

# *The* **Breeze**

Serving the Geneva Lakes area

**Lake Geneva  
Farmer's Market**

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**Mail Boat Jumpers**

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**Blossoming Crops**



# Holt takes over United Way of Walworth County

After a year of instability, a new leader has taken over United Way of Walworth County.

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**  
STAFF WRITER

UWWC recently announced that Brian Holt – a long-time Elkhorn resident and Walworth County Board Supervisor – would take over as executive director.

The organization will have its third ED in the last year. Tammy Dunn resigned last summer, and the new hire, Jeff Pal, was in the position for less than three months.

Holt confirmed that he is “here for the long term.”

“United Way of Walworth County stands at a critical juncture, and I am honored to lead an organization that has such a profound impact on the lives of our residents,” Holt said.

“I look forward to building on our past successes while introducing innovative strategies that will expand our reach and deepen our community connections,” he

added. Holt has served as County Supervisor for District 3 since 2019.

He also is significantly involved in the Elkhorn community and is serving as president of the Elkhorn Rotary Club and beyond, including filling the role of vice president of the Lake Geneva Jaycees.

He confirmed that he will remain in all three organizations but will have a “diminished role” in running those groups.

Prior to joining United Way, Holt managed a successful dairy heifer operation and is a partner in Vacation Rental Property Partners, demonstrating his adeptness in business management and operational leadership. He said he will step back from his partnership in that



Brian Holt

business over the next few months, with the support of his business partner (who encouraged him to apply for the United Way position).

Holt said his transition from agriculture to focusing on community-oriented goals reflects his passion for public service and his desire to make a substantial difference in the lives of the residents of Walworth County.

As executive director, Holt said he plans to leverage his comprehensive experience to enhance United Way’s programs and outreach initiatives. His immediate priorities include increasing the organization’s visibility in the community, strengthening relationships with local businesses and nonprofits, and enhancing support systems for the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) population in Walworth County.

Many of United Way’s relationships with local businesses and nonprofits

have flourished for years, showcasing the power of long-term collaboration. Holt said the organization will focus on crucial areas such as housing, next-generation housing and childcare, aiming to support the local economy and help businesses thrive.

“I have seen firsthand that the right person in the right place can make a huge difference,” Holt said in the release. “Forming these relationships is personally extremely rewarding. We all thrive together when the community is strong.”

**on the cover:** A boat makes its way across the deep blue waters of Geneva Lake. The summer season is passing by rapidly and spending time on the water, or along the lakeshore, is a favorite activity of many area residents and visitors alike.  
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# Three decades on the air

## WLKG celebrates its 30-year anniversary

Enjoying radio music as a teenager in 1960, Tom Kwiatkowski found himself hooked.

By **Jim McClure**  
CORRESPONDENT

“I started out listening to WGN in Chicago, which had a lot of agriculture and interview shows at the time . . . then they switched to rock and roll music and I was hooked,” explained the man who eventually started a Top 40 music station in southeast Wisconsin.

WLKG out of Lake Geneva has an unusually large reach across both southeast Wisconsin and northern Illinois, but the secret isn't in the relatively short tower one sees traveling south on Highway 12. Nor is it in signal strength.

The station, which was started in the summer of 1994, recently celebrated its 30th anniversary.

But the station, which has the nickname of “The Lake,” gets a unique advantage in listening area and reach – not from what's above the ground, but what's under it.

“Back when this area was first formed by the glaciers moving huge amounts of rock

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Radio station WLKG in Lake Geneva, which debuted in 1994, recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. Shown here are members of the crew having fun at the studio.

FACEBOOK PHOTO *The Breeze*



# Men in local Louis Vuitton handbag heist plead not guilty

Two men accused of armed robbery for a designer handbag pled not guilty recently in Walworth County Circuit Court.

Logan T. Butler, 17, pled not guilty at his arraignment July 12 to charges of armed robbery and three counts of misdemeanor bail jumping.

Kohl A. Lohmeyer, 18, pled not guilty during his July 15 arraignment to armed robbery as a party to a crime.

According to the criminal complaint, on June 12, Lake Geneva police received a report from a man who claimed to have been robbed at Walmart. The man told police he met a man, later identified as Butler, to sell him a Louis Vuitton handbag for \$600.

At Walmart, their meetup location, Butler suggested going into the bathroom to do the transaction to avoid flashing a large amount of cash. Butler was with another man who was unidentified in the criminal complaint.

In the bathroom, Butler provided \$60 to the man. The man asked Butler for the remaining amount. Butler then lifted his shorts and brandished what appeared to be a firearm. Butler then took the handbag and he and his friend ran out of the store.

On June 20, a detective spoke with Butler,

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



**Logan T. Butler**



**Kohl A. Lohmeyer**

## Court news

# Accused cocaine dealer pleads not guilty

A Burlington woman caught with a large amount of cocaine near White River Park in the Town of Lyons pled not guilty during her arraignment in Walworth County Circuit Court.

Megan S. Werlein, 27, is charged with two counts of possession with intent to deliver more than 40 grams of cocaine (one charge included “near a park” enhancer), two counts of misappropriating identification to obtain money, theft of moveable property, credit card theft, possession of drug paraphernalia and two counts of felony bail jumping.

