



Spring
2024

Wonders

of RACINE
COUNTY



Published by Southern Lakes Newspapers LLC

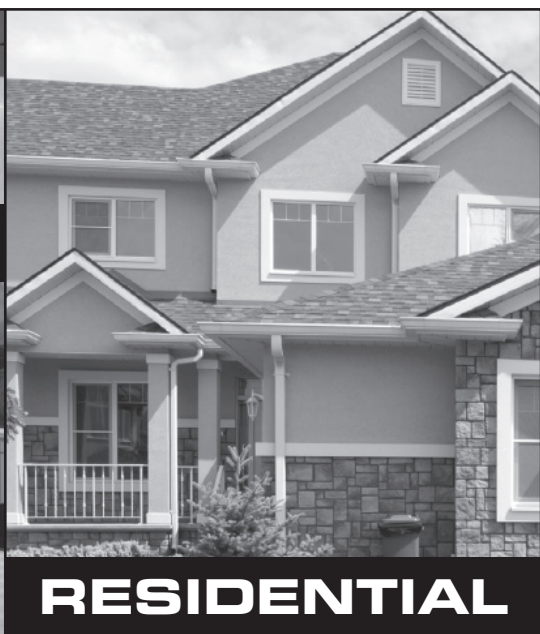
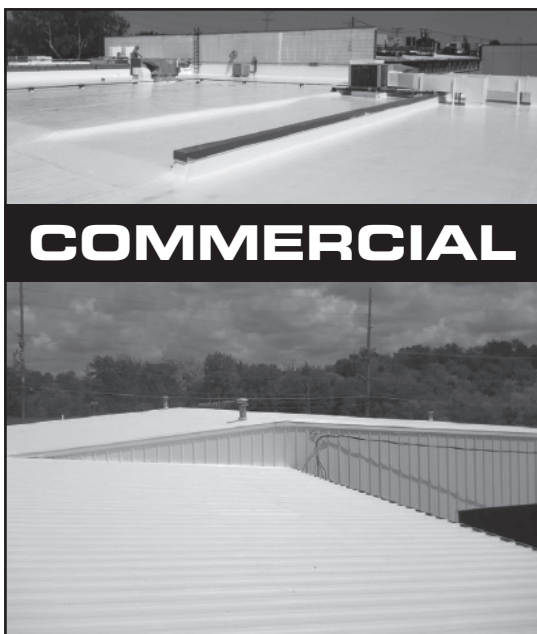




Oneill

CONSTRUCTION GROUP

Residential • Commercial
ROOFING & GUTTERS
262.287.2532



- Preventive Maintenance
- Energy Sufficient Coatings
- Reroofs & Complete Replacements
- Siding
- Gutters



FREE INSPECTIONS

LICENSED • INSURED • BONDED

Oneillconstructiongroup@gmail.com • Oneillconstructiongroupwi.com



Racine County Fairest to reign over State Fair

Union Grove graduate to serve as 2024 ambassador

By Jason Arndt
STAFF WRITER

Kelsey Henderson spent countless hours representing the Racine County Fair last year in her role as the 2023 Fairest of the Fair.

Henderson, 21, who earned the title last June at the county fairgrounds in Union Grove, channeled her passion for agriculture and the fair by welcoming visitors, highlighting exhibitors, and showcasing events.

Now, the reigning Fairest of the Fair will represent more than Racine County, with Henderson receiving the Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair crown earlier this year at Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells.

She was selected among 35 contestants and became just the second from Racine County to earn the crown. The first was in 2012 when Richelle Kastenson became the Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair.

Kastenson, who was on hand during the Wisconsin Fairest of Fairs convention, said she and other Racine County Fair Board members are beaming with pride at Henderson's achievement.

"She is a wonderful person inside and out, so we are very excited that she also gets to represent our county," Kastenson said. "Seeing Kelsey up on stage, she was really fun to listen to."

Kastenson recalled her own tenure as Wisconsin Fairest and believes Henderson is up to the challenge.

"Our fair board and our fairest committee on the county level are just so proud of Kelsey," Kastenson said. "She represented us so well, and she has just done a great job this year. We are so excited for what her future holds and how she is going to represent everyone. She is going to do a phenomenal job."

'TRULY BLESSED'

Henderson, like other contestants, participated in many interviews in various settings – and interacted with other officials – before earning the state fairest title.

"I felt truly blessed to be selected, not only as Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair, but I was actually selected Miss Congeniality as well," Henderson said. "Miss Congeniality was voted on by all of my peers in the contest. That almost meant more to me to be recognized by all of them. They were truly an inspirational group."



at left: Racine County Fairest of the Fair Kelsey Henderson, a Union Grove High School graduate, receives the Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair crown from predecessor Sharlene Swedlund on Jan. 10 at Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. **above:** Henderson is just the second representative from Racine County to earn the Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair title.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS Wonders of Racine County

Henderson succeeds Sharlene Swedlund from Green County and will spend a year traveling throughout the state, promoting the educational, agricultural, social and culture of fairs. Henderson will also promote commercial opportunities available at Wisconsin Fairs, according to Mid-West Farm Report.

She will also serve as an official ambassador for the 2024 Wisconsin State Fair, which will be presented by US Cellular Aug. 1-11 in West Allis.

Henderson will greet fairgoers and special guests, perform as master of ceremonies for events, participate in multiple contests and make multiple media appearances showcasing the Wisconsin State Fair, according to Mid-West Farm Report.

Additionally, similar to her predecessors, Henderson will travel to other county fairs throughout the state.

"There is so much I am looking forward to. I am really excited about the Wisconsin State Fair," Henderson said. "I am super excited to see that in a different light because

I was always an exhibitor at it."

During Henderson's tenure, she will learn more about the state's fair industry, including the uniqueness of each county fair.

Henderson said she has always found enjoyment as an exhibitor at the Wisconsin State Fair. As a bonus of being Fairest, she will now be able to experience all 11 days of the event this year.

"I would go every day to the Wisconsin State Fair, so I am super excited to go every day," Henderson said.

LOCAL UPBRINGING

Henderson, who graduated from Union Grove High School in 2020, grew up around the Racine County Fair, exhibiting award-winning animals and being involved in Union Grove FFA and 4-H.

She is the daughter of Craig and Sue Henderson and has a younger sister, Madisyn.

Kastenson worked with Henderson most of the year representing the Racine County Fair and recognized Henderson's passion.

"She grew up exhibiting at the fair, so she took the passion and shared it with the public and she was helping us with our social media on the fair Facebook page," Kastenson said.

Leading up to the Racine County Fair, Henderson used the Facebook page to interview exhibitors, who talked about their projects set for display at the annual fair.

