



THE SPIRIT of Geneva Lakes

Vol. 37 No. 1

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JANUARY 2025

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ON THE COVER

This will be the 30th year of Lake Geneva's Winterfest event, which will bring some new changes while still featuring all that makes it a draw for residents and visitors alike. Among the highlights is the snow sculpting competition, which takes place in Riviera Park (pictured) and Flat Iron Park.

VISIT LAKE GENEVA PHOTO
Spirit of Geneva Lakes



IT'S COMIN' UP JANUARY EVENTS

thru 6 Winter Show and Artsy Holiday Market – Inspire your holiday shopping with a visit to the Artsy Holiday Market at Gallery 223 in downtown Lake Geneva.

The Geneva Lake Arts Foundation is hosting its Winter Show and Artsy Holiday Market with a treasure trove of art-inspired, handmade items. The highlight of the show is the annual Holiday Art collection, featuring many affordable items to give or to cherish.

This exhibit, featuring the work of local and regional artists, is open through Jan. 6. Visitors will enjoy the wide variety of members' paintings, prints, wood working, photographs, jewelry, sculpture, cards, and more.

The gallery is at 223 Broad St., Lake Geneva. For more information, visit genevalakesartsfoundation.org.

6 Movie Mondays – The Lake Geneva Public Library presents Movie Mondays with Black Point Estate.

Each film session will include an introduction by Dave Desimone of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Desimone will lead a group discussion following each film. Upcoming films include:

Jan. 6 - The Third Man

Feb. 3 - To Catch a Thief

March 3 - Gallipoli

April 7 - The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou

The movies are shown at 2 p.m. on the dates listed at the Lake Geneva Public Library, 918 W. Main St.

10-31 'My Life in France with Julia Child' – Join the Lake Geneva School of Cooking as they celebrate the recipes and cuisine of Julia Child and honoring her memoir, My Life in France.

"Julia's fun and approachable cooking style allow everyone to feel at home in the kitchen. Her witty character and passion for sharing her love of cooking allow Chef John to create a relaxed feel to this class. Whether you're looking to add a little French inspiration into your cooking or just have an entertaining evening out, this is the class for you," organizers said.

In this hands-on class, you will learn how to make the best of Julia's very own recipes. Her goal was to make all home chefs feel comfortable and confident in the kitchen, even when preparing fine foods and intimidating recipes. The Lake Geneva School of Cooking embraces this approach and brings it to life with an intuitive and enjoyable culinary event.

Classes are held from 6 to 10 p.m. and will be offered Jan. 10 and Jan. 31.

The menu will include some of Julia Child's favorite courses: French Onion Soup; Caesar Salad; Chicken Coq au Vin; and Chocolate

Mousse.

Once this hands-on class is complete, participants will do as Julia did: take off their aprons and enjoy the meal!

For more information, to register or see a calendar of more upcoming events, call 262-248-3933 or visit lakegenevaschoolofcooking.com. Lake Geneva School of Cooking is at 301 Geneva National Ave. South, Lake Geneva.

16 Interviews with Iconic Lake Geneva Entrepreneurs Join the Friends of the Lake Geneva Public Library at our Interviews with Iconic Lake Geneva Entrepreneurs!

The talks are held 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and all are welcome! Upcoming events include:

Jan. 16 - John and Lindsay Neighbors with Boxed & Burlap

Feb. 20 - Ed Gilbertson with Gilbertson's Studio

Attendance is free for all Friends of the Library members. There is a \$5 charge for non-members to attend.

The Lake Geneva Public Library is at 918 W. Main St., Lake Geneva.

24 Lakeside Laughs Comedy Night It will be a night full of howls of laughter and loads of belly laughs as The Abbey Resort hosts Lakeside Laughs Comedy Night.

"Leave your cares at the door for this evening of comedy featuring comedians from the Milwaukee and Chicago areas with host Jose Montero. You'll leave with your sides aching from laughter," representatives said.

A cash bar will be available; must be 21 or older to attend. Comedy Night will be on Friday, Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m.) Tickets are \$20 plus tax. For more information and a link to purchase tickets, look under Events online at theabbeyresort.com.

The Abbey Resort is at 269 Fontana Blvd., Fontana.

25 Abominable Snow Race The Abominable Snow Race is a 4-6-mile race featuring 25-plus winter-themed obstacles. It will be at 8 a.m., Jan. 25 at Lake Geneva Zipline and Adventure Park.