According to the criminal complaint, on April 10, sheriff's deputies were called to the intersection of Buckby and Sheridan Springs roads, within 1,000 feet of White River Park, for a welfare check on a silver sedan.

When deputies made contact with Werlein, the driver, a drug pipe was in plain



**Megan S. Werlein**

view inside the vehicle.

After a search of the vehicle, deputies located 67.04 grams of suspected cocaine, 4.78 grams of crack cocaine, a box of baking soda, a digital scale, a wallet containing credit cards issued to several different people, a plastic bag of baggies, and a .380 caliber Kimber

handgun.

The suspected cocaine was divided into three separate bags – one weighing 27.86 grams, another weighing 25.068 grams and the final one weighing 14.10 grams.

The amounts are common selling weights for street transactions, according to the complaint, which further stated that the purchaser was likely going to process the cocaine into “crack” or sell smaller

amounts to others. The baking powder is often used as a cutting agent for mixing and increasing volume for potential sale.

Deputies contacted the victims whose credit cards were found in Werlein's possession.

Two victims stated that they gave Werlein their cards at one time but never intended for her to keep them or make any additional charges to them. Both women pressed charges.

If convicted of the Class C cocaine dealing charges, Werlein faces up to 80 years in prison and \$200,000 in fines.

The two Class H identity theft charges carry up to six years in prison and a \$10,000 fine for each.

Werlein is currently out on a \$1,000 bond, amended on June 14 from a \$10,000 signature bond. She was ordered to enter AGAPE Recovery during the preliminary hearing.

# The Breeze

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A publication of Southern Lakes Newspapers LLC

1102 Ann Street, Delavan, WI 53115  
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## Court blotter

The following people were charged with these Class H and I felony offenses in Walworth County Circuit Court recently:

### Class H

Class H, punishable by up to six years in prison and \$10,000 in fines:

### Bail jumping

• Ryan T. Enochs, 19, of Genoa City; two counts of felony bail jumping.

According to the criminal complaint, Enochs was released on bond April 10 for a felony marijuana case in which he pled not guilty. Conditions of his bond ordered that he comply with pretrial services, including check-ins two times a month and once a week testing at Southeastern Monitoring in Elkhorn.

On May 20, Enochs failed to appear for testing and on May 21 failed to check in with pretrial services.

• Gabriel R. Chavez, 23, of Genoa City; two counts of felony bail jumping.

According to the criminal complaint, on June 16, an officer saw Chavez walk into Thumbs Up Saloon in Lake Geneva and knew Chavez has pending felony cases. Inside, the officer did not see Chavez, but

learned he was served a shot of Patron tequila.

The officer later located Chavez at Lake Geneva Billiard Club where he was playing pool. The officer told him he knew he was consuming alcohol, to which Chavez claimed he was being harassed. Chavez was out on bond since April 29 for a substantial battery case, as well as a felony bail jumping case and was ordered not to possess or consume alcohol.

### Drunk driving

• Steven W. Hahn, 37, of Burlington; operating a motor vehicle while under the influence – fourth offense.

According to the criminal complaint, on June 1 at 2:46 a.m., Walworth County deputies responded to a crash at 1625 Mill St. in the Town of Lyons. Hahn emitted an odor of intoxicants, had bloodshot, glassy eyes, slurred speech and difficulty keeping balance.

He admitted to drinking “one or two” mixed drinks. He failed field sobriety tests and submitted to a blood draw. Results are pending. He was previously convicted of driving while under the influence on May 12,

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## HANDBAG HEIST • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

who admitted to being involved in the armed robbery. He said he met the man on Snapchat and arranged to sell him two guns for \$1,000. He said that man did not have enough money so Butler agreed to take the Louis Vuitton bag and some cash in exchange for the two guns. Butler said he walked into the bathroom with the man and realized the handbag was fake, so he ran out of the bathroom without giving the man a gun.

Lohmeyer was reportedly communicating with the victim on Snapchat and drove Butler to an alley where he parked behind the store.

Lohmeyer admitted that he picked up the men from their houses and said he knew “what was going on.” He said he waited a few minutes inside the vehicle before Butler and the other man left the store and then drove them to Burlington.

Butler was out on bond since June 3 in Walworth County for misdemeanor possession of THC. He is scheduled back in court on July 31 for a status conference.

Lohmeyer is scheduled back in court for a status conference on Aug. 27.

Both are facing 40 years in prison and \$100,000 in fines for the Class C felony.

# Badger appoints new associate principal

Badger High School has a new associate principal.

According to a news release, the Lake Geneva-Genoa City Union High School Board appointed Bridget Hansen to serve as the associate principal, effective immediately.

“I am pleased and excited to announce the hiring of Mrs. Bridget Hansen as an Associate Principal at Badger High School,” Superintendent Peter Wilson said.

Hansen has 21 years of experience in education, all of which have been at Badger High School.

Prior to this role, she served as an English teacher and department head at the school.

“It is a privilege to be able to continue my service to the Badger High School community in this new role,” Hansen said. “I look forward to working with the administrative team, staff, students, and community members to ensure that all



**Bridget Hansen**

students have the opportunity to be successful and graduate from Badger feeling empowered and prepared for their future endeavors.”

Hansen has a bachelor’s degree in secondary English education from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and a master’s in educational leadership and Principal certification from Cardinal Stritch University.