"This past year, with our fair, she made these really cute videos and she really got to know different exhibitors," Kastenson said.

Since Henderson began as Racine County Fairest of the Fair, she has been impressed with the overwhelming support from the community, including members of the Racine County Fair Board as well as Fairest of the Fair committee members.

"Ever since I was crowned, I have felt nothing but love and support from my county and it truly means the world to me," Henderson said.

Henderson plans to graduate from Iowa State University in May with a degree in agricultural business and a minor in

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Daniels Family Funeral Homes & Browns Lake Crematory

Schuetze-Daniels
Browns Lake Crematory
625 S. Browns Lake Dr.
Burlington, WI 53105
(262) 763-3434



Polnasek-Daniels
908 11th Avenue
Union Grove, WI 53182
(262) 878-2011

www.danielsfamilyfuneral.com

Wonders of Racine County

A publication of Southern Lakes Newspapers LLC
1102 Ann St., Delavan, WI 53115 • (262) 728-3411

GENERAL MANAGER: Sue Z. Lange
EDITOR IN CHIEF: Heather Ruenz
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Heidi Schulz
PAGE DESIGNER: Jen DeGroot
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Vicki Vanderwerff

FOR ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES:
Call (262) 763-2575

On the cover: Amanda Colby, of Auntie A's, talks with customers at a Burlington Farmers Market event last year. The market, held Thursdays at Wehmhoff Square Park, which is off of East Washington Street between North Pine Street and North Perkins, is set to kick off the 2024 season May 2. For more information, visit burlingtonwifarmersmarket.com or follow Burlington Farmer's Market on Facebook.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

Practice baseball, softball year round

Swing City, of Burlington, offers multiple sessions

By **Jason Arndt**
STAFF WRITER

During the winter months, area baseball and softball players do not need to put away their gloves and bats, with Swing City's arrival.

Swing City, 496 S. Pine St., Burlington, owned by Shaun and Keri O'Dea, has been open since October and features five batting cages, including one equipped with HitTrax as well as pitching machines and other equipment.

HitTrax is the world's first and only baseball simulator offering a combination of analytics and entertainment available for indoor facilities.

The equipment includes real-time statistics and key performance metrics such as exit velocity, launch angle, distance, pitch speed, late break of pitch, strike zone analysis, spray charts, and more with instant feedback available to users.

Jake Evans, 14, of Burlington, spent time using HitTrax during a training session on Dec. 2 and said the software enables hitters to see various data sets while selecting various simulations, such as field size.

While Evans has enjoyed HitTrax, he pointed out that Swing City offers numerous other features, including areas to have throwing and catching drills.

"It's a great opportunity to be able to practice hitting, throwing, catching and everything else," said Evans, a freshman at Burlington High School.

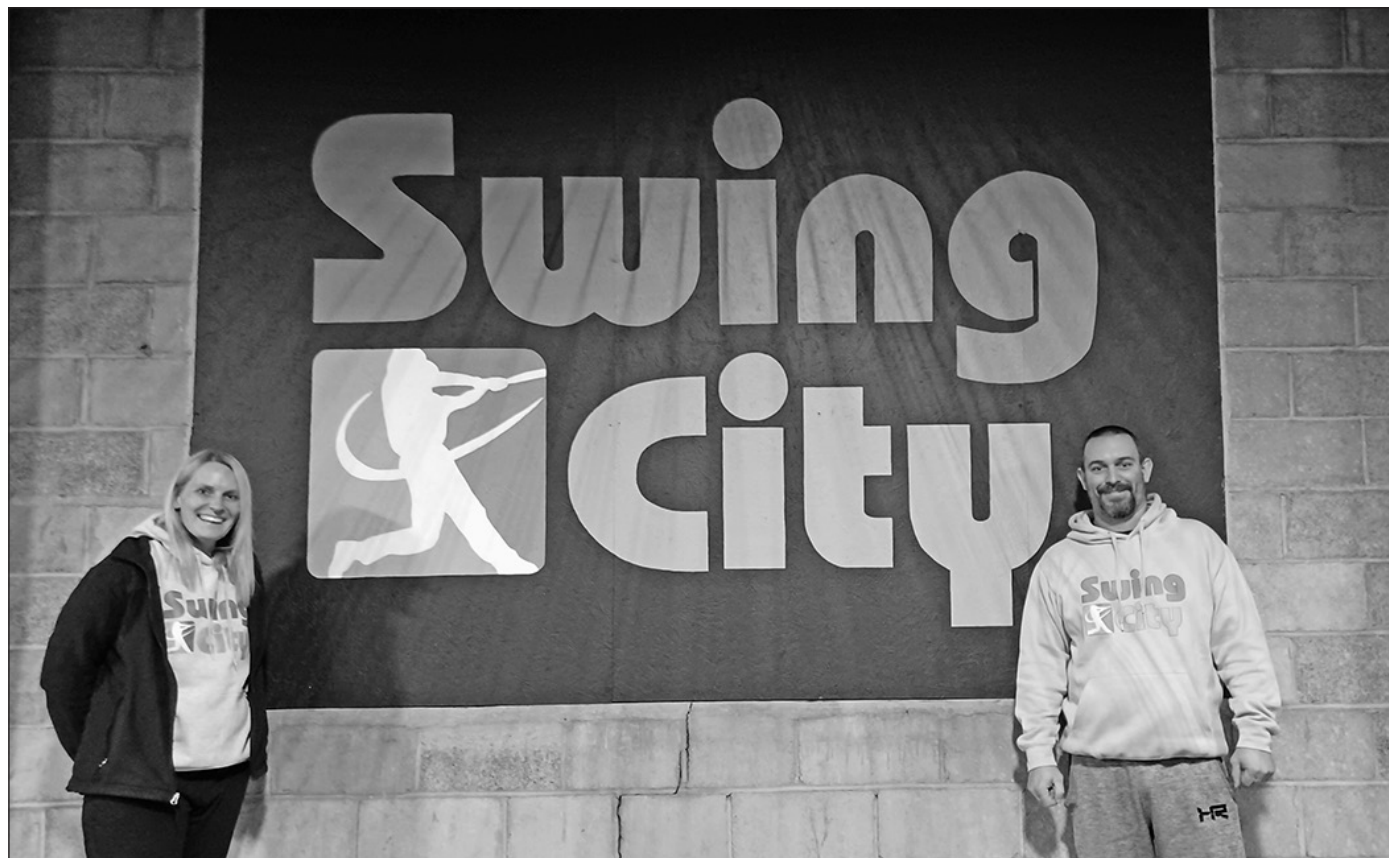
AN OWNER'S PASSION

Shaun, who graduated from Burlington High School in 2000, played on the Demons baseball team.