It offers fun for the whole family (ages 4 and older). Run Just for Fun, go for the distance, or compete for cash and prizes. All racers receive a Finisher's Medal, an Abominable T-Shirt, and a craft beer (21 and older) or hot chocolate.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit abominablesnowrace.com.

The calendar of events is compiled from a variety of sources. Dates and times may change, and events may be canceled. Please verify details prior to making plans.

THE SPIRIT

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Peace and Beauty

Bella Botanica a dream for woman passionate about plants, gardening



by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

For many people, finding what gives them peace and satisfaction in their life is a long journey that often leads them in a variety of directions. For Tracy Hankwitz, that has not been the case.

From an early age, Hankwitz has known that it was plants, gardening and teaching others that added to her happiness, along with embracing her own spirituality. She has spent many years working as a manager at Burlington Garden Center and several years as an adjunct professor at Gateway Technical College. In both roles, she was able to share her knowledge of landscape design and herbaceous and other plants while she dreamed of owning her own store.

Her vision was of a store that would carry plants and unique, handmade craft items and would offer visitors a sense of peace and a chance to create craft items of their own under the direction of Tracy or other local artists.

It was in 2021 that Hankwitz found what she believed would be the perfect place for the business she hoped to build. It was an old church, that was built in 1865 in Springfield, which is a somewhat out-of-the-way location but easy to access

above: If you have trouble getting your plants to bloom, consider purchasing one at Bella Botanica such as this one that's about to flower. **at left:** Tracy Hankwitz, owner of Bella Botanica, holds a whimsical sign reflecting the only good reason for the garden to be closed.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



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W5357 Lauderdale Dr, Elkhorn - The Iconic Lauderdale Lakes home, "The Boathouse" on Deakin Isle is situated on 192' of premier shoreline. Rebuilt in 2015 to its original 1915 Jazz Age glory, this 4 bedroom, 3.5 bath home is bursting with historical details and architectural styles. Ballroom features 1,200 sq ft with original hard rock maple floors, unique hanging Meiji era Japanese lanterns, with the original Opium Den prepped for a future hidden wine cellar. All 3 Lauderdale Lakes are visible from numerous vantage points throughout the four levels. Kitchen features custom marble countertops, farm sink, Wolf & Sub-Zero appliances. Master BR ensuite with luxury freestanding tub, full steam room, and private deck with fireplace. A finished swim basin provides access to the marquee wet boathouse w/ underwater lighting. **\$4,499,700**



W5742 North Dr, Elkhorn - Why go through the hassle of building when this 2023 custom built 4 Way Bedroom, 3.5 bath two story is ready to enjoy. Situated on 75' of Middle lake frontage you'll find this open concept main level with wall of windows lakeside. Inside Kitchen offers everything the discriminating chef would demand and ultimate living and dining space with gas fireplace, custom wet-bar and deck access. Master Bdrm ensuite with breathtaking lake views offering double vanity, large tile shower and ample walk-in closet. Family room walk-out with gas fireplace, full bath, work-out room or Bdrm, 4th bdrm and screened porch. Kitchen also features large island/breakfast bar with Delkton countertops and Zline Autograph appliances. Outside fireplace and level lakefront yard by pier and storage shed. **\$1,659,700**

214 Potter Rd, Elkhorn - Rare opportunity First floor condo overlooking beautiful Evergreen Golf Course. This 2 BD, 2 Bath unit overlooks the green on the 3rd hole of the South Course. Move in ready featuring open concept with kitchen with island/bar with granite tops and Black stainless steal appliances with dinette area adjacent to the living room with gas fireplace and 80" flat screen leading into the sun-room bring in ton's of natural light and access to cement patio. Master BD ensuite with double vanity, soaking tub and walk-in shower plus walk-in closet. 2nd bedroom off foyer with shared full bath and large laundry room. Huge 2.5 attached garage with built in shelving with ample room for 2 cars and your golf cart. Minutes to Elkhorn and easy access to I-43, area lakes and Kettle Moraine trail head. **\$399,700**



N8367 Hillburn Mill Rd, East Troy - The ultimate nature enthusiast property on a very private 5.73 acres, amongst majestic oak trees. You'll be impressed by this 5 BD, 3.5 bath, 2 story with finished walk-out. As you enter the foyer off the covered porch you're greeted by the LR with vaulted ceiling gas fireplace adjacent to Ktch with wood floors, large breakfast bar, granite tops and new Bosch appliances WiFi capable. Off the ktch you have a dinette with deck access, formal dining room plus den off dinette. Master BD ensuite with double vanity, soaking tub plus glass shower and walk-in closet. 2nd Bd with Vaulted ceiling. Upstairs offers a loft 3rd BD with sitting area, jack and jill bath & 4th Bd. Family room walk-out to cement patio, 5th Bd and ample storage. Walking trails throughout the woods and natural spring pond. **\$1,075,700**