“I’m excited to have Mrs. Hansen join the leadership team at Badger High School,” Wilson said. “She has a passion for student connection, strong leadership skills, and a commitment to Badger High School’s success.”

Hansen and her husband, Steve, have three children: Matthew, a 2024 Badger graduate, will be attending the University of Iowa in the fall; Ryan, an incoming sophomore at Badger; and Anna an incoming seventh grader at Lake Geneva Middle School.

Hansen enjoys taking family road trips, getting lost in a good book, watching her kids do the things they love, and cheering on her students at Badger events.

## WLKG • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

north, it left a lot underneath the surface,” Kwiatkowski explained. “Believe it or not, the signal from our tower bounces off all the rock under the surface and sends the signal out much farther than you would think as it reflects off all those hard surfaces of rock formations below ground.”

A commuter headed to Milwaukee or Chicago, Whitewater or points west hears the station clearly during the drive. Milwaukee is a sure thing, especially when atmospheric factors are involved. Simply put, geographical factors in the ether can send any and every station across the country to be heard far away.

From the rock below goes out the rock music of the present day – Taylor Swift, Beyonce and Justin Timberlake just some of the top hits of the current time.

The Top 40 list is compiled by radio industry megacompany iHeart – the home to two recent Lake 96.1 alumni – Dave Matthews and Ted Ehlen.

Matthews, who worked all three shifts in Lake Geneva and known best as “Matthews in the Morning,” is now with iHeart in Milwaukee, as is Ehlen – whose remarkable career has taken him from Milwaukee to Monroe and beaming from Wisconsin to Illinois.

Both Matthews – who grew up in Mukwonago – and Ehlen, who hails from Burlington, got their key talents from their long-time work in Geneva. Melissa Jordan is also now in Milwaukee, and originally hailed from Central Michigan University.

Ehlen was best known for hosting “Saturday at the 70’s,” a show that at the time ran from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Kwiatkowski, a former southside Chicagoan who attended St. Rita High School, would go on to become an educator in nearby schools. He now resides in Lake Geneva near the lake, where one can often hear from shore his station’s airwaves floating across the lake waves on sailboats and motorboats.

He’s an educator who got one of his greatest lessons not from the classroom but from the process of creating and overseeing a successful radio station.

“The whole process was an education for me,” he said, relating the many intricacies of buying and forming a station along with watching it grow and sustain.

“I’m 77 now and still come into the station everyday in the mornings,” he said. “Now I watch others run it and they do a fantastic job.”

Kwiatkowski noted that station personnel in all departments have succeeded in further pursuits after leaving Lake Geneva.

News and sports to music and community interviews, there’s something for every age from Baby Boomers to pre-teens, all created by the lifelong love of a medium that changed Kwiatkowski’s life.

“You never get over it,” he said with a smile of his description of still getting a thrill hearing the radio station he hears in his office and his car with the same wonder of a teenager that made his dream come true.



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# Keeping it fresh and local

## LAKE GENEVA FARMER'S MARKET REMAINS A SUMMER STAPLE

By **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

A block of Broad Street in Lake Geneva on any given Thursday morning during the summer is likely the busiest area in the downtown.

Beginning at 8 a.m. and lasting through 1 p.m., each Thursday, the Lake Geneva Farmer's Market runs from early May through Oct. 31. It consists of farmers, gardeners, artists and craftsmen – all of whom primarily come from the southern Wisconsin area with a variety of home-grown, home-produced or hand-created merchandise.

The beginnings of the market date back to 1912, when early foremen of some of the summer estates along Geneva Lake competed against each other with vegetables, flowers and plants.

“The original stalls from these early markets are still in the courtyard, but no longer used,” said Sean Payne, the director of the farmers market for the last 12 years.

Today, the stalls for the market line the streets along Broad Street for a full block. Additional vendors also set up in Horticultural Hall, located just behind the market.

In addition to managing the weekly market, Payne is also the manager of Clear Water Outdoor Sports in downtown Lake Geneva.

“We have about 50 vendors and there are also about another 30 vendors that are in

front and alongside the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion and sponsored by them,” Payne said.

He said each of the vendors sign a contract for the entire season, and can renew it for the following year. Contracts must be returned by March of each year to guarantee a spot.

As the season starts, the locally grown vegetables and fruits vary by the season. One crop that is always available and one of the bestsellers is fresh flowers. There are a variety of flower vendors that offer mixed bouquets.

### Family-friendly market

The market is a family affair and Payne encourages visitors to bring their children. Watching walk down the sidewalk toward the market, many are pushing strollers with youngsters securely in place while others are walking their dogs through the crowd. Schools also bring in students for field trips. Central Denison, a school just a block away from the market, often schedules a trip for its first graders, and students learn about growing food in the area and creating edible items like cheese, jam, dips and breads.

