of a voucher program involve taking from the limited public school funds and essentially giving them to private schools. The trajectory of the voucher program has dramatically increased over the past 10 years and could create serious budgetary challenges managing public schooling with an uncontrollable line item.

MARY PETERSON (INCUMBENT)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for another term on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: Education seems to be on the front line of discussions and cuts. As school board members, it is our job to continue to meet the challenges by ensuring our kids have the best opportunities to learn to be responsible adults entering the next chapter in their life. It’s an important job and I am inspired to help provide our Rhinelander students with the education necessary to meet their needs

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: As a SDR board member, I have tried to be responsible with our taxpayers’ monies. State funding diminishes each year. We have been cautious with our spending, but in order to keep programs for our kids to grow and excel, we may need to ask our community for help in the form of referendums. By being transparent and factual to our citizens, they have responded to our needs and passed the necessary funding requests.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: This discussion is a political “football!” If our state politicians continue to support vouchers, they need to provide monies that create equal funding for both public and private education, with equal accountability.

DOUG ARTUS (INCUMBENT)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for a seat on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: Although I currently have a seat on the board, I was not elected by public vote. I was appointed by a vote of the board due to an early retirement. I put my name in the hat for that special vote because I have three children in Rhinelander schools. I want to be involved in the school district my children attend.

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: Budget is an important topic for the school board. The district should provide a great learning experience for the future adult generation of our community. As well as be responsible of maintaining a healthy and above board budget. Much of the school funding is from the State. It’s the board’s duty to make decisions based on what the state aid is provided to Rhinelander.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: The state voucher system gets much attention for the amount of influence it has on the Rhinelander budget. It’s great to have a system that allows parents & students a choice of which school to attend.

JACQUI ZIVKO (CHALLENGER)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for a seat on the Rhinelander school board?

Answer: My experience as a parent and social worker in Rhinelander has motivated me to seek a position on the school board, offering a unique perspective on the district’s operations. I believe I would bring a balanced and diverse perspective to the school board, leveraging my open-minded approach to consider all aspects

of a situation while acknowledging the need for ongoing policy and procedure refinement. My objective is to serve as a liaison between the administration and the community, ensuring open and honest communication regarding academic discussions and decision-making processes that prioritize the educational success of our children and students.

Star Journal: How should the School District of Rhinelander address its budget challenges?

Answer: I firmly believe that the primary focus should be on staff salaries and student services. These two factors are inextricably linked in ensuring access to adequate and available education. I insist that the budget emphasis needs to shift towards enhancing our district’s internal operations and leveraging school funding to support this objective more. Notably, since the Covid-19 outbreak, I have witnessed multiple instances of students being denied necessary services/support due to reasons of inadequate staffing and educational funding. If we were to direct funding towards these vital areas, I would be curious to see if it would lead to a reduction in behavioral issues among special education students, improved grades due to an increase in support staff, and enhanced overall student enrollment and attendance. Although physical upgrades may create an impression of prosperity, our district is grappling with significant internal challenges that demand attention in order for the school to maintain.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: The specific needs of a child should drive the decision between public and private education. Private school vouchers introduce new educational avenues; but do they directly benefit the child or is the child engaging in private education for the right reason? Both public and private schools rely on taxpayer funding for financial sustainability. However, private schools have the added benefit of private tuition, in addition to other financial means. Educational funding helps to maintain staff, students support, and educational materials. The implementation of private school vouchers has resulted in decreased public school enrollment. Public school funding is based on school population, which decreases as private school enrollment increases.

RON LUENEBURG (INCUMBENT)

Star Journal: What prompted you to run for another term on the school board?


Answer: The reason that I am running for school board is essentially two-fold. I want to continue with the board to ensure our youth are academically prepared for life after high school, whether that be going to college, a vocational institution, or going into the work force. I am a proponent of seeing that the youth of the community receive instruction in the fundamentals of education and that they can do so in a safe environment. These should be essential goals for the district. Additionally, I very much supported the \$26M referendum to upgrade the trades programs in both the high school and middle school. We are hurting in the trades area in this community and the area at large. To get young people interested in pursuing these skill sets and remaining in the area would be good for all of us in the long run. I think it is important to see this project through to its completion.

Star Journal: How should the district address its budget challenges?