Lt36 Potawatomi Rd, Williams Bay - Vacant lot in desirable Williams Bay. Walking distance to the Williams Bay beach, Geneva Lake boat launch & restaurants. .22 acre wooded lot in Willabay Woods Subdivision. This is your opportunity to build your dream home! **\$99,000**



33706 Fern Dr, Burlington - Located on a corner lot you'll find this 3 BD, 2.5 Bath 1.5 Story Bohner's lake access home . Inside features include open concept with eat-in kitchen with dinette with sliding glass door to private patio with hot tub. Ktch is open to the LR, Master BD suite on 2nd floor with full bath and tile shower, large closet and sliding glass door to balcony. Family room also on 2nd floor with sliding glass door to balcony. Finished 34 x 24 Man cave garage with 10ft ceilings insulated and heated with 1/2 bath, bar and access to 14 x 20 cement patio. On the main level there's 2nd and 3rd bedroom, full bath and laundry room. Large storage shed and cement driveway. Short drive to lakefront park and beach with picnic area. Must see! Make your appointment today! **\$379,700**

300 W Main St 111, Palmyra - Located downtown Palmyra you'll find this Turnkey established Restaurant/Bar and separate 4 lane bowling alley waiting for an energetic entrepreneur to bring their vision to life. Restaurant/Bar has a seating capacity of 173 with an updated kitchen in 2019. Charming bar area overlooking main street and soaring ceilings in the dining area. Potential outdoor space for a beer garden and additional space to expand the bar area or rental opportunity. Income producing apartments on the second floor which consist of a 3 Bd, 2 Bd and 1Bd currently rented. Liquor license included. Palmyra is in the heart of the Southern unit of Kettle Moraine Forest offering hiking, mountain biking and equestrian trails. Minutes from Blue Spring Lake and steps to Lower Spring Lake. **\$695,000**

465099

as it's near the intersection of highways 36 and 120, just north of Lake Geneva.

Hankwitz said she was certain this was the perfect spot for the store she wished to create, and the building would help share the vibe of tranquility and spirituality that she hoped to establish.

"The simple building was originally built by the Episcopalian Community and used as their place of worship, until they outgrew the space and opted to build another church elsewhere," she explained.

"It was purchased by a farmer around 1940, who used it to store hay in the winter," she added. "It was believed that during the time the farmer used the building to store hay, children in the area found a way in to play and, of course, cause some teenage mischief."