“Bring the kids,” said Payne. “There are activities for them to enjoy, starting with story time at the Lake Geneva Farmer's Market in a partnership with the Lake Geneva Library. Marley's Harley, an ice

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



**above:** Produce at the market varies but among the recent offerings was fresh lettuce, sure to make a summer salad taste even better. **top:** At the market in early June, radishes, asparagus and strawberries were among the produce available.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *The Breeze*

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2009; Aug. 18, 2012; and Aug. 6, 2016.  
• John T. Reyno, 43, of Lake Geneva; operating a motor vehicle while under the influence – fourth offense.  
According to the criminal complaint, at 7:12 p.m. June 24, Reyno was pulled over for driving 56 miles per hour in a 30-mph zone at North Walworth and Madison streets in the Village of Darien. He showed signs of impairment, including bloodshot and glossy eyes, slurred speech and difficulty keeping balance. He also smelled like alcohol.  
Reyno blew a .182 on the portable breath test and refused a blood test at 7:56 p.m. At 9:32 p.m., his blood was drawn.

**Class I**  
Class I, punishable by up to 3-1/2 years in prison and \$10,000 in fines:

**Discharge bodily fluids**  
• Russell W. Kaar Jr., 34, of Genoa City, Illinois; throw or discharge bodily fluids at public safety worker, and disorderly conduct.  
According to the criminal complaint, on

July 8, Village of Genoa City police were called for a welfare check. When they made contact with Kaar, he began to scream and slam his head against the squad door, and yelled “rape,” causing a scene.  
While being transported to Lakeland Medical Center for jail clearance, he continued to kick the window, yell racial slurs and spit on the window. While being wheeled into the hospital, Kaar threatened to kill five different officers and spit in an officer’s face.  
• Brooke A. Milbocker, 32, of Williams Bay; throw or discharge bodily fluids at public safety worker, resisting an officer and disorderly conduct.

According to the criminal complaint, Lake Geneva police were called to Champs Bar July 3. The bouncer wished to have Milbocker removed from the bar. Milbocker threw the remainder of her ice water on an officer, causing a scene.

When she was taken to Lakeland Medical Center, Milbocker attempted to kick the officer with her right leg, was screaming and resisting. She then spit on the officer.

**Soliciting a minor**  
• Alexander John Von Holdt, 26, of Lake Geneva; soliciting intimate representation from a minor.  
According to the criminal complaint, on June 5, 2023, Lake Geneva police received a cybertip with a chat between, “Hank,” who was later identified as Von Holdt, and a 15-year-old girl who he believed to be 12. In a chat exchange, Hank sent sexually explicit photos between Dec. 10 and 11, 2023, and engaged in sexually explicit chat with the girl, which included soliciting sexually explicit photos from her.

**Drugs**  
• Brett L. Giller, 60, of Delavan; possession of cocaine – second and subsequent offense, obstructing an officer and possession of drug paraphernalia.  
According to the criminal complaint, on June 21, sheriff’s deputies were on the scene of a crash investigation with injuries in the Town of Darien. A driver, later determined to be Giller, was driving the wrong way down

Highway X, after exiting Interstate 43.  
The lane was closed. Giller was signaled to stop and was asked what he was doing. Giller responded, “I’m going that way,” and pointed to the wrong way down the road. When he was asked for his ID, Giller accelerated his vehicle with the deputy inches from his van window, and several emergency personnel and civilians right ahead.  
Several deputies assisted in stopping Giller, who was argumentative and uncooperative. One deputy reported detecting an odor of intoxicants coming from Giller. She also saw, in plain view, a crackpipe in the inside door groove.  
With K9 Arie, deputies located a black bag inside the center console containing two, small, tied-off baggies of crack cocaine. There was also a small jar with another crack rock and a wooden “one hitter” box.  
While he was riding inside of a squad car, Giller began showing signs of overdosing and was taken to a nearby hospital for medical care. Giller was convicted in Walworth County of possession of drug paraphernalia.

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# They jump for a chance at this job

## CARRYING ON THE TRADITION OF MAIL DELIVERY ON GENEVA LAKE

By **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

Early on a recent morning, the Walworth, also known as the U.S. Mailboat of the Lake Geneva Cruise Lines, began a cruise on Geneva Lake. The Walworth usually leaves at 10 a.m. when delivering the mail, but on this day, the boat was on a special journey.

This was the day when the prospective applicants were auditioning for the job of mail jumper for this summer. A total of twelve gathered in the front of the boat, ready to display their skills.

They all seemed to know each other, and were sharing stories and concerns about the day. To become the mail jumper is not just a question of jumping, but also performing other needed tasks during the cruise. The mail must be sorted, as there is no time to do so while they are delivering the mail and moving from pier to pier.

In addition to delivering the mail, the mail jumper must also read some of the live narration of the growth of the Lake Geneva area, especially pointing out the special summer cottages – mansions of the rich and famous – along the shore of Geneva Lake.

The job of narration is shared by the mail jumper, when not jumping, and the Captain. Homes of well-known families are identified – such as the Wrigley Compound, with their six homes currently on their estate.

So, on this day, the applicants took turns reading the history. Some had done this before, as they previously have been mail jumpers. The judges listened and graded them.

“Being a mail jumper is the most sought-after job,” said Ellen Burling, general manager of Lake Geneva Cruise Lines. “In order to try out for the job, you have to have worked for the Cruise Lines for at least a year. Each year, the jumpers reapply for the job. Being a mail jumper one year does not guarantee you will be chosen the next year.”

Like many Lake Geneva Cruise Line employees, Ellen is a past mail jumper, having held that position in 1984. Being a mail jumper is often a family affair. Ellen’s sister was a mail jumper, as were her son and daughter.