Answer: This question is difficult as there are many different views regarding how to address the budget issues the school district is facing. What the district is going through is not new to local government, which the school district is, a body of local government. Oneida County, like many other counties, Rhinelander, like many other communities, each face budget challenges frequently, like the school district, and must make necessary, but unpopular budget cuts at times. I know what it is like to run a department with constraints on the budget. It is difficult to deliver the same level of public service when financial resources are reduced. If the referendum does not pass the administration will have to critically evaluate how operations are managed and how funds are spent; this philosophy should be the same if the referendum passes, even though the district will be in a much better financial position. In short, streams of funding, both federally and at the state level have been reduced. It is difficult to continue delivering district services with fewer financial resources. This is a complex budget issue that will not be solved at the local level, state and federal legislators will need to develop plans which will benefit all their respective districts proportionately.

Star Journal: What is your opinion on the relationship between public school funding and private school vouchers?

Answer: The relationship is basically that public funds go to both public and private schools under certain conditions. Though opinions may vary, I think there is merit to some degree of funding going to private schools, should parents opt to place their children in a private school. Ultimately it is the state that determines how funds will be allocated.



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STAR JOURNAL™

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| COMMUNITY CALENDAR |

March 26, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., ADRC of Oneida County, 100 W. Keenan St., Rhinelander. Free tax assistance; by appointment only. 715-369-6170.

March 26, Rhinelander Area Food Pantry: 4-6 p.m., distribution. Donation drop-off hours, 8 a.m.-noon, Mondays through Fridays. 627 Coon St. Rhinelander-areafoodpantry.org.

March 26, Line Dancing: 6-8 p.m., The Haven, Rhinelander. Every Wednesday. For more information, call Diane at 715-282-5226.

March 26, Bingo: 10-11:30 a.m., ADRC, 100 W. Keenan St., Rhinelander. 715-369-6170.

March 26 SPARK!: 10:30 a.m., ArtStart, 68 South Stevens St., Rhinelander. A cultural program for people with early to mid-stage memory loss and their care partners. Registration required. 715-362-4328 or artstartrhinelander.org/spark.

March 27, Builder's Club: 1-5 p.m., Rhinelander District Library. Legos, Magna-Tiles, and more available in the children's department. 715-365-1070 or rhinelanderlibrary.org.

March 27, Alzheimer's Association Volunteer Open House: 5-7 p.m. Join the Alzheimer's Association at Rhinelander Brewing to learn about all of the ways you can get involved as a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association. Enjoy one free drink and light appetizers.

March 27, Thursday Night Trivia: 7-10 p.m., Backwaters Bar and Grill, Rhinelander. Join teams of up to six to compete in a live hosted trivia game of 50 questions. Weekly on Thursdays through May 15. 715-369-5645.

March 28, Blood Drive: 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. The Northwoods Veterans Groups and Immanuel Lutheran Church are teaming up to host a Blood Drive at the Rhinelander Veterans Center. Donors will get a free lunch of pulled pork sandwiches, homemade chicken noodle soup and cake for dessert.

March 28, National Vietnam War Veterans Commemoration Ceremony: 11:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Northwoods National Cemetery (4520 Lakewood Rd., Harshaw). Honoring Service, Valor, Sacrifice. Honors presented by: American Legion Riders, District 11 and- Northwoods Honor Guard.

March 29, Rhinelander Area Food Pantry: 9-11:30 a.m., distribution. Donation drop-off hours, 8 a.m.-noon, Mondays through Fridays. 627 Coon St. Rhinelander-areafoodpantry.org.

March 29, Indoor Farmers Market: Saturdays, 9 a.m.-noon, throughout the fall and winter at the YMCA of the Northwoods, 2003 E. Winnebago St., Rhinelander. 715-362-9622 x 118.

March 29, Personal Essentials Pantry (PEP): 9-11:30 a.m., First Method-

ist Church, 724 Arbutus St., Rhinelander. Use entrance A on the corner of Prospect and Wabash. PEP provides products necessary for personal and household cleanliness and good health. 715-362-2091.

March 30, Community Open Swim: 9 a.m.-noon, Sundays through May 19, Heck Family Community Pool, Rhinelander High School. Visit the community section at rhinelander.k12.wi.us. Contact: Mike Cheslock, 715-365-9745 or cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us.

March 31, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., ADRC of Oneida County, 100 W. Keenan St., Rhinelander. Free tax assistance; by appointment only. 715-369-6170.

March 31, Overeaters Anonymous: 1 p.m., Trinity Lutheran Church, 235 N. Stevens St., Rhinelander. 715-362-4258.

March 31, Bridge Games: noon, American Legion Hall, 121 W. Front St., Minocqua. \$4. Call Lee at 715-356-4243.