He said he always had an affinity for baseball growing up in the area.

His passion, he explained, is one of the reasons he decided to open the year-round facility.

"Baseball has always been a passion of mine," he said. "It's literally the sport I



Keri and Shaun O'Dea, a husband and wife team, opened Swing City in Burlington, an indoor baseball and softball facility, last fall.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

grew up on."

Shaun said he also did other sports when he was younger in an effort to keep active.

"But baseball has been the sport that I have always loved," he said.

Swing City isn't only a facility for baseball players to practice hitting and fielding drills as the owners have big plans for the future to help area athletes and teams take advantage of all the opportunities it offers.

"We want to run hitting groups, hitting sessions and camps. We want to offer everything from softball to baseball," he said. "We would like to have both softball and baseball here with us."

GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

Swing City has formed partnerships with local youth programs, such as

Burlington Blast softball, Junior Demons baseball, and brought in coaches with baseball and softball experience.

Randy Appleby, who coached baseball at Westosha Central High School, as well as long-time Burlington coach Ryan Hoffman, will offer private lessons to players seeking further instruction.

For softball players, Burlington graduate Ashley Schmalfeldt, who played on the Demons 2018 state runner-up team, plans to offer private pitching lessons at Swing City.

Additionally, Shaun and Keri plan to bring in former Waterford player Kyle Huckstorf – who plays for Division 1 University of Iowa, as well as former Burlington softball player Kendra Baumeister while both are in this area during winter break.

"They actually reached out to us, to

be honest," Shaun said of Huckstorf and Baumeister's involvement.

He said Baumeister approached them about opportunities to help with softball lessons when she first learned about the new facility.

"She really wanted to come in and do lessons," Shaun explained.

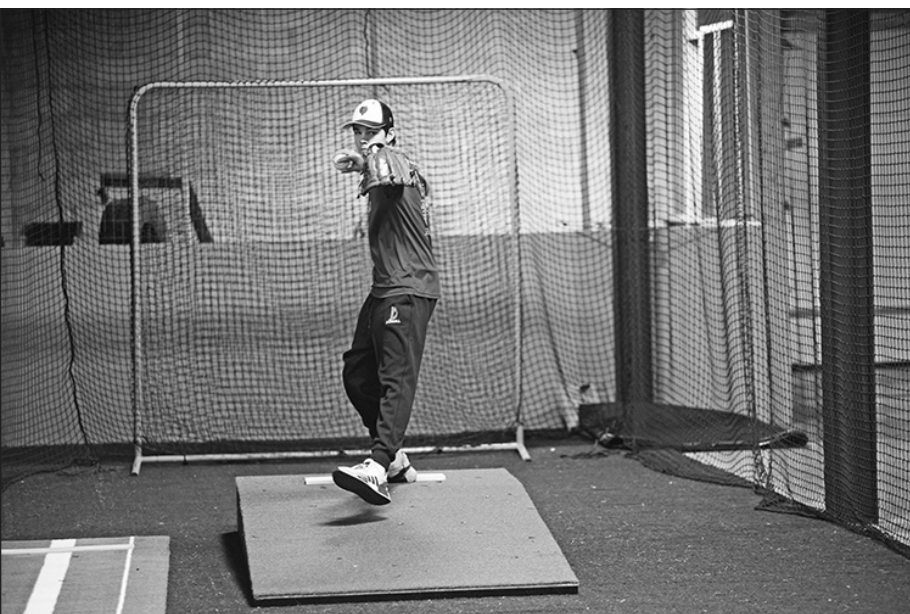
Lessons range from \$40 to \$60 based on the age of the athlete and length of the session.

MEMBERSHIPS, RENTALS

There are a trio of membership options available at a cost of \$150 for one month; \$400 for three months; and \$620 for six months.

Each of the memberships include the following, per month:

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



14-year-old Jake Evans takes a series of warm up tosses in the bullpen at Swing City. The indoor facility offers year-round batting, pitching and more for area athletes.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County



Evans practices hitting as well at Swing City, which features five cages in addition to pitching equipment including one with HitTrax, a simulator.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County



Community State Bank and Experience Burlington hosted a 100 Women Who Care - Western Racine County earlier this year. Officials said the event, which brought 74 attendees, was the largest since the event began in 2022.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Wonders of Racine County*

Shepherds College benefits from 100 Women Who Care event

Community State Bank and Experience Burlington hosted the fourth 100 Women Who Care - Western Racine County event on Thursday, Feb. 8 at 1841 Farms and Vineyard in Burlington.

100 Women Who Care, a nationwide initiative, provides women with the opportunity to support non-profit organizations in their community with the local event benefiting Union-Grove based Shepherds College.

"This was our largest donation yet with 74 women in attendance. There is always room to support the community and this event is about fulfilling that need," said Media and Communications Director Ellie Heigl, of Community State Bank.

"It's about having a purpose to do more and to give back to nonprofit organizations that make our communities better."

Community State Bank hosted the first 100 Women who Care event in 2022. Since then, nearly \$22,000 has been reinvested back into the community.

In 2024, CSB partnered for the first time with local organizations to extend the reach of the event. Performance Tire and Auto Service in Burlington sponsored a portion of event costs and Experience Burlington partnered with CSB to host and market the event.

"Experience Burlington is excited and gratified to partner with Community State Bank on this fun and impactful event. Networking with powerful women to support worthy causes truly serves to create strong and thriving communities in Western Racine County. We are looking forward to the next 100 Women who Care event," said M.T. Boyle, Executive Director of Experience Burlington.

On Feb. 8 at 1841 Farms and Vineyard in Burlington, the event drew in 74 attendees, bringing the total contribution to \$7,460.

Each guest was asked to bring \$100 in the form of a blank check or cash in order to enter the event.

Guests were then encouraged to nominate a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that serves Western Racine County.

After each nominee presented their

organization, the group then voted to choose a recipient of the funds.

This year's chosen recipient was Shepherds College, a post-secondary college for students with intellectual disabilities located in Union Grove.

"Thank you to 100 Women Who Care - Western Racine County for joining our mission of empowering individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in reaching their God-given potential to lead a fulfilling life," said Shepherds College Corporate and Community Development Officer Alicia Miklavicic-Franz.

"The donation provided through the powerful women who engaged in this event, shows the heroes of Shepherds College, our students, that they have a strong community around them that is taking action in supporting their dreams of attending a learning environment that is specifically designed for them."

The donation was formally presented to Shepherds College staff and students on Monday.

Funds will be used towards the Shepherds College Annual Scholarship Fund that assists students in need of financial assistance.