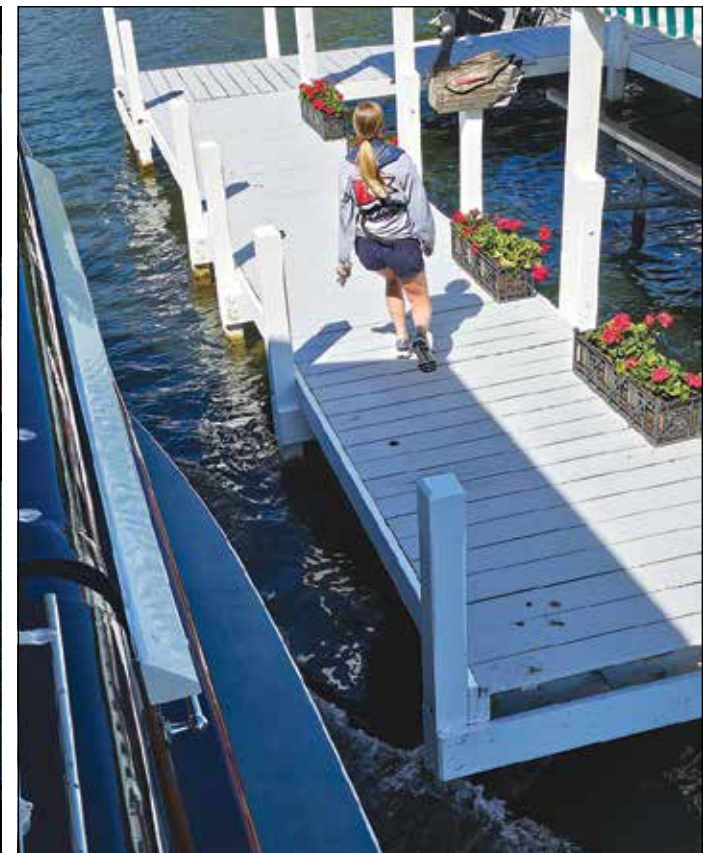
### Special delivery

For most people, grabbing their mail means opening the front door and pulling it out of the mailbox, or walking down the driveway to the postal box along the road where the mailman deposits their mail each day. But for those who live on Geneva Lake, there is another alternative, which is to have their mail and newspaper delivered by boat



**left:** After tryouts for this year’s team of five mail jumpers, applicants gather as a group outside The Walworth to commemorate the experience. **right:** Captain Ray Ames, shown after docking The Walworth near The Riviera in Lake Geneva, became captain of the mailboat tours in 2019 after the retirement of Captain Neill Frame who handled the duty for more than 40 years.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *The Breeze*



**left:** The entire group trying out made their way onto the side walkway of the boat before all jumping onto a pier and running as a group along the prairie path. After running some distance on the path, they gather on a different pier to be picked up by the boat. **right:** The distance between the boat and the pier shows how far the jumpers must travel over open water to safely land on the pier and back on the boat.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *The Breeze*



**right:** Amy Rose Weber, of Geneva Lakes Produce, culls through ears of corn recently at the farm stand. Weber serves as manager of the stand. **above:** Located at the intersection of highways 120 and 11 in Spring Prairie, which is north of Lake Geneva, the farm stand features Geneva Lakes Produce's full inventory.

JASON ARNDT PHOTOS *The Breeze*

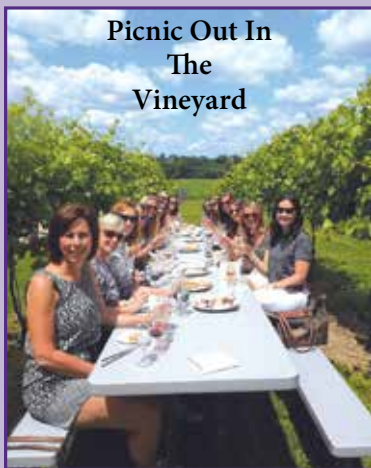
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# Steady rain and heat bring blossoming crops

Geneva Lakes Produce, a multi-generation farm, has reported a positive growing season compared to 2023 when the family-owned establishment wrestled with drought conditions and rebuilding following a fire.

By **Jason Arndt**  
STAFF WRITER

Manager Corban Koster, of Geneva Lakes Produce, said the farm encompassing about 450 acres between Burlington and Lake Geneva has experienced enough consistent rainfall and heat to see crops succeed.

“It has been an overall decent growing season,” he said. “All the crops have been getting the right amount of heat and the right amount of moisture.”

Geneva Lakes Produce, which has a farm stand prominently located on highways 120 and 11, uses half of its farm to grow fresh produce, such as sweet corn, watermelon, cantaloupes, onions, shallots, green beans, strawberries.

Additionally, the establishment also produces other products, like herbs and flowers, including gladiolus and sunflowers.

“We also do fresh cut herbs, where we have a dozen of different varieties of unique herbs that we sell fresh and dried as well,” Koster said.

With an array of different crops, Geneva Lakes Produce still finds a way to plant, and grow each of them consistently.

However, Koster recognized that rainfall is often unpredictable, but Geneva Lakes Produce managed to plant nearly all of its produce this year.

