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2023

# Wonders

of RACINE  
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# Fighting for equality everywhere

## Former Burlington High School coach enters third Hall of Fame

By Jennifer Eisenbart

STAFF WRITER

Diane Hanson is quietly proud of her accomplishments. "It's not bragging," Hanson said in a recent interview. "I need to share this. You need to share good things."

Not one to scream from the rafters, the former Burlington High School physical education teacher and pioneering girls coach recently entered her third different Hall of Fame, joining the Blanchardville/Hollandale/Pecatonica Hall of Fame in mid-September.

After spending most of her career at BHS, Hanson retired in Elkhorn. Since then, her accomplishments in brining girls to competitive athletics has been celebrated by induction into the Burlington High School Wall of Fame in 2019, the Barneveld Hall of Fame (2018) and now the B/H/P Athletic Hall of Fame.

Before Pecatonica became a unified district, Hanson graduated from Hollandale High School in 1965.

"Back in my era, there were no sports for girls, (nothing) organized," she said.

Hanson went on to play down her accomplishments at her home school, where she played sports as an individual, "guessing" that the group was honoring her "for pioneering efforts and contributions to girls sports."

Whether Hanson will admit it or not, her efforts were more than that.

Her push came at a time where Title IX – a standard-setting women's rights act that said, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Title IX leveled the playing field in 1972 – in more ways than just athletics. But it was the right time for Hanson to become an educator and to take girls athletics to the next step.

### Early on

When Hanson was in high school, the best that sports had to offer girls was the GAA – the Girls Athletic Association.

Young females who wanted to participate in sports did it through the GAA, playing informal tournaments on weekends, or during the summer.

There were no organized teams, no membership in the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association – no state tournaments.

As Hanson put it, the best she got was a chance to play recreational softball during the summer, and the coach had to bend rules to get her on the team due to her age.

After graduating from Hollandale, Hanson attended the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physical education. She went on to earn a master's degree from UW-Whitewater in education, then a degree in school counseling from UW-Milwaukee.

"Which I figured I needed if students were going to come and talk to me," Hanson explained.

That led to her being hired at Barneveld, where she began the school's first girls sports programs.

Back then, Hanson was paid \$125 to



Former Burlington High School physical education teacher and Elkhorn resident Diane Hanson is shown celebrating a recent birthday. Hanson was inducted into her third separate Hall or Wall of Fame in mid-September.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Racine County

run pom-poms, cheerleading, basketball, volleyball, track and field and tennis.

"It was like a get together for girls to participate," Hanson said of those early teams. "We played sports, but then we'd play other schools in the area. We'd have little invitationals."

### Title IX and moving on

Hanson could see the differences, though, between the amount of work she was putting in – she said she made an effort to get all of the young women at Barneveld involved in the sports offered – compared to what was paid to a football or basketball coach.

When she asked for equal pay, though, she was turned down.

"The school board said they couldn't afford it," Hanson said.

Back at the high school, her administration – all men, she explained – told her to file a Title IX complaint.

Ruled on in 1972, Title IX set a standard for equal rights across education for women. Among other important standards, it meant girls were entitled to equal funding and equal program access, as well

as athletic scholarships.

Hanson, with her administration backing her, filed the complaint. By way of response, the Barneveld School District

tried to non-renew her contract and have her removed.

"I came close," Hanson said of being fired. "I came very, very close."

Eventually, the school board backed down, faced with opposition from parents of her athletes and the publicity of the lawsuit.

But by then, Hanson was fielding offers from other schools. In the end, she chose to move to Burlington in 1976.

### At Burlington

At Burlington, Hanson's accomplishments became legendary. While she still had to fight to establish girls sports, she did manage to win her battles.

According to an article in the Burlington Standard Press in 2018, Hanson came in and took over the girls basketball team. She ended a 26-game losing streak and coached the team to a 9-9 record.

She was named the Standard Press Coach of the Year that year, and that was just the start. She would also coach track and field and girls golf, eventually becoming head coach.

Some of her athletes went on to become fellow Burlington Wall of Fame inductees – players like Sue Schenning and Libby Ripp-Forte.

In all, she would spend 35 years at Burlington High School, transitioning from sport to sport, helping where help was needed, giving a lift to girls throughout the high school in the process.

"In a way, I didn't even think of it as something special or exceptional," said Hanson, who is now retired and living in a rural farmland area outside of Elkhorn.

"I just thought, it's time."

Last year, Title IX celebrated its 50th year in existence. Today, many young women don't know the battles that preceded them in sports – the GAA, lack of scholarships and lack of equality.