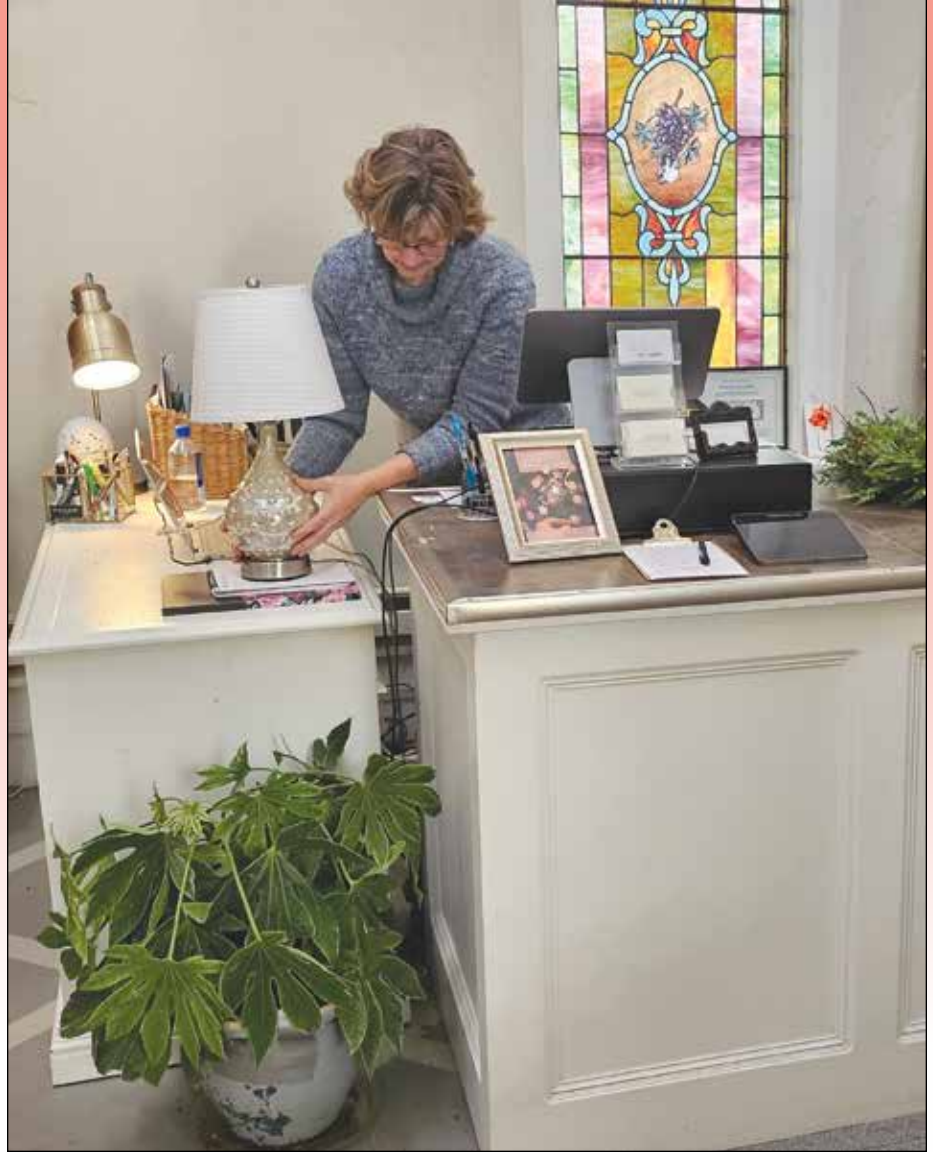
Fortunately, the building was purchased in the 1950s by the Methodist community and restored as a place of worship. They returned it to a more traditional church, with beautiful stained-glass windows that are still in place as well as the addition of a choir loft.

"The Methodists also outgrew the space, and then it sat empty for about 30 years, except for occasional community gatherings," Hankwitz. "Then, in 1999, it was purchased, and Kym Moyes-Davidson opened an antique shop in the space, which she creatively named 'Pray for More Stuff.'"

After Moyes-Davidson retired and moved from the space, the building was used as a yoga studio.

Labor of love

In 2021, it became available, and Hankwitz knew it would be the perfect home for her new business. The building was large, open, and light and having been a church, the good spiritual



vibe was there.

She and her husband, Neil, began what seemed to be an overwhelming task of turning the church into what was envisioned for the business.

Their labor of love resulted in a beautiful, welcoming space that has become the home of Bella Botanica, where many come to purchase unique items, whether for birthday gifts, shower gifts, housewarming gifts, or just something special for their own home. They also stop by to confer with Tracy about their houseplants and landscaping needs, while taking in and appreciating the relaxing feel of the

building.

The theme, of course, is plants and plant-related objects, so there is a greenhouse area where many succulents are housed. Even though it's winter, there are a few blooming plants to be seen.

Unique ceramic pots are displayed on shelves and Hankwitz is more than happy to help customers find the perfect plants for a variety of needs or they may want to purchase one of the terracotta pots for their plants. She recommends everyone have some indoor plants, as they do make the indoor air healthier.

While perusing the shop, it's easy to notice that most of the merchandise – such as greeting cards and ceramic coffee cups, along with books – all have a plant or flower theme, adding to the horticultural theme of the space.

When opening the store, one of the decisions that needed to be made was choosing a name that reflected the beautiful and peaceful vibes as well as the



at left: Unique gifts such as this candle in a different style of a holder will add a beautiful accessory to many rooms. **above:** Tracy completes the sale of a small side lamp for a customer. Notice the stained-glass window behind the desk.

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horticultural aspect.

Bella Botanica was chosen.

Research, Hankwitz explained, revealed that Botanica in Hispanic countries meant a plant store that sold healing herbs or religious goods. And while Bella means beautiful in Italian, it also means promise of God.

With this knowledge, she said they knew they had found the perfect name.

“Bella Botanica is something I have wanted to do for myself for a long time, as it includes what I love,” she said. “And now is the time that it has all come together. Being in a church allows me to add a sense of spirituality to the boutique.”