"Your generous donation of funds for a student scholarship is vitally important in helping a student attend Shepherds College and have the opportunity of a lifetime," said College President Tracy Terrill.

"This contribution demonstrates that collectively, you value Shepherds College students as well as our post-secondary training program and its impact on the lives of those students. Thank you!"

Shepherds College is the fourth recipient of 100 Women Who Care - Western Racine County Funds.

Community State Bank and Experience Burlington plan to host the event once a year.

The next date will be announced on the 100 Women Who Care - Western Racine County Facebook page as soon as it is chosen.

For additional details about the recipient or 100 Women Who Care - Western Racine County, please visit the following website: [CSB.bank/100wvc](https://www.CSB.bank/100wvc).

First responders recognized for heroic, quick-thinking actions

By **Jason Arndt**
STAFF WRITER

Aurora Health Care recently recognized two first responders from the City of Burlington Fire Department for their heroic and quick-thinking assessment of a patient who experienced a stroke during a call in December.

Nicholas Johannesen and Kyle Oldenburg received Brain Saver Awards from Aurora Health Care before a Feb. 21 Common Council meeting at the Department of Public Works facility.

According to Carolyn Henderson, Aurora Burlington Stroke Coordinator, the two first responders quickly issued a stroke alert to hospital staff before they arrived at the facility to allow staff members – such as nurses and physicians – to immediately treat the patient.

"That made a huge difference for this patient," she said. "The patient ended up having three procedures, was able to be released to rehab, and eventually was able to be discharged home with zero deficits."

"Outstanding work, and thanks for everything you guys do," Henderson added, as those gathered in the room erupted in applause for Johannesen and Oldenburg.

Fire Chief Alan Babe beamed with pride about their actions, and said both of them followed protocols to perfection, including the critical alert to hospital staff.

"Four our department, it makes us all very proud," he said. "They did exactly what they were supposed to do on that call. They initiated good patient care, scene safety, and were able to call out a neuro alert, which got the hospital resources going so they had an understanding of what they were coming into."

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Johannesen and Oldenburg said they encountered some logistical issues while responding to the call.

Oldenburg, who has been with the department for about 10 years, said the man was on the third floor of an older building that has some aging infrastructure.

"It's an old building, and probably at one time, it wasn't meant to be a multi-residential facility," he said. "Some of the stairwells are narrow and steeper. It's not as easy getting up there."

Johannesen agreed, explaining that they took advantage a stair lift, which allowed for easier transport of the patient down the stairs and into the ambulance for transportation to Aurora.

Both of the first responders credited monthly trainings from Aurora for giving them the necessary tools to treat patients including those experiencing strokes.

Oldenburg said he didn't even need to pause while treating the patient.

"I don't think I hesitated," he said. "I think that the training provided to us monthly kicks in, and it's just instinct," he said.

Oldenburg and Johannesen said the alert to Aurora Medical Center played a key role in helping the patient recover.

"The staff was prepped for that and expedited the patient care," Oldenburg said.

"This basically gets all the faculty, nurses, doctors ready for that stroke alert," said Johannesen, who has been with the department for a little more than a year.

HONORED FOR RECOGNITION

The two first responders said they felt grateful for the recognition, especially since they regularly respond to patients in need of critical care, though at times, the outcome is sometimes less than ideal.

"It's kind of nice to know the outcome was positive," Oldenburg said. "We meet a lot of people on their worst days and not all of them are positive."

"It is nice to be recognized for the good things," Johannesen added.



City of Burlington first responders Nicholas Johannesen and Kyle Oldenburg received Brain Saver Awards in late February. **from the left:** Oldenburg, Fire Chief Alan Babe, and Johannesen.

JASON ARNDT *Wonders of Racine County*

Teaching duo finds joy at Twigs + Twine

By Jason Arndt
STAFF WRITER

Shannon Walczak said she knew the Burlington area exhibited a remarkable charm when she taught in the community. So did another teacher Renee Wallace. While they never taught together, the duo met through a different common interest—at a craft show about seven years ago.

Walczak, who specialized in refinished furniture, eventually became friends with Wallace.

One day, Walczak recalled receiving a message from Wallace, who proposed starting a business together.

The duo started Twigs + Twine, 549 N. Pine St., Burlington in 2022 and said they've received amazing support from the community.

Walczak and Wallace both live in Milwaukee County and said they explored other locations before deciding on Burlington.

"We looked at different places to open and there is just really nothing like Burlington, at all, so that is why we picked it," Walczak said.

Twigs + Twine specializes in home décor—offering locally-sourced products—and a wide-range of items such as embroidery and hats, candles and room sprays, shirts and accessories.

"We bring in a lot of goods that we create ourselves and then we also try to bring in goods from makers that we have met along the way," said Wallace, who added she and Walczak curate the store's inventory.

"Everything is handpicked by us." Wallace, an artist-by-trade, teaches art part-time and implements some of her passions into the business.

For example, calligraphy became her first love, and Wallace honed her skills to create multiple mediums for people. She also designed the store logo.

"I make charcuterie boards or signs for

people, all free hand and that is something I really feel passionate about doing," said Wallace.

Although both bring differing specialties, they complement each other well.

Other items include products from Shagbark Farms, which produces honey, and soup from Soup of Success.

Soup of Success, an Indiana-based vendor, helps empower women who are in unsafe conditions find improvement in their lives.

"It's not a local small business, but it is a business that has a great cause," Walczak said. "We took a chance on them awhile ago and it has been one of our best sellers."

Twigs + Twine also offers skin care items and some jewelry.

The most popular seller is Firefly candles and when customers walk into the store, they are most impressed by the pleasant aroma of each handcrafted candle, according to Wallace.

Walczak said each candle is made without any toxic or undesirable chemicals.

"We have met so many people who have great products that we just love to support," Walczak said.

THE RIGHT LOCATION

Wallace and Walczak initially started selling products at pop-up markets in Wisconsin and Illinois before opening up their brick-and-mortar store in downtown Burlington.

In 2021, a year before Twigs + Twine launched in Burlington, Wallace personally made appearances at more than two-dozen regional markets.

But the business partners felt compelled to find a permanent location and immediately thought of Burlington as an attractive location.

"We both were kind of ready for the

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Twigs + Twine, 549 N. Pine St., Burlington is run by co-owners Shannon Walczak (left) and Renee Wallace. They said choosing the right location and having the support of the community is key to their success.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Racine County



far left: Specializing in home décor and offering local, handcrafted items has proven to be the right mix for customers of Twigs + Twine. **above:** Firefly candles have proven to be one of the most popular items at the shop. **at left:** Along with home décor and candles, they have kitchen items for sale, including soups and other small food products.