Last year, when that anniversary was celebrated, Hanson received an email from one of her former Barneveld athletes.

"She said she didn't realize what we went through back then," Hanson recalled. "They didn't know what Title IX was."

They were teenagers. Now, 50 years later, she's so grateful for what I did."

Hanson added, simply, "It was the best thing I've ever received."

## Wonders of Racine County

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On the cover: Steve Gunderson, of Antioch, Illinois, rides his tractor with his grandson, Henry Sanford, during the 31st annual Fall Harvest Days on Sept. 9 at the Racine County Fairgrounds in Union Grove.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County



# Celebrating Rochester

Hundreds of people celebrated Sept. 16 at the 27th annual Rochester Day in the Country, which featured vendors, live music, food, a car show and several other attractions. Upper left photo: the event was organized by a group committee members (from left) Sarah Coots, Chances co-owner; Daniel Hoelt, co-owner of Fox and Fork; Sarah Damaschke, Day in the Country president; Leslie and Shawn Kinsey, owners of DW Coffee, and Scott Chenier, co-owner of Fox and Fork. Above: Sawdust Symphony, a bluegrass band, entertains the crowd. Upper right: Friends Emmy Vondra (left) and Emery Chick cozy up with some furry farm animals in the event's petting zoo sponsored by Community State Bank. At right: Crafters, local organizations and other vendors line Main Street for the event.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH DAMASCHKE  
Wonders of Racine County



# Baking for her community

*Baking Bird owner gives back to those who've supported her*

By **Jason Arndt**  
STAFF WRITER

Melissa Wandrey has spent nearly two decades in the baking industry, working in grocery stores and other bakeries throughout the Midwest.

Within the last six years, she moved to Union Grove and found an opportunity to open a business called Baking Bird, which came from her childhood inspiration.

"My nickname is actually Bird, it has been since I was a little kid and I have been a baker for almost 20 years," she said in an interview last fall. "I just thought it sounded really cute."

Wandrey, born and raised in Illinois, initially started the business out of her home as a test to see how receptive the community would be to a new bakery.

"In that year's time, we just took off in popularity," she said. "I just started asking people how they would feel if I would open a bakery. The support was overwhelming."

Baking Bird, 1013 Main St., Union Grove, launched in June 2022 and offers multiple specialty items as well as favorites such as cheesecake and salted

caramel bars.

Wandrey also has staple items available for customers looking for a treat.

"In this area, there is a lack of availability of specialized items. You would have to drive to the city or downtown Racine to get similar products," she said. "We have a huge variety of items. We have an ever-changing menu."

The business, open Wednesday through Sunday from 6:30 a.m. until 4 p.m., also caters to workers who typically start their day at 7 a.m.

Oftentimes, Wandrey sees customers waiting at the door before she unlocks the building for business.

"I have people usually waiting at the door at 6:30," she said. "There are a lot of people who start work at 7, so they will stop in for coffee, or a little treat."

Wandrey, however, acknowledges the early morning isn't even the most hectic for her establishment.

Baking Bird being just down the street from Union Grove High School is a plus as well.

"The reason I started so early is that we are open for all of the high schoolers," she

said. "They don't have anywhere to go."

Wandrey said high schoolers now have more breakfast options, instead of merely stopping at the convenience store or gas station for a simple snack.

## Unique blend

Coffee drinkers can find a coffee blend unique to Baking Bird.

Baking Bird uses Anodyne Coffee Roasting Co., of Milwaukee, for its coffee and has produced a proprietary blend.

"We actually have a chickadee breakfast blend, it is a proprietary blend that we created for Baking Bird specifically," she said.

"We also carry a few of Anodyne's other top types of coffee," Wandrey added.

Established in 1999, Anodyne Coffee Roasting Company is a locally owned, small batch roaster, according to its website.

The coffee roaster aims to provide an exceptional cup of coffee using just enough technology coupled with an experienced crew to assure satisfaction with every roast.

For customers looking to bring coffee home, Baking Bird offers bags of Anodyne, which are ground on site.

"You can actually buy a whole bag of coffee and we will actually grind it for you," she said.

## Giving back

After Wandrey had a family member diagnosed with leukemia late in 2021, she said the community became overwhelmingly supportive by offering assistance such as gas cards.

In response to that community support, Wandrey explained, Baking Bird's mission became to give back to the organizations dedicated to battling cancer.

The mission is simple, she said, with customers offering monetary donations in exchange for a wooden birdhouse.