“It is a whole lot to plant in the spring time when you dance around the rain. It makes it more difficult,” he said. “This year, it worked out pretty well in getting most of that stuff, where we good a planting in and then we get a couple of days of rain, and then another good planting and then some more rain.”

Although farmers typically plant most of their crops in the spring, Geneva Lakes Produce dedicates itself to the agriculture industry year-round, often planting during the summer.

“We don’t just plant in the spring and then harvest in the fall,” Koster said. “We plant all summer long with a number of different plantings on almost every crop that we do. Sometimes when we get the extra rain, it is a little hard to keep up with.”

### Crop trends

In 2024, Koster has seen some crops blossom, while others haven’t produced as much compared to previous years.

Koster noted strawberries and sweet corn have each grown well for 2024.

“Our strawberries started producing

• CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE



**FARMER'S MARKET** • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

cream truck, will also be available.”

Miss Wendy from the library handles story time, and during the summer it's held at the farmers market each Thursday at 10:30 a.m. The event involves reading books aloud, followed by themed activities and socializing. The final story time of each month is bilingual, with books read in English and Spanish.

In the event of rain, story time moves indoors – at the Lake Geneva Public Library.

### Keeping it local

All items sold at the market are made by the purveyors. Nothing sold at the market is purchased elsewhere and resold, thus keeping in line with the original premise of the market – freshly grown produce and flowers.

Produce can be limited at the start of the market season, understandably. In May, green lettuce, onions, radishes and early strawberries can be found on the market stands. Mushrooms, grown indoors, are available throughout the market season and while the types vary, fresh mushrooms and can also be purchased.

As the summer progresses, there is a wider variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes, cucumbers, green beans and, of course, fresh sweet corn – are among the offerings that make their way to the market. In the fall, pumpkins also begin to arrive.

A Wisconsin market would not be complete without freshly made local cheese from master cheesemakers like Decatur Dairy and Steve Stettler. Among the special items available are cheese curds with green olives imbedded for a unique flavor.

Honey is often sought for health reasons. Macy Kyle became a beekeeper with her own hives last year and sells her honey through The Birds & the Bees in Janesville, as well as at the market in Lake Geneva.

She said it's important to use local honey for help with allergies and explained the difference in color between spring and fall honey.

“The fall honey has a more golden color than the spring honey,” shared Kyle. “Dogs also benefit from honey to treat some ear infections.”

Ya Ya's Skordalia, which has Greek almond dip is another favorite of regulars at the Lake Geneva Farmer's Market. There is generally a crowd gathering around the Ya Ya's stand, waiting for samples and to purchase the variety of flavorful dips offered, from the standard flavors to seasonal ones.

### Horticultural Hall cohosts the market

The history of Horticultural Hall goes back to the early days of more and more large estates being built on Geneva Lake. Help was needed to maintain the large and



showy lawns so numerous local gardeners were hired by the summer residents.

The gardeners were said to be competitive with each other; still, at the same time, they banded together to organize the Gardeners and Foreman's Association. The group originally held flower shows and exhibits on the estates of Levi Leitner and Herbert Moore to showcase their talents and skills.

It became obvious the group needed a place to call home, where they could hold their sales outdoors and have a place to meet when the weather was cold, rainy, or snowy so meetings could be held year-round rather than just in the summer.

Simeon Chapin, along with other like-minded residents, formed the Lake Geneva Horticultural Society and donated the land at 330 Broad Street in Lake Geneva for the building of a home for the society. He also spearheaded the raising of funds for the

building of such a home.

It was a unique structure, featuring a great hall emulating an English Guild Hall with high-beamed ceilings and a parquet floor – a look that has been maintained through the years. The building was built around a large grassy enclosed courtyard to maintain privacy.

The structure was completed and dedicated on June 15, 1912. The grounds were landscaped as beautifully as the large lake estates and continue to be so, mostly by volunteers.

The Lake Geneva Garden Club was organized under the direction of Mrs. Charles Hutchinson, wife of Charles Hutchinson, the President of the Art Institute of Chicago and summer resident of Lake Geneva. The garden club supported Horticultural Hall, and held flower shows there until 1990.

With a variety of local events held at the



**above:** For the past 12 years, the Lake Geneva Farmer's Market has been organized and run by local resident Sean Payne. He has served on the Horticultural Hall board and is manager of Clear Water Outdoor Sports.

**above, left:** A variety of fresh breads and rolls are available at the market each week.

**at left:** Market vendors inside Horticulture Hall sell a variety of handmade crafts, jewelry, cards, crocheted and knitted items as well as prints and more.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *The Breeze*

hall over the years, they were able to cover the expenses of the building. However, with changing times financially and the loss of many of the original supporters who moved away, the building eventually was no longer self-sufficient.

At one point the city was considering purchasing the hall and turning it into a bus station. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and in 1952, the Geneva Area Foundation took title to the building.

According to Beth Gallagher, director of Horticultural Hall, the not-for-profit Geneva Area Foundation oversees the many activities held at the hall and the profits from rentals for activities go directly back into repairing and updating the facility.

Back to the market, while the outside vendors offer foods, flowers and more, inside Horticultural Hall are a variety of arts and crafts booths featuring unique handmade items. Shoppers can browse handmade jewelry, crocheted items, handmade cards, purses and more. And, just like the outside area, visitors can meet the creators.