JASON ARNDT
Wonders of Racine County

A clearer view of future goals

Son of former Badgers' kicker aims to follow in dad's footsteps – and beyond

By **Jason Arndt**
STAFF WRITER

Helping others, making community contributions, and a newfound passion for kicking footballs run deep for Waterford Union High School sophomore Beau Veit.

Beau, son of former Wisconsin Badgers' punter Sam Veit, who earned 1990 Racine County Player of the Year before heading to Madison, earned first team All Southern Lakes Conference as both a punter and kicker for the Wolverines.

While he contributed for the Wolverines, Beau has also played a key role in the community, helping raise funds for children in need at Grant Elementary School in Milwaukee and assisting with Type 1 juvenile diabetes groups inspired by his sister Sophia's diagnosis at a young age.

Beau, soft-spoken during the interview for this story, typically leads by example while exhibiting a considerate demeanor.

"You can see he is still a shy kid, a little bit, but he has a good heart," Sam said.

While the Veits share a common bond through kicking and punting, it wasn't always that way for Beau, who initially focused on playing soccer during the fall sports season.

FROM WALK-ON TO STARTER

Sam, who graduated from Racine Case, played quarterback, defensive back, punted, kicked and returned punts for the Eagles en route to Player of the Year accolades.

At 5-foot-9, Sam didn't believe he would have a chance to make a Division I college as a defensive back, so he placed an emphasis on kicking and punting.

When he was a high school senior, the Wisconsin Badgers finished with a 1-10 overall record in legendary coach Barry Alvarez's first year at the helm.

Once he graduated, Sam received an opportunity to join the Badgers as a walk-on, but a starting job as kicker or punter was not a guarantee.

However, when the Badgers' starting kicker was injured, Alvarez summoned Sam to start.

"I was pretty much the lowest of the low, I was a walk-on, a freshman and a kicker," Sam recalled. "It doesn't get much lower on the team than that. I got to play in my first game. I got to kick off."

"I told everybody I knew to come to the game because it could have been the only game that I played," he added.

At the same time, the Badgers' starting punter had struggled with receiving the football from the long snapper, which included a botched punt during a game.

"He had a beautiful punt, but he had problems catching and he had smaller hands," Sam said. "His first snap came through his hands, hit him in the helmet and the other team, I think we were playing Western Illinois, scored a touchdown on the very next play."

The Badgers' coaching staff decided to keep Sam as the starting punter, a position he held for four years, including as a member of the 1994 Rose Bowl winning squad.

"I have always enjoyed kicking, but I thought my only real chance to make it at a Division 1 school was as a kicker," he said.

Since then, Sam has coached other kickers in southeast Wisconsin, including Brookfield Central graduate Brad Nortman.

Nortman, who later went on to play for Badgers, eventually became a member of the Carolina Panthers and Jacksonville Jaguars in the National Football League.

While Sam guided kickers and punters for many years, his son didn't enter the mix until he was freshman at Waterford.

GIVING IT A TRY

In addition to soccer, Beau played basketball and baseball. He never considered football until he was a freshman at Waterford.

After a series of discussions with Waterford area coaches, Sam encouraged Beau to at least try kicking field goals. He agreed to, but with some initial hesitation.

"He didn't really like it in the beginning," Sam said.

But then Beau's passion for kicking grew, which came as a surprise to Sam.

"He never even played football in youth at all, so I would not have guessed that he would play football in high school," Sam said.

"The fact that he does like it as much as he does is kind of amazing," he added.

Last year, as a freshman, Beau played soccer and received an invitation by former football coach Adam Bakken to join Waterford's first official practice.

Bakken, according to Sam, showed an interest in Beau's kicking abilities.

"He was kind of just thrown into the fire and he did well," Sam said. "I don't remember how many he made that first day."

Beau admitted he was willing to try kicking for his father. However, he didn't have a long-term vision for football at the time.

"I kind of did it just to make him happy," Beau said. "Even as a freshman, I really wasn't sure about it or that I would like it."

Beau has since developed strong bonds with his Waterford football teammates and discovered a newfound talent.

"I just naturally like it. It is fun and it's fun to be a part of the team," he said.

Beau, ranked fifth in his sophomore class with a 4.0 grade point average, made seven of 10 field goal attempts and went 30-for-31 in extra points for the Wolverines last fall.

While he is only sophomore, he has already made it a goal to reach the professional level.

"I want to attend a Division 1 school and ultimately hope to be playing in the NFL," Beau said.



Waterford's Beau Veit punts the football during a game last fall.

LORMA WENDT PHOTO Wonders of Racine County



Beau Veit joins his parents Sam and Amy following a Waterford football game. Sam, a former kicker for the Wisconsin Badgers, encouraged his son – who had only played soccer and baseball – to try kicking but said it's amazing how fast he grew to enjoy it.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Racine County

entrepreneurship as well as a marketing option.
 When she completes her term as Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair, which will expire in January 2025, Henderson will join John Deere full-time as a Marketing and Customer Support Development Program representative.
 She said John Deere was willing to work with her so she could serve her term as State Fairest.
 “They understand the personal mission that I have.”

A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

As state fairest, Henderson will gain new knowledge about the fair industry, Kastenson said.
 “She is going to learn a lot about the fairs in Wisconsin and the diversity of them,” Kastenson said. “They are all so different and it is such an eye-opening experience seeing how diverse they are and how similar they are. It’s really a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”
 Kastenson recalled her own journey as 2012 state Fairest of the Fair and expects to see Henderson embark on many expeditions.
 “Back when I was fairest during the summer months, I was driving about three to four hours daily to get to different fairs,” Kastenson said, adding that she likely attended more than 40 county fairs. “The biggest thing that I took away from it is the connections that I made.”
 Kastenson said she’s confident Henderson will embrace her new role.
 “I definitely think she is ready. There is no doubt in my mind that she will do a wonderful job,” Kastenson said.
 Shari Black, CEO of Wisconsin State Fair



Newly crowned Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair Kelsey Henderson, who served as the 2023 Racine County Fairest, embraces her younger sister, Madisyn, at last year’s county fair after Madisyn showed a reserve grand champion pig.
 JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

Park, said the group is looking forward to working with Henderson this year.
 “We are excited to have Kelsey take on this important role,” Black told Midwest Farm Report. “Kelsey’s education, experience, and participation in fairs will serve her well as she travels throughout Wisconsin, promoting the Wisconsin State Fair as well as fairs around the state.”
 Ellie Szczech, of Waukesha County, earned first runner-up, followed Amalia Draxler from St. Croix County, Dane County’s Aubrey Schlingen and Aleah Hunter from Trempeleau County.
 Henderson said she enjoyed meeting with other contestants.
 “I got to interact with 34 other amazing girls, and they were truly inspiring to me. It was really fun to get to know all of them,” she said.