Customers are invited to decorate a birdhouse and return it to Baking Bird, where they affix it to wall, which is painted as a tree.

"We wanted to be able to pay it back to the community and the organizations that helped us," Wandrey said.

"Whatever monetary donations you want to make, there is a no cap or minimum, you can take the birdhouse and paint it, return it and we let them put it where they want," she said.

At the end of each month, she donates all of the proceeds from the birdhouses to a specific organization, which she posts on Baking Bird's Facebook page. The page also regularly features which baked goods are available, including a variety of specialty items offered at various times.

**“We wanted to be able to pay it back to the community and the organizations that helped us.”**

**– Melissa Wandrey, Baking Bird**

Melissa Wandrey, owner of Baking Bird, sits in front of a wall containing birdhouses painted by customers who make a donation. Each month, the bakery then donates the proceeds to an organization in the area. Baking Bird, which opened in downtown Union Grove in June 2022, offers a variety of baked goods and more.



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# Smokehouse heads to downtown Burlington

*Family-owned business touts authentic barbecue menu*

By Jason Arndt  
STAFF WRITER

Jacobs Smokehouse has been known to be a featured restaurant at many public events, such as the Burlington Jamboree, while competing on the professional circuit.

Owners Jason and Monicka Jacobs took their massive smoker on the road but also launched a brick-and-mortar location three years ago just outside the City of Burlington. Recently however, the smokehouse relocated to the Chestnut Street loop in the downtown area.

Jacobs Smokehouse, 133 E. Chestnut St., is nestled between *gia bella* flowers as well as Infinity Coffee and Beyond.

Jason, who always had a love for cooking and began perfecting his craft when he received his first smoker from a friend, said customers have raved about the new downtown storefront.

“People are really stoked,” said Jason, who held a soft-opening in early September.

Monicka said long-time loyal customers are appreciative of the location change, especially since it allows easier access.

“Everyone has been super supportive. It’s been amazing,” she said.

Jason worked as a factory supervisor overseeing facilities in Milwaukee and northern Illinois, when, in 2017, he launched the smokehouse business while participating in local and regional competitions and catering for private events.

The private events, he explained, initially started with a group of friends, who developed a love for his barbecue and smoked dishes.

“On the weekends, we were doing all public events, catering and things like



Monicka and Jason Jacobs, co-owners of Jacobs Smokehouse, recently opened a downtown Burlington storefront in the Chestnut Street loop.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

that,” he said.

Jacobs Smokehouse continued to see increased popularity with the Jacobs’ family setting up shop along McHenry Street in the Town of Burlington on Aug. 21, 2020.

However, the business has endured numerous setbacks since that time, including the COVID-19 pandemic and prolonged construction on McHenry Street.

The road construction consisted of two separate and consecutive projects, including one conducted by WE Energies and another for resurfacing.

“The construction hit us hard twice in two years,” said Monicka. “So many people wouldn’t come there because of construction.”

Jason found a silver lining, opting to take his large-scaled smoker on the road. He then offered a variety of smoked and

barbecue options at several community events such as the Burlington Jamboree, the Burlington Farmers Market, and others.

“We wanted to turn a bad situation into a good situation, so we started doing events and bringing our product to events all over the place,” Jason said.

In the meantime, Jason and Monicka

• CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

# Burlington native recognized for service

Gerry Hancock, born and raised in Burlington, recently became the latest recipient of the Frank Lamping Community Service Award presented by Community State Bank.

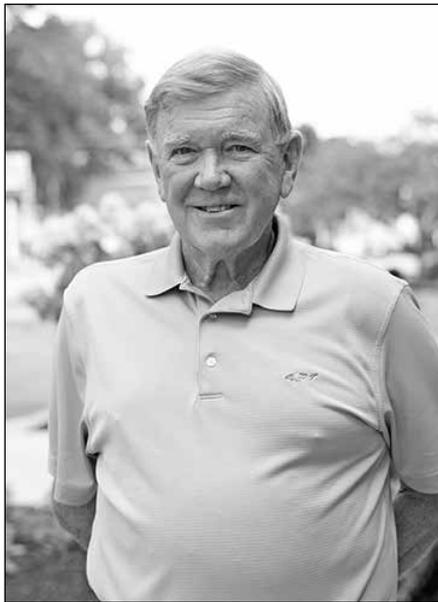
Community State Bank, which announced Hancock as the 2023 award winner in a news release, said the award was created to acknowledge and celebrate a community member who exemplifies positivity, selflessness, leadership, and inspires other to give back to the community.