Sharing her passion

While Hankwitz no longer teaches at Gateway, she spends much of her time teaching others at her store. There are many unique classes offered and they’re kept to smaller groups so there is time for individual assistance as needed. They are held in the loft space overlooking the store below, complimented by the beautiful stained-glass windows.

The classes offered change, often with the seasons. A recent class held was for evergreen wreaths where participants created a wreath sure to add a touch of fresh green to their home throughout the season.

Terrariums are always enjoyed, and in a class that teaches how to create a mini terrarium, succulents are offered.

Private classes can be booked, usually requiring a minimum of five participants. Check the website for dates on when upcoming classes will be offered.

Do the cold winter days make you wish



above: Classes are offered throughout the year on a variety of crafts. Here, Tracy teaches how to construct a winter wreath. **below:** In the choir loft, there is a small teepee for children to sit and look at a book. It's intended to keep them occupied while their adult checks out kids' items available.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



for time at the beach? A beach aerium might be an ideal project to help. It's a small reconstruction of a beach built in a pint-sized mason jar. It's created using a variety of colored sands and topped with an air plant. Once completed, it can offer a reminder of the warmer days to come.

Winter is a great time to treat yourself to some luxury. One of the ways to do so is to take a class to create Botanical Bath Tea Bags. These unique tea bags are for a relaxing bath, not to drink. They contain essential oils, Epsom salt and dried flowers to help with relaxation.

Another type of project offered is Cyano – the art of using the sun to leave the imprint of flowers onto a cloth.

At this time, Bella Botanica is also offering the framed moss art with a live air plant along with candle making.

And enjoy the Potted Herb Bar and bring home your favorite herbs to grow and use in recipes.

Local artisans also teach classes, sharing their special skills.



A variety of small pots, some created in house, are perfect for indoor plants.

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Staying connected

Tracy writes a blog that can be obtained by signing up through the website. It aims to offer inspiration as she shares new ideas.

“Everyone has a creative side,” she said, and she would love to help find where your creativity lies.

The choir loft has been turned into the children’s loft. It has unique clothing for young children and a variety of books perfect for children. If your children are with you when you stop in, they will enjoy the teepee in the corner that is just their size, no adults allowed.

There are a variety of gifts suitable for many occasions.

New to Bella Botanica is a prayer wall on the back stairway, where everyone is invited to add their own prayer needs.

“It is a place for people to share their wishes and prayer needs. They write them out and then hang them along the wall. I read all of them and pray for all,” Hankwitz said.

In the months of January and February, the space is available to small groups to host retreats, book clubs, or work sessions – simply call the store for available dates and prices.

“We also book creative retreats. Participants may either work or shop in the morning. A catered lunch is brought in, and then it is time for a creative endeavor. An afternoon class is held, such as a potting class or the creation of a small terrarium. Call us to set one up,” she said.

The goal of opening her own business was to create a place that would feature plants to heal, gifts that encourage, and words to inspire – and the space certainly meets those goals.

Bella Botanica is at 1787 Walworth St., Springfield. The shop is open Thursday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, call 262-706-3007, or visit bellabotanicaboutique.com and follow the business on Facebook.



from top: Hand crafted mugs make a special gift especially when paired with cocoa or a specialty tea. If looking for a unique birthday card for someone, this selection contains many with plants and flowers; Stained glass pieces created by a local artist are available.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*





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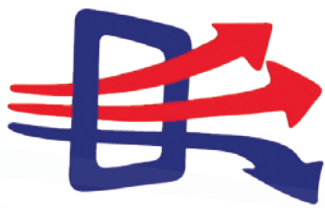
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HELPING THOSE IN NEED



Post-holidays often a vital time for food pantries in the area

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

During the holiday season, most people are joyful as they plan to celebrate. They are also more aware of the need to help others who are not as fortunate, for the holidays are the season of giving.

Requests for donations to help those others – food, gifts, clothing, or sometimes even housing – encourages the holiday spirit in many people to donate what they can.

But once the holidays have ended, the decorations put away, and life is back to normal, the thoughts of helping those in need is often relegated to the boxes that have been packed away.

But the needs continue.

Those unable to buy enough food in December will still need help in January. Warm winter coats, snow pants, boots, and mittens are just as vital because Wisconsin winters continue bringing cold temperatures and snow.

So, while the spirit of the holiday season does encourage sharing – and that giving is certainly appreciated – if often falls off come January and while the need is present throughout the year, winter can be especially harsh, not to mention the role the economy has played in recent years.