The Lake Geneva Farmer's Market is open rain or shine. For more information, follow the Lake Geneva Farmer's Market on Facebook.

For more information, about Horticultural Hall, 330 Broad St., call 262-248-4382, or visit horticulturalhall.com.



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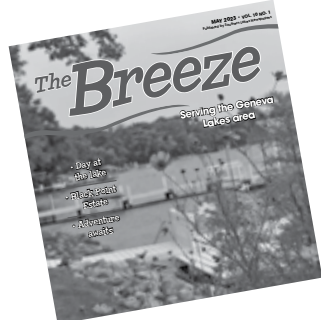
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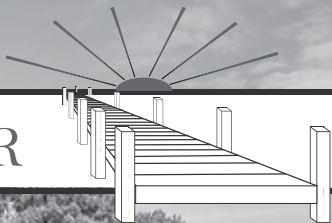


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onto their pier.

Beginning over 100 years ago, receiving the mail on the pier was the only way to receive it, as there were not any roads around the lake and delivery of mail. Everything else from building materials to food supplies arrived by boat as well. Boat arrival was also the way the residents were transported to their homes on arrival.

This was only done in the summer, as these “summer cottages” were for the most part not insulated or built with furnaces to allow occupancy year-round. On the first cool days of fall, the owners packed their belongings and returned to the city.

It was in 1916 that the idea was suggested that delivering the mail by boat could be made much more exciting if they added mail jumpers to leap off the boat, deliver the mail to the mailbox on the pier, and return to the boat and jump back on before it finished passing the dock without stopping.

At the time, the mail jumpers chosen were all athletic, long-legged men, who were thought to be able to handle the jump from the boat over the 4 to 8 feet of water between the boat and the pier.

## Women can jump, too

This went on until 1974, when Elaine Kanelos decided she needed a summer job, and that job would be that of the mail jumper. Living on Geneva Lake and collecting the family mail each day in the summer, she chose to go right to the top. She sent a letter to Bill Gage, Sr., head of the Gage Marine Boat Company as it was called at the time and told him of her desire to be a mail jumper. Much to her surprise, three weeks later she received a positive response from Gage and was given the job.

Her first day on the job also served as her tryout. She passed the tryout and successfully delivered the day’s mail. Over the next 10 years, many more women have made the cut.

According to Ellen, there was one point where all the mail jumpers were women. Today, everyone is welcome to apply, and it varies but this year one young man tried out while all of the other applicants were women.

While the Walworth normally has 150 passengers aboard to view this unique way of delivering mail, on tryout day, only a few invited guests were aboard the boat.

First, there was a group of judges who would be scoring the jumpers as they made their jumps and did their readings. Most of the judges seem to have been mail jumpers in the past.

Also aboard were a few members of the press and some honored guests, including a 5-year-old who is determined to be a mail jumper when he is older and wears his mail jumper shirt proudly.

Bruce Pett, who was a mail jumper 60 years ago, returns every few years to watch the tryouts.

## Unique summer job

All the people trying out this year are



**left:** Hudson Huidobro, 5, shown with his mom, hopes to be a mail jumper when he’s older. He became enamored with mail jumpers after taking his first tour on The Walworth and dressed as a jumper for Halloween last year. **middle:** General Manager of Lake Geneva Cruise Lines, Ellen Burling – who was a mail jumper herself in 1984 – served as one of the judges of this year’s candidates. **right:** Jumpers leave the cabin of the boat through this front window to access the walkway so they can jump onto the piers and back onto the boat.



SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *The Breeze*

enrolled in colleges all across the country, but in the summer, they return home to Lake Geneva. Many of them have been employed at Lake Geneva Cruise Lines for several summers, and some have been mail jumpers for as many as three years, while others are hoping to make the cut this year for the first time.

“I was able to jump twice last year, and it was truly one of the best days of my life,” shared Mia Fiscelli. “I have lived on Geneva Lake my whole life, and being a mail jumper has always been a dream of mine. I love giving the tour and talking about the history of the lake.”

Mia also said jumping onto the pier is the easiest part of the jump.

“It is jumping back to the boat that is more difficult. There is more timing required,” she explained.

Mia attends the University of Colorado and is active in ice hockey and lacrosse. She has finished her first year on the hockey team in Colorado and was ranked in the top 10 for rookies in Division One of the American College Hockey Association.

Annie McEneaney, a student at the University of Wisconsin working on a degree in special education, has been working for Lake Geneva Cruise Lines for the past four summers.

“This is the best job ever,” she said while waiting for her turn to jump. “I was a mail jumper last year and loved it. My sister, who is 6 years older, was a mail jumper, too, several years ago. Working with Captain Ames, (captain of the Walworth) is fun, as he was my band teacher in middle school.”

## Obstacles a challenge

As the applicants prepared for their jumps, they were called by name and made their

way to the window near the front of the boat, which was opened for them to climb out, stand on the ledge, and, as they approached the pier, make the jump.

Each jump is unique, as the placement of the mailbox varies by pier. Some are placed at the front of the pier, meaning they must jump, stop their forward momentum, and grab the mailbox without being catapulted down the pier. Others require running to the far end of the pier to the mailbox and zigzagging through the belongings of the homeowner.