Hancock, who will receive \$1,000 as the fifth award recipient, selected the Union Grove Area Food Bank as the beneficiary.

“I am honored and humbled to even be considered for an award named in Frank’s honor and also awarded to individuals like Tom Czerniak, Jim Moyer, and Cary Madrigal,” Hancock said. “It takes the kindness of many people to make a community great. Union Grove has always embraced me. I just try to do my part and give back.”

Hancock attended St. Charles Grade School and St. Mary’s High School in Burlington before pursuing a career as a pharmacist.

After graduating from St. Mary’s, he then attended the University of Wisconsin



Gerry Hancock

- School of Pharmacy, and began his internship at Hauper Pharmacy in Union Grove, according to a news release.

For more than 40 years, Hancock was an intern, pharmacist and owner of Hauper Pharmacy, which he then sold to Aurora in 2007.

Hancock worked the last six years of his pharmaceutical career at Aurora before retiring.

While he served as a pharmacist, Hancock also contributed to the Union Grove area, joining several organizations and groups.

Organizations include the Kiwanis Club of Union Grove, St. Robert’s Bellarmine, Union Grove Area Chamber of Commerce, Catholic Central High School, as well as various communities in the Village of Union Grove.

An active member of the Kiwanis Club for 30 years, Hancock served as the group’s charter president in 1984, and treasurer for 26 years.

At St. Robert’s, he was the finance chair of 22 years.

From 2013 until 2020, Hancock visited the Wisconsin Veterans Home in Union Grove to serve communion.

On a weekly basis, Hancock also delivers meals to community members in need through the Racine County Meals on Wheels program, according to a news release.

Capt. Madrigal, of the Racine County Sheriff’s Office, won the 2022 Frank Lamping Award and said Hancock exhibits all the positive characteristics of the achievement.

“Gerry Hancock has overcome adversity with a beautiful blend of positivity, realism, humbleness, willingness and resiliency,” said Madrigal, who serves as a committee member.

“His unfaltering attitude towards life and his belief in everyone’s ability to contribute simply embodies the spirit of our beloved friend, Frank Lamping, and for that alone I believe he deserves the Frank Lamping Community Service Award.”

Community State Bank hosted an award ceremony Sept. 27 to present Hancock with the award.

“Frank was all about our community and I believe Gerry encompasses that same mentality,” Dave Moyer, Community State Bank Marketing President and long-time friend of Lamping, said prior to the ceremony.

“We’re very excited to keep the memory of Frank alive in the community and will continue to do so for many years to come. We hope the community will join us in celebrating the legacy of Frank Lamping and the community leadership of Gerry Hancock.”

The 2023 Frank Lamping nominating committee consisted of Madrigal, Candi Lucksted, Gordon Svendsen, Scott Gunderson and Tom Johnsen.

began looking for other locations, but couldn't find an ideal fit until the property they're in now on Chestnut Street became available.

The Chestnut Street loop, he said, is proving to be an ideal location because the area continues to see increased traffic with several community events, like Loop Day, as well as the Oktoberfest festivities taking place this month.

"Right here at the Loop, they do events all of the time and we were coming out here regularly," Jason said.

"When we found out that this became available, it was an amazing fit, between being right here in the community and being a part of all of the things going on, plus the area schools."

Monicka said she often received feedback from customers hoping the business could move to an easier-to-find location.

"A lot of customers wanted us closer, so we thought it would be even better here in downtown Burlington, where it's busier and we can reach our customers," Monicka said.

Unlike the Town of Burlington location, Jacobs Smokehouse will not offer beer at its downtown storefront, but Jason believes that shouldn't be an issue because the majority of sales have been for the many food options on the menu.

Jacobs Smokehouse serves beef brisket, smoked burnt end, pulled pork and chicken, ribs, while offering Jason's



**above:** Jacobs Smokehouse, which has a brick and mortar store in downtown Burlington, also has a mobile trailer to take products directly to customers for private parties and community events. **left:** The restaurant features St. Louis-style barbecue ribs.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS Wonders of Racine County

homemade barbecue sauces and a handful of dry rubs.

"We gave up our alcohol license because most people came for the food," Jason said.

Jacobs Smokehouse also offers some healthier meal options, like the cucumber or berry salad, along with desserts

available after 3 p.m.

Additionally, Jacobs Smokehouse will be doing DoorDash, dine-in services in an area shared with Infinity Coffee and Beyond, and carryouts for customers.

And that's not all they have planned. "In the spring, we intend to add rooftop dining," Jason said.

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