There are pantries in communities all over that provide help for those in need and the reality is, their work is never done.



The sign outside The Sharing Center welcomes those looking for assistance. It's at 25700 Wilmot Rd., Trevor.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

Volunteers at the Walworth County Food and Diaper Bank accept donations to help feed the residents in need of food to supplement what they are able to afford.

COURTESY WALWORTH COUNTY FOOD & DIAPER BANK *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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Here's a look at two of the main pantries in the area.

WALWORTH COUNTY

The Walworth County Food and Diaper Bank, which is in Elkhorn, is doing its best to provide for its residents.

"We work with twelve partners in Walworth County to provide food, milk, diapers, and adult incontinence and period supplies for those in need," said Tammy Dunn, Executive Director of the Walworth County Food and Diaper Bank.

"There is a need all year round for food and personal supplies. It is most stressful for those families who are just getting by and then something happens and things spiral out of control. These things happen quickly," she said.

The organization is not county-funded so relies completely on private donations.

To be eligible for assistance, people must be residents of Walworth County and show an ID for every person in the family. They must also verify income and once verified, are eligible to come in once each month for food and supplies.

"We provide food for about twelve days," Dunn said. "No food bank is meant

to be the complete amount of food the family needs, but to supplement them. Some families do find it necessary to go to another food bank source to make it through the month. We are not filling cupboards, just helping to provide some of the food needed."

For seniors over the age of 60 who qualify, they may receive a Stockbox of healthy foods and two pounds of Wisconsin cheese each month.

Diapers, period supplies, and incontinence supplies are often items that the family budget doesn't cover but are necessary.

"Girls are forced to miss school because they do not have period supplies, and mothers may not be able to go to work because they don't have the diapers that the day care requires them to leave with their child," Dunn explained.

According to Dunn, they are a bank, which is a site for Feeding America where food and supplies are delivered and then shared with other food pantries.

"We have a loading dock and a refrigerated truck so we can order items like ground beef at lower prices and store it in large refrigerators," she explained.

top: The donated bicycles hanging from the ceiling at The Sharing Center will be in demand when spring comes to life. The board games on hand will be enjoyed by families this winter. **at left:** Sharon Pomaville, Executive Director of The Sharing Center, Inc. works with those in need. It's a job that has become much more difficult as the number of those in need increases while resources shrink.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

The size of the operation requires many volunteers to keep it running smoothly. “We provide help through our over 100 volunteers who give of their time and we are always grateful for new volunteers,” Dunn said.

It’s not uncommon, she explained, for those who are helped to pay it back, or forward, depending on how you look at it. “Our recipients are so grateful for the help we are able to provide, and when back on their own feet, they will often come and volunteer or donate things to the program,” Dunn said.

Homelessness and hunger continue to grow in the area so the organization works with others throughout the county in an effort to continue to meet those needs.

In addition to volunteers, the food and diaper bank accepts and appreciates donations. To learn more, sign up or connect for a donation, visit the website.

The Walworth County Food and Diaper Bank is at 205 Commerce Ct., Elkhorn. For more information call 262-723-4488 or visit the website at wcfdb.org. Food distribution hours are Thursday, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday, from 9 a.m. to noon.

KENOSHA COUNTY

Rural western Kenosha County residents utilize The Sharing Center.

“With food prices that have escalated for the past three years, many families struggle to provide the very basic nutrition, let alone sufficient healthy food,” shared Sharon Pomaville, Executive Director of The Sharing Center, Inc. in Kenosha County. “We have seen an increase in families seeking help. So many are unable to make ends meet that in 2024 we have set a record.”

In addition to food, The Sharing Center provides clothing, services to help prevent homelessness, employment assistance, and housing to rural residents of Kenosha County.