March 31, Rhinelander Area Food Pantry: 3-5 p.m., distribution. Donation drop-off hours, 8 a.m.-noon, Mondays through Fridays. 627 Coon St. Rhinelander-areafoodpantry.org.

March 31, Tiny Tot Time: 10 a.m., Rhinelander District Library. Caregivers can connect with each other and their little ones as they

play and learn. 715-365-1070 or rhinelanderlibrary.org.

March 31, The Table-Free Community Meal: 4-6:30 p.m., St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, 39 S. Pelham St., Rhinelander. Doors open at 4 p.m. Serving takes place at 5:30 p.m. 715-420-0066.

April 1, Preschool Storytime: 10 a.m., Rhinelander District Library, 106 N. Stevens St., Stories, flannels, songs and fun for ages 2 and up. 715-365-1070 or rhinelanderlibrary.org.

April 1, Teen Art Experience: 4-5:30 p.m. at ArtStart. Youth ages 13+ are invited for open studio time with local artists. Participants can expect a casual art making experience with a wide variety of materials and projects to explore. Registration required.715-362-4328.

April 2, RAREA meeting: 11 a.m. at CAVOC (4321 South Shore Drive). Rhinelander Area Retired Educators' Association will meet for a salad/dessert potluck. Please bring either a salad or a dessert to share and your own beverage. There will be a brief meeting followed by a social game time.

March 26, Bingo: 10-11:30 a.m., ADRC, 100 W. Keenan St., Rhinelander. 715-369-6170.

March 26, SPARK!: 10:30 a.m., ArtStart, 68 South Stevens St., Rhinelander. A cultural program for peo-

ple with early to mid-stage memory loss and their care partners. Registration required. 715-362-4328 or artstartrhinelander.org/spark.

March 31-May 12, Rally Dog Obedience, Advanced Level: Mondays, 6-6:45 p.m. (no class April 21), Pelican Elementary School Gymnasium. Registration deadline: March 27. Visit the community section at rhinelander.k12.wi.us. Contact: Mike Cheslock, 715-365-9745 or cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us.

March 31-May 12, Nosework for Dogs: Mondays, 7-7:45 p.m. (no class April 21), Pelican Elementary School Gymnasium. Registration deadline: March 27. Visit the community section at rhinelander.k12.wi.us. Contact: Mike Cheslock, 715-365-9745 or cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us.

April 2-May 14, Puppy Manners: Wednesdays,

6-6:45 p.m. (no class April 23), Pelican Elementary School Gymnasium. Registration deadline: March 31. Visit the community section at rhinelander.k12.wi.us. Contact: Mike Cheslock, 715-365-9745 or cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us.

April 9, Watercolor Painting, Red Slayer: 5:30-7:30 p.m., Rhinelander High School, room 134 (art room). Registration deadline: April 7. Visit the community section at rhinelander.k12.wi.us. Contact: Mike Cheslock, 715-365-9745 or cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us.

April 10, Spring Has Sprung Cooking Decorating: 5-8 p.m., Rhinelander High School, room 112. Registration deadline: April 4. Visit the community section at rhinelander.k12.wi.us. Contact: Mike Cheslock, 715-365-9745 or cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us.

| DEATH NOTICES |

Marlene Faye Lange, age 75, of Rhinelander, died on March 17, 2025. Carlson Funeral Home

Danny B. King, age 68, of Rhinelander, died on March 15, 2025. Carlson Funeral Home

Crystal Rose Gamez, age 44, of McNaughton, died on March 15, 2025. Hildebrand Funeral Home

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Raffle winner

Mary Schroeter of Minocqua was the lucky winner of the Star Journal's gift basket at the recent Up North Expo at the Hodag Dome in Rhinelander.
Heather Schaefer photo

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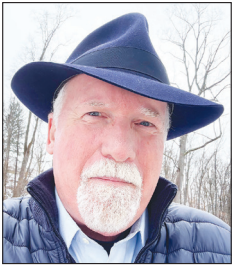
| PUBLISHER LETTER |

Protected Moments in Time: A Reflection on Love and Change

Dear Reader,

In life, we all experience what I'd call "protected moments in time"—those rare and powerful instances where everything feels eternal. Perhaps it was the day you fell in love and promised a "forever" to someone, or a life-changing experience where a vow to stay true felt as solid as the stars. In these moments, we see our highest ideals, our best selves, and we genuinely believe that nothing will shake that promise.

Yet life has a way of unfolding unpredictably. Years pass, circumstances change, and sometimes, so do we. We might find ourselves looking back at those once-immovable promises, wondering if they are still meant to shape our lives now. It's a complex question: Do we remain loyal to the person we once were, honoring that promise? Or do we let that moment live as a cherished memory, appreciating it for what it was, even if we have



outgrown it?