- (10) 30-minuted cage sessions – which include bullpen use for tee work, soft toss, throwing sessions and pitching sessions, and;
 - (2) 30-minute HitTrax sessions.
- Options for using the facility intermittently are as follows: 30 minutes is \$25; one hour, \$43. HitTrax is \$40 for 30 minutes; \$65 for an hour.
 Teams, organizations and clubs can also rent the full facility.

OPEN TO ALL

Although Swing City is in Burlington, Shaun said he hopes to see players from throughout the region come in and take advantage of all the facility has to offer.
 “All baseball and softball players can come. Everybody is welcome here,” he

said.
 People interested in singing up for a membership, lessons or facility use can sign up for timeslots on the website at swingcitywi.com.
 Swing City, which will have a staff member on premises offering assistance, has baseballs and softballs, tees for use in hitting drills, and pitching machines ready for customers to use when they visit.
 Hours of operation are from 4 until 10 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. on weekends.
 Swing City is at 496 S. Pine St., Suite 3 (just south of Wisco Automotive and north of Love, Inc.) For more information, call 262-206-3165, email swingcityburlington@gmail.com or visit swingcitywi.com.

TWIGS + TWINE • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

next step for our business and then we both really love Burlington,” said Wallace.
 “At one time or another, we both taught in town here, so we thought it would be a great place to open up.”
 Although Twigs + Twine is still a relatively new business, the community has been very supportive, according to Wallace.
 She said they have formed positive relationships with many customers who have continued to walk through the doors.
 “We have met so many customers who I felt I have known for such a long time,” Wallace said. “We knew Burlington was a special community when we taught here. When we had our first year of business in 2022, we were just shocked with how

important shopping local in Burlington is.”
 “People are more than happy to support small businesses here,” she added.
 Walczak agreed and said the influx of customers has exceeded her expectations, and they are appreciative of the support.
 “We have had a really great last two years. I think it’s a lot better than we anticipated and we are really thankful for that,” Walczak said.
 Additionally, community events have been a boon for Twigs + Twine.
 “Burlington is a community that really comes out for local businesses and not just the big box stores,” Wallace said.
 For more about Twigs + Twine, visit the website, twigs-twine.square.site or follow the store’s Instagram or Facebook pages.

UNION GROVE LUMBER

Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:00-5:30; Sat. 7:30-3:00; Sun. 10:00-1:00
 1024 10th Avenue • Union Grove, WI
262-878-1214

453191

MAAS & SONS
PUMP, WELL & PLUMBING
 24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE
 29110 Evergreen Dr., Waterford, WI 53185
262-534-2170

YOUR LOCAL PLUMBING AND WATER QUALITY SPECIALISTS

FULL LINE PLUMBING REMODEL
 • Sinks • Toilets • Faucets • Showers
 Water Softeners • Iron Filters • Reverse Osmosis • Water Heaters • Well Pumps & Tanks

Store Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 am-4:30 pm
29110 Evergreen Drive, Waterford • 262.534.2170
 info@maasandsons.com • www.maasandsons.com

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

MIRACO

452884

COMPANION ANIMAL SERVICES
FOX VALLEY VETERINARY SERVICE

Providing Comprehensive Medical, Surgical and Dental Care

Quality Compassionate Care Like No Other
 231 S. Millgate Dr. • Burlington, WI 53105
 (Town of Rochester)
262-534-6000 • www.foxvalleyvetservice.com

HOURS: MON. 8:00-7:00
 TUES. 7:30-7:00; WED. 8:00-5:30
 THURS. & FRI. 7:30 - 5:30
 SAT. 8:30 - NOON

A+ ACCREDITED BUSINESS TOP CHOICE

431743

your home away from home

Open 7 days a week!

pinestreetcafe'

141 Pine Street • Burlington
(262) 763-9800

Hours: Mon.-Sat. 6 am to 8 pm • Sun. 6 am to 3 pm
PineStreetCafe/facebook.com

431744

There's power in girls wrestling

The sport offers an opportunity for physical, mental growth

By Jason Arndt
STAFF WRITER

Burlington High School sophomore Maggie Hansen often feels a sense of empowerment when she hits the wrestling mat to compete against other girls.

"It's really powerful to see a girl walk out on the mat and give it her best," Hansen said. "It not only pushes your body, it also pushes your mind. It's overall just a really fun sport."

Hansen, like many other girls in Wisconsin, saw limited opportunities to compete on high school teams prior to the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association endorsing girls wrestling as an official sport beginning in 2022.

Girls had previously wrestled on boys' teams for a number of years, according to the WIAA, which noted 261 total girl athletes across 12 weight classes entered the state's inaugural tournament on Jan. 29, 2022, at the La Crosse Center in La Crosse.

Since then, the WIAA has moved the girls' tournament to Kohl Center, where the boys also compete for state titles.

Jade Gribble, Burlington wrestling coach, said the addition of girls wrestling has opened up new opportunities for girls looking for another sport.

"I was excited. I have been on the coaches' advisory team, and it has been on our minds for a while," said Gribble, adding he has seen a steady increase in girls wrestling participation at Burlington.

Before the WIAA added the sport, Gribble said there were one or two girls on the team, but that number has since grown to seven entering the 2023-24 campaign.

While Burlington has seen a steady uptick in girl wrestlers, schools have experienced a boom in participation numbers statewide, according to Gribble.

"There are girls' teams that have 20 to 30 girls on the squad," Gribble said. "That is just incredible, and that's what we are working on here."

Badger High School is one of the teams in this area that has seen growth in numbers, with nearly 30 girls joining the wrestling team, according to boys wrestling coach David Davila.

Davila, whose program at Badger includes two state champion wrestlers – Carley Ceshker and Ella Creighton – said he and girls coach Jason Bousman spent time actively recruiting girls to join.

"We talked to each and every girl, every single girl that walks in the hallway, about how it would be a good time to try something different," said Davila, who recalled seeing only a handful of girls participating in the sport less than three years ago.

Davila attributes the exponential growth of girls wrestling at Badger to the success Ceshker and Creighton have had on the mat.

"That opened some minds of, 'Maybe, I could do this,'" he said.

NATIONAL EXPLOSION

Based on national participation numbers for the 2022-23 season, there was a 46% average increase in girls competing in wrestling in all states, according to FloWrestling.

Davila said the increased participation



should not come as a surprise.

"I think it was about time. It was only a matter of time before girls wrestling took off," he said.