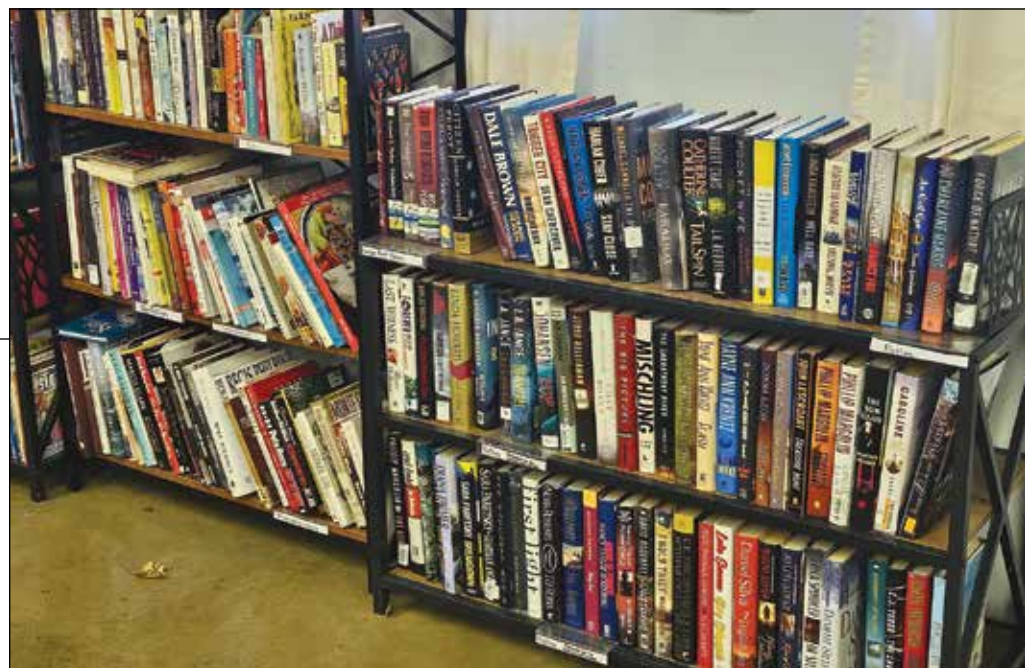
“There is more need as pandemic era funding has been eliminated and current rent and food costs outpaced any wage increases to bridge the divide. In 2020, there was an increase in FoodShare benefits and rent assistance to be certain that no one would be homeless,” Pomaville explained. “Unfortunately, both programs ended in early 2023, when need was actually far

top: Fresh fruits and vegetables are a necessary component of a nutritious meal, and those in need can choose from a variety of both at the food bank.

COURTESY WALWORTH COUNTY FOOD & DIAPER BANK
Spirit of Geneva Lakes

at right: Not only is food for the body provided but also food for the mind and soul. Patrons of The Sharing Center can choose a book for their enjoyment and enrichment, available in children and adult options.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



greater than during the pandemic.”

Many of those in need also have pets who also require food, housing and sometimes medical care.

“It may sound counterintuitive to have a pet when one struggles financially, but families have made it clear that their pets provide a feeling of safety, of being loved, a reason to live, and the ability to feel hopeful,” Pomaville said. “Many are willing to give up their own food to feed their pets.”

The Sharing Center distributes well over a ton of pet food each year, but still there is a need. Families that have unstable housing have even more trouble finding temporary housing because many will not accept those with pets.

“We have partnered with Noah’s Rest to caretake pets when owners are hospitalized or in a shelter program. We also partner with local veterinary clinics for veterinary services for the most extreme needs,” she added.

A new service is being added to what the Sharing Center provides, which is to remain open late into the evening as a warming center on the coldest nights of the winter. The center will be open to people and their pets until midnight to provide a safe warm place.

“We will be offering food, social services, warm winter clothing, sleeping bags, cold weather gear specific to outdoor living, pet food, and more. Families can choose to take advantage of a motel room for a night when funding is available through Kenosha Human Development Services,” Pomaville said.

“We always work first to help people secure permanent safe housing, but Kenosha County, as well as much of the U.S., is in a housing crisis. Finding an apartment that matches the earning potential of families is extraordinarily difficult, if not nearly impossible. But it is still our foremost goal,” she said.

This program requires volunteers to work with the families to help connect them to services they need.

Volunteers are on call for extreme weather emergencies and would work a shift from 8 p.m. to midnight. Because they work directly with guests, it can be a highly rewarding experience that has a profound impact on both volunteers and guests. Training is provided.

To learn more and apply to become a volunteer, visit thesharingcenter.net/ volunteer to learn more and apply.

The Sharing Center’s food program has been upgraded to an Instacart model, where those who qualify are given a list of what foods are available and they fill out a list. Volunteers hand-pick the groceries requested so when the person, couple or family arrives, it only needs to be carried to the vehicle, which volunteers help with.

With less food available for the county, donations of items and money are also



above: The food bank at The Sharing Center offers a variety of foods to meet the needs of families it serves, who can choose items they know will be eaten.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

top: A large variety of fresh vegetables are available for Walworth County residents to choose from. The pantry is not county-run so relies solely on donations.