Then, there is the leap onto the ledge at the back of the boat before it passes by. Even once on the boat, they are not in the clear yet. They then have to walk or run the ledge back to the front window to grab the next batch of mail for the next pier and be ready to jump again before it’s too late.

Captain Ray Ames replaced Captain Neill Frame, in 2019. Like his predecessor, Ames is a people-person who enjoys working with the jumpers as well as the visitors.

“Mail is delivered six days, and the newspaper is delivered all 7 days, no mail on Sunday,” Ames said. “We currently have 75 homes with a Lake Geneva mailing address that choose to receive their mail on their piers from June 15 through September 15. Our mail jumpers show their athleticism as they leap from the boat to the pier, race to the mailbox, take out any outgoing mail or packages, insert the day’s mail, and race back to the boat before I pass the pier.

“Sometimes they don’t quite make it and we have to return to pick them up. Occasionally, they miss the boat and end up in the lake,” he added.

Landing in the lake on a very hot day is enjoyed by the jumper as a way to cool down. Sometimes the falls are to provide excitement for the boat riders. A planned spill in the lake

is always safer, as the captain will move the back end of the boat out a little.

Falling into the lake accidentally is quite rare, as this crew jumps to (and from) 75 piers each day. But an occasional fall can be a welcome cool-off and bring excitement to a sleepy crowd.

## Making the cut

After over two hours of tryouts, the boat returned to the pier at the Riviera.

But these prospective jumpers were not finished, because the boat was needed to be readied for a tour of the Lake, which was scheduled to leave a half hour later. It was the applicants who were given the job of replacing the seating that had been removed for the tryout with traditional seating that will hold the expected number of guests.

In spite of the activity the previous two hours, they were right at it, all still smiling.

The judges met after the tryouts ended to decide on who would be this year’s mail jumpers. According to Ellen, they were judged on a variety of points, including style and the stamina needed to complete the job.

“This was a very difficult group to judge,” said Burling. “Never have there been this many good choices.”

Yet those tough decisions had to be made and all five jumpers chosen for this summer have previous experience in the job.

The chosen jumpers were Marie Nickolette, Gina Weis, Marissa Torres-Raby, Ella Clapp and Michaela Fletcher, according to Ellen.

To purchase tickets for a Mailboat Cruise, visit [www.cruiselakegeneva.com/public-tours/usmailbox](http://www.cruiselakegeneva.com/public-tours/usmailbox). The 2 1/2-hour cruise leaves the Riviera Docks at 10 a.m. each morning, loaded with mail, packages and newspapers to be delivered to piers around the lake.

earlier than ever this year," said Koster, who added strawberry season had concluded. "We normally don't start taking strawberries until mid-June and we were picking strawberries at the end of May."

Strawberries, he said, typically come back every year and the early growth was indicative of the early heat.

Sweet corn is another crop that blossomed and they were able to begin harvesting a couple of weeks early.

"There are some years when we don't start picking sweet corn until August," Koster said. "But most crops are on a normal schedule."

However, unlike sweet corn and strawberry, other crops haven't been as fruitful based on past trends.

"The one thing that probably isn't doing as well as it has in past years would be some of our cooler weather crops, like our early broccoli and our early lettuce," he said. "For some reason, that hasn't produced quite a well."

### Generations of service

The Koster, including Corban, have been farming for several generations.

In the 1980s, the Koster Farm became known as Geneva Lakes Produce headed by Corban's father, Scott, who began expanding crop offerings and access to produce through the farm stand and at area farmers market.

"My great grandpa used to farm gladiolus and strawberries, and then my grandfather did mostly corn and beans," Corban said.

Since then, Geneva Lakes Produce has remained in the same family.

Geneva Lakes Produce makes appearances at multiple farmers markets, including one on Thursdays in Lake Geneva.

### Popular stand

Additionally, the family-owned establishment has a popular farm stand,

which is staffed seven days a week.

"That is our bread and butter," Koster said. "It is open every day for everyone who wants to get fresh and local produce. We got a full selection of all of our crops there."

Amy Rose Weber, who manages the farm stand, began as a seasonal employee before becoming a full-time staff member.

Weber, in her fifth season at the farm, worked in the education industry and corporate world and decided to leave both behind to help the Koster family.

She said the decision to depart the corporate world also enabled her to return to her hometown.

"This used to be just a summer job and I worked for the school district and I also actually left corporate," she said. "When I found out that this family needed me, I just decided to have a little fun, so I have been here ever since."

Weber said she has enjoyed seeing visitors come from a wide area.

"We have had some travelers from Minnesota," she said. "It has been very cool to see."

### Rebuilding from the fire

In March 2023, Geneva Lakes Produce experienced a devastating fire, causing the establishment to lose one of its greenhouses as well as supplies needed for the crops.

Since then, Geneva Lakes Produce has remained busy, even during steady rainfall, to rebuild, while replenishing supplies, Koster said.

Weber said the community stepped forward and offered support in many ways.

"Since we had the fire last year, a lot more people have been coming out to help us rebuild and help us regrow," Weber said. "We couldn't be here without the community."

For more information, including locations of other markets they have a presence at, visit [genevalakesproduce.com](http://genevalakesproduce.com) or follow them on Facebook.



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