As we grow, perhaps part of honoring these protected moments is acknowledging that they held real meaning and value, even if time has carried us in different directions. It's about asking ourselves how these moments can be preserved—not necessarily as obligations but as threads in the fabric of our lives. In this way, those precious promises don't have to be lost or broken; instead, they become a part of who we are today, even as we embrace the person we've become.

Opening this dialogue invites us to look at our lives with compassion, respect, and honesty. It allows us to honor our past without being held captive by it, and perhaps to understand that some promises were meant to live beautifully in memory, influencing us, but not confining us. In these reflections, we might find peace, and maybe even inspiration, to continue building moments worth protecting in the time we have.

PATRICK J. WOOD
Publisher

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

PRICE COUNTY Veterans Service Officer

Price County is accepting applications for the position of County Veterans Service Officer in the Price County Veterans Service Department. This position plans, directs, and organizes efforts to assist Veterans, their families, and survivors regarding benefits available to them through the Federal Veterans Administration, the Wisconsin State Department of Veterans Affairs, and county and local resources.

This is a management position in which the employee plans for the daily operations of the office, supervises the support staff in implementation, applicable benefit preparation, and maintains a flow of information and services to the Veteran community of Price County. This includes coordinating benefits with other departments, local, state and federal. The County Veterans Service Officer serves as the Veterans and their dependents advocate to local, state, and federal programs and benefits. This position takes direction from the County Administrator and the Executive Committee.

This is a full-time, exempt position with a starting annual salary of \$64,209.60 (Grade 9), and full benefits package. Benefits include Wisconsin Retirement System with 6.95% employer match, income continuation insurance, choice of multiple health insurance plans including a zero deductible plan, 22 days of paid leave within the first year, 10 paid holidays per year, paid maternity/paternity leave, and quarterly employee lifestyle enhancement reimbursement perk. Dental/vision, flex spending, WI Deferred Comp, life, short-term disability, accident, and cancer/critical illness coverages are available.

A full description of minimum requirements and application instructions can be found on the Price County website's employment opportunities page at www.pricecounty.wi.gov, by emailing a request to hroffice@pricecounty.wi.gov or by calling 715-339-5131.

Completed applications must be received by the Price County Office of Administration by April 9, 2025, to be considered for this position.

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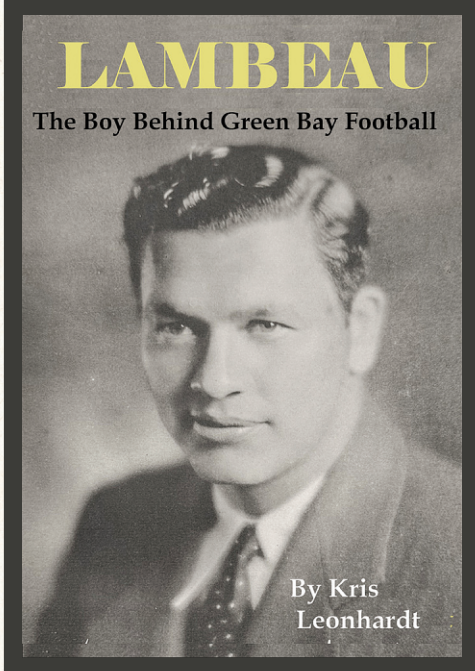
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of dedication that will inspire fans and readers alike. If you love football, community and tales of grit, this book is a must-read. **”**

The story of the beginning of the Green Bay Packers and the life of Earl Louis “Curly” Lambeau are so intertwined that it is hard to imagine one without the other.

From the streets of Green Bay, Lambeau developed a passion for football and grew that yearning into a football team that would exist long past his lifetime.

Like the Packers, Lambeau's story is a tale of adversity and challenge, but also a story of triumph and perseverance. While his personal life and professional career were wrought with challenge, his legacy continues to resonate in the Green Bay community, including a massive structure along Lombardi Avenue that shines a light on his contribution to the professional team.



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We will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. All persons are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised are available on an equal opportunity basis.

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HANDYMAN HELPER WANTED to work on a home in the Rhinelander area. If interested, please call my cell phone at 920-540-0266. Thank you.

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Hodag Highlights

HODAG HIGHLIGHTS: GIRLS SOFTBALL

The Rhinelander High School girls softball team held its first practice on Monday, March 17 in the Hodag Dome. The first action for the team will be the Danny Mac tournament beginning this Thursday in the Hodag Dome.