Locally, many Southern Lakes Conference schools, including Wilmot, Burlington and Badger have actively promoted girls wrestling through their social media channels.

Westosha Central, which has nearly 20 girls participating in the sport, held its first-ever tournament on Dec. 9 called the Stateline Scuffle.

The Stateline Scuffle featured 29 schools from Illinois and Wisconsin, including Burlington, Westosha Central, Wilmot and East Troy.

"Everyone in our conference has done a fantastic job of promoting girls wrestling," Davila said. "Our conference is pretty special, and I think we are going to do our part in being leaders of the state."

Bousman admitted he didn't have any expectations of girls wrestling in Wisconsin because it was a relatively new program for the WIAA.

However, midway through last year, he saw enthusiasm build for the sport and noted the WIAA did an exceptional job featuring girls during the individual state tournament.

"It was amazing. I am really excited for the future of what is going to happen with girls wrestling," Bousman said.

Ceshker, a sophomore at Badger, said she feels fortunate to be part of the WIAA's early history with girls wrestling.

"It feels good to be a part of it and show little girls you can wrestle," she said. "It's just the beginning of it."

As for the increase in participation nationwide, Ceshker said the results clearly demonstrate that girls wrestling will become more prevalent, assuming the trend continues.

"That's a good thing. It shows people that girls wrestling is here to stay," Ceshker said.

Creighton, a senior, said wrestling is opening up more options in sports for girls.



above: Burlington High School wrestling coach Jade Gribble delivers instructions to Kaisha Myers (center) and Maggie Hansen at practice.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

top: The Badger High School girls wrestling team is nearly 30 student-athletes strong on its squad for the 2023-24 season.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Racine County

"There are so many opportunities out there right now because it's so new," Creighton said.

Hansen said she and others in Burlington have a great deal of enthusiasm for the growing sport.

"I was really excited that girls wrestling is starting to grow and reach people," she said. "Girls can do anything that boys can."

VALUABLE SKILLS LEARNED

Kaisha Myers, a sophomore at Burlington, began wrestling in the eighth grade while at Karcher Middle School.

At the time however, she had to compete against boys, since not many girls were in the sport.

When the WIAA officially sanctioned girls wrestling, Myers and her teammates knew it was a great opportunity.

"I thought it was really exciting and really cool to be part of a girls program and not have to fall under the guys program," Myers said. "It brought a lot of girls out who were afraid to step up because they didn't want to wrestle guys."

Myers, who participated in track and field as well as basketball, said she found a different kind of satisfaction in wrestling, and has been able to apply skills she learned as a dancer and gymnast to improve her craft.

"I think wrestling is a good sport to learn disciplinary skills. You are in charge of your



For Every Occasion...



**Burlington
DAIRY QUEEN**
324 S. Pine Street, Burlington
763-9385

443637

**Ketter's
Flooring**
Unique Concepts for Home and Business

257 Milwaukee Avenue, Burlington

**HARDWOOD • CERAMIC • LUXURY VINYL
TILE & MORE!**

kettters.com • 262-763-6259

439222



Maggie Hansen sends teammate Kaisha Myers to the mat during a practice at Burlington High School.

JASON ARNDT *Wonders of Racine County*

GIRLS WRESTLING • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

weight and help support the team and your teammates," Myers said. "I also think it's fun because you get to know girls from all different areas and is a really good bonding experience just to try a new sport."

Hansen played a little volleyball through middle school before deciding on wrestling.

In the sport of wrestling, she discovered challenges she wanted to tackle.

"I saw all of the positive impacts of wrestling and how much you can get challenged mentally," she said.

Sophomore Gina Dagostino grew up participating in jiu jitsu since her brother

and father have a background in the sport.

In the eighth grade, when she joined the Karcher wrestling squad, Dagostino said she gained valuable tools while making new friends.

"I joined wrestling because I wanted a little bit more discipline in my life and I wanted to learn about responsibility," she said. "I learned that it's not always easy and you have to work for what you want."

Gribble said he's enjoyed witnessing the growth of the girls on the wrestling team.

"I think the girls are getting more and more confident," he said. "They are just showing that they belong. It's fun to see."

BEAR
Realty

CELL:
262-358-1031
OFFICE:
262-843-2317
FAX:
262-843-2423



Glenda S. Dupons
IL & WI Real Estate Managing Broker
ABR, GRI, CRS
Appraiser, WI Cert. #21
Notary Public

7353 256th Avenue
Suite 140

Paddock Lake, WI 53168
glenda@bearpaddocklake.com



431873

Otter Sales & Service

1197 Milwaukee Ave.,
Burlington, WI 53105
www.ottersalesandservice.com
262-763-3563



452511

SQUARE ONE
HEATING & COOLING, LLC



262.763.7000
262.878.2228

**WHATEVER
IT TAKES.**

24-Hour Service

452765

Planning an Outdoor Event?

We'll provide the comfort and reassurance your guests deserve!

- ❖ Portable Restroom & Sink Rental For Any Occasion
- ❖ Holding Tank Pumping
- ❖ Prompt, Professional Service
- ❖ Septic Tank Cleaning
- ❖ Mound System Pumping



38331 60th St., Burlington, Wis.
Call (262) 537-4988

www.patsservices.com



439002



above: Bertha Benitez, owner of Los Compadres, which is in Burlington, sits inside her authentic Mexican restaurant. **at left:** Benitez stands alongside her sister, Jackie Hernandez, near the bar at the restaurant. Hernandez pitches in at the business when her sister is in need of an extra set of hands.

JASON ARNDT Wonders of Racine County

Authentic Mexican food made with family in mind

By **Jason Arndt**
STAFF WRITER

Compadre, in English, refers to a relationship between two close friends. But at Los Compadres, 725 Milwaukee Ave., Burlington, the definition carries a higher meaning for owner Bertha Benitez. Benitez, a Burlington High School graduate, didn't initially plan on opening the authentic Mexican restaurant until her oldest son's godparents pitched the idea. "At the beginning, it really wasn't my idea, it was my oldest boy's godparents," Benitez recalled. "They said 'Let's open up a restaurant!'" Benitez's sister, Jackie Hernandez, pitches in at the restaurant whenever Bertha needs some assistance. She noted Los Compadres is a relationship between a child's father and godfather. "Los Compadres is what they call each other in Spanish when they baptize each other's kids, so that is how they decided on the name," Hernandez said. Los Compadres, which opened in 1997, has served the Burlington community and beyond since then by offering

authentic dishes including some that draw inspiration from family recipes handed down from generation to generation. Benitez said Los Compadres strives to treat customers like they are members of her own family while offering high-quality, locally-sourced ingredients, with little to no processed food on the menu. "We are very authentic and we cook everything from scratch as fresh as we can get it," Benitez said. Unlike grocery stores – and some restaurants – the food made at Los Compadres does not carry any undesirable preservatives. "We try to stay local," she said. "My family eats here, my kids eat here, my customers are my family and I wouldn't feed them any processed foods." Menu options include, but not limited to, a carne asada dinner, ala Mexican dinner consisting of sautéed onion, tomato, jalapeno, and cilantro mixed with tomato sauce served with a choice of meat and tortilla, among dozens of other dishes. For the complete menu, visit the website at www.loscompadreswi.com.