Head coach Ali Bender speaks to her players at the end of a practice..



Senior Lucy Lindner hits off a tee as her sophomore sister Cassidy resets balls on the tee for her.

HODAG HIGHLIGHTS: TRACK TEAM COMPETES IN WR

The track team members that were in Rhinelander for spring break took the bus ride to Wisconsin Rapids for an indoor track meet. The girls placed second out of five teams while the boys placed third.

One new girls school record was set as both sophomore Macy Myers and freshman Emaline Hintz broke the 8'3" mark in the pole vault with a height of 8'6". That was as high as Myers would go. Hintz then continued and set the new mark at 9'3".



Sophomore Macy Myers is on her way to breaking the school record in the pole vault with a vault of 8'6".

HODAG HIGHLIGHTS: GIRLS BASKETBALL BANQUET

The Rhinelander High School girls basketball team celebrated the 2024-25 season with a banquet on March 12. Players were introduced with a short synopsis of their season and awards were handed out as well as numerals, letters, and bars to those that earned them.

One of the highlights was the presentation of certificates for the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association Academic All State team. Eleven girls qualified for the award which requires a 3.5 grade point average.

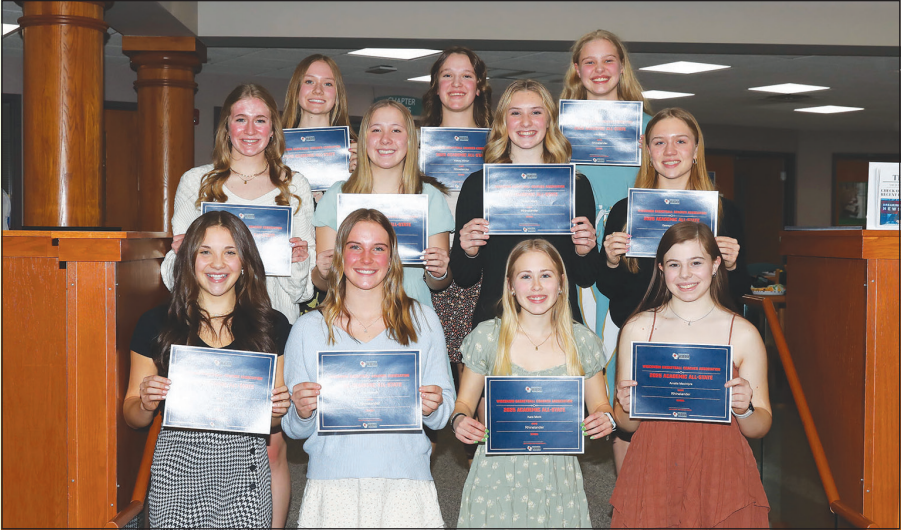
Three varsity girls earned honorable mention all-conference, as voted on by the coaches. Those players were Aubryn Clark, Vivian Lamers and Kelsey Winter.



JV award winners Amelia MacIntyre (Hodag Award,) Kara Monk (Defensive Player of the year), Mady Treder (Most Improved) and Ashlyn Hapka (Spirit Award).



The varsity awards went to (front row) Ella Miljevich (Defensive Player of the Year), Dawsyn Barkus (Spirit Award), Reese Gehrig (Hodag Award). In the back row are Lexi Beran (Hodag Award), Vivian Lamers (Most Improved), Kelsey Winter (Toughness Award).



Pictured are the Academic All State honorees on the girls' basketball team. Front row: JaLyn LaChapelle, Ella Miljevich, Kara Monk and Amelia MacIntyre. Middle row: Vivian Lamers, Gracie Anderson, Aubryn Clark and Dawsyn Barkus. Back row: Ellie Cummings, Kelsey Winter and Lexi Beran.

The two Hodags finished first and second in the event. In other action, Kara Monk won the 1600 meter run and the 4x133 meter relay was won by the team of Violet Biolo, Myers, Addison Fish and Wendy Fronk. Rhinelander also placed second in the 4x400, Biolo was second in the 50 meter dash, and Olivia Ruetz was second in the 400 meter dash. Logan Schwinger was first in the shot put with a toss of 43-11 1/2 for the only event win for the boys. Matthew Haselton was second in the 400, Michael Brunette was third in the 1600 and the boys were third in the 4x133 relay. Both the boys and girls were in Ashland on Tuesday for a meet.



Freshman Emaline Hintz successfully cleared the bar at the height of 9'3" to set a new school record in the pole vault.

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