INCREASED ENGAGEMENT

Los Compadres has found more ways to connect with the community in recent years such as introducing a food truck. The food truck, which has made numerous appearances at community events – including some organized by other Burlington businesses – has increased exposure to the brick and mortar store along Milwaukee Avenue. "It is pretty new right now, we are just starting the food truck," Benitez said. "When people come here, they don't even know we have a food truck." However, those customers who have ordered from the food truck at community gatherings often discovered later the restaurant has a permanent establishment. In addition to increased exposure through the food truck, Los Compadres has been involved in other community events. That included helping with the recently launched Day of the Dead, which was held in conjunction with the annual Spooky City event in downtown Burlington. Day of the Dead, known as el Dia de los

Muertos, is a Mexican holiday that allows families to welcome back the souls of their loved ones and food, drink and celebration are part of the Mexican holiday. It's celebrated annually from Oct. 31-Nov. 2. Benitez, who assisted her sister, Jackie, with the Day of the Dead event, said she met many new friends from throughout the community during the inaugural event last year, which she said was a success. "When we did Day of the Dead, I saw faces of people I have never seen before because I never had the opportunity to," Benitez said. Looking ahead, Benitez and Los Compadres plan to host a Cinco de Mayo margarita market featuring local vendors. Their hope is to also partner with other local establishments for a Cinco de Mayo event. Los Compadres, located along the main corridor on Milwaukee Avenue in Burlington, also offers a banquet hall for events and catering services. For customers seeking a simple carryout option, the restaurant also offers online ordering.

BHS MUSIC EDUCATOR INSPIRES YOUNG SINGERS

By **Callie Koehne**
CORRESPONDENT

Long-time music instructor Penny Yanke, of Burlington Area School District, has been named 2024 Music Educator of the Year by the Barbershop Harmony Society/National Association for Music Education. According to the society, the award recognizes excellence in teaching, performing, and an instructor's ability to make a lifelong impact on aspiring singers. Yanke, an employee of BASD since 1987, has been instrumental in growing the program from a choir to five groups while adding a popular music theater program. She said it's always been her goal to help students develop a love and dedication to music that will last their lives, but her passion in caring for the hearts and minds of those in her classes extends further than that. "High school is hard," she said. "While we're striving for our personal best, I want

to make sure that our students have a great time while they're here, that they make friends, and find a place where they belong." Yanke offers it in her programs, providing the room and conditions for them to flourish. BHS's musical theater department has a no-cut policy thanks in part to Yanke and her belief that there's a place for everyone. Yanke's focus on excellence has resulted in two of her students recently being accepted into a national barbershop group. "They were so excited. I have kids that sing in a cappella groups at the college level and some that have gone on to compete professionally throughout the world." Yanke, who grew up in Racine County



Penny Yanke

and attended BHS from 1977 to 1981, said she's always been proud of her school, and is now when her students represent it. "Teaching every kid who has come through my classroom has been an honor. I always hope to give them the best and be open to what they want and need." A few years ago, when A cappella music started to become popular, Yanke learned of a program at Harmony University in Denver from her friend John Donehower. She went to a workshop based on Barbershop Harmony. When Yanke got home, she immediately started thinking about how she could get her kids involved. The BHS music program hasn't been the same since. It now has several quartets, and Members of a Burlington High School Barbershop Quartet took home multiple awards, including Grand Champion, from the Barbershop Harmony Society's 2023 Midwinter Convention. Yanke's award came as a shock to her.

"Getting recognized myself isn't something that I ever think about really." The honor was first bestowed on her at the BHS Winter Concert last December and was again formally at the BHS 2024 Midwinter Convention in New York City. "I couldn't help but cry when my old college friend came up to present it to me," Yanke said of Donehower, her college classmate and the past president of the Barbershop Harmony Society, surprised her on stage with the award. He said while standing there, he realized he wasn't just thanking Yanke on behalf of the BHS and the National Association for Music Education, he was there to thank her for everyone that was in the room. "Everybody that's in music has that special teacher who inspired them. I can think of no better gift that a teacher can give to a student than inspiration and a lifetime of singing."

Putting needs into action

Trailside Elementary School second graders give back

Second-grade students at Trailside Elementary School put a recent lesson about "Communities Needs and Wants" into action. Under the direction of teachers Jennifer Lindner, Madison Loeffelholz and Erin Hoffman, the second graders developed an action plan. They then organized a school-wide hat and glove drive, taking in more than 100 warm winter-weather items for local people in need. The social studies lesson introduced

youngsters to concepts of needs and wants, scarcity and abundance, as well as ways that producers and consumers interact and, finally, how individuals and communities make choices about how to use their resources.

In late January, the students and their teachers trekked through the ice and slush from Trailside Elementary to nearby St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store to drop off collected donations.

Inside the non-profit thrift store, students were given a behind-the-scenes look at the work that goes into running the store, volunteerism and serving the community.

Afterward, they enjoyed a special treat of pizza at Bruno's Restaurant.



at left: Trailside Elementary School students helped St. Vincent de Paul during a recent special community project they held at the school. **above:** Second grade students from the school catch an inside glimpse at how St. Vincent de Paul representatives accept and organize donations they receive.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS
Wonders of Racine County



Top Drivers Can Earn Up To \$100K!

Veteran's Truck Line INC.
in Burlington, Wis is now accepting applications for:

TRUCK DRIVERS

- Home most nights/every weekend
- Paid health benefits • Competitive Hourly Wages
- Time & 1/2 over 40 hours • 401(k) w/contribution
- Drive newer equipment • Paid vacations/holidays
- Paid life/disability
- Must have a Class A CDL and pass medical/drug screen

262-539-4460

Go to:
www.vetstruck.com
for applications

FREE WATER SKI SHOWS



Experience the action on the water!
Human Pyramids, Jumping, Barefooting
and Dancing
Fun FREE Family Entertainment!



Show performances every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. on beautiful Browns Lake at Fischer Park. Memorial Day through Labor Day. Official schedule on our website:

www.aquaducks.org