COURTESY WALWORTH COUNTY FOOD & DIAPER BANK *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

greatly appreciated. Monetary donations go especially far because more food can be purchased in bulk.

This year was a special time for The Sharing Center. After renting the building that was its home for 13 years, they were able to purchase it. Now, the Board is diligently working on improvements, one of which was the creation of the new parking lot that is triple the size of the former one.

Sometimes improvements have additional costs not expected when the

project is being considered. And this one was no different. In this case, there was a large amount of dirt that needed to be removed at a cost. Fortunately, it was able to be donated to Wilmot Mountain, which gratefully used it for the children’s run at the ski resort. Both benefitted.

The Sharing Center, Inc. is at 35700 Wilmot Rd., Trevor. For more information, call 262-298-5535, visit the website at thesharingcenter.net or follow the Facebook page.



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An artistic, colorful view

A closer look at stained glass, from creations and restorations to classes

By Sandra Landen Machaj
CORRESPONDENT

The beauty of stained glass has been enjoyed for centuries – first in churches and cathedrals, then later in homes and even businesses.

Whether a complete window or door or as an accent piece, stained and clear leaded glass pieces are unique.

In 1983, Ed Gilbertson and his father returned to Wisconsin from out of state and opened Gilbertson's Stained Glass Studio. Initially, the studio offered classes where customers could learn to create their own stained glass pieces.

"We also sold supplies to create your own works," Ed Gilbertson explained. "But as we grew and began to create more original pieces and restore others, we stopped the classes and the selling of supplies."

In 1999, they purchased the building at 705 Madison St., Lake Geneva, giving the business a permanent home, where they continue to create and restore both secular and religious glass pieces.

History of stained glass

While stained glass windows were used in Europe for centuries, the art came to the United States around 1903. Many Europeans who were glass creators came to America and set up shop.

The idea of a stained glass window was to allow a glassmaker the opportunity to create a larger window, as single large sheets of glass couldn't be made originally. Artists blended several sheets together to make the window larger and stronger.

While European artists were very literal in design, American designers like John La Farge and Louis Comfort Tiffany began to establish an American style of stained glass. Tiffany, for



Two of the most recent stained glass pieces Gilbertson's produced were designed by Jeffrey Easley – a former designer for the Dungeons & Dragons books – for a display at the Geneva Lakes Museum. One depicts a wizard, the other a dragon slayer.

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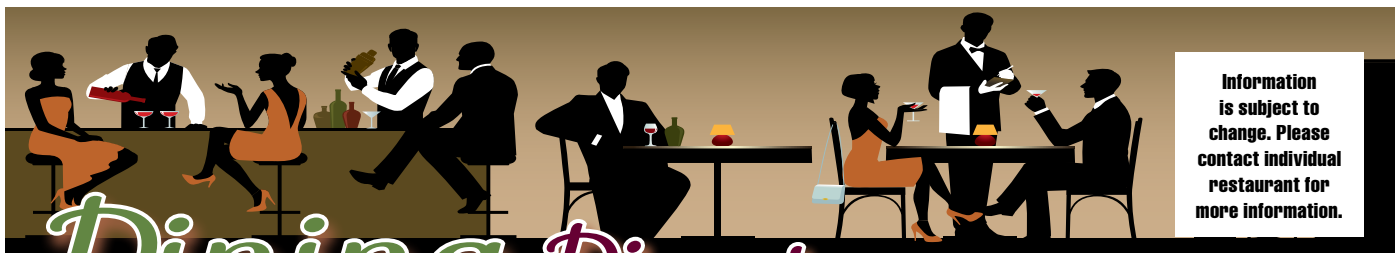
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example, layered glass, while Europeans used only a single layer in their work.

“By layering or stacking the glass as Tiffany did, they were able to give depth to the work,” shared Gilbertson. “They also would only use paint on the skin of the figures in the scene to make them more realistic.”

There are two styles of attaching stained glass pieces to create a scene – the traditional use of lead and the use of copper foil.

Tiffany began to use copper foil, as it allowed smaller lines and was lighter than the lead lines. In particular, he used it in landscape scenes where the thinner lines worked better in the design.

These methods continue to be used today when creating or restoring stained glass pieces, as the lead or foil eventually needs to be replaced.

A variety of projects

Among the services the studio offers are restorations of old works, as well as the creation of new glass pieces for churches, homes, and businesses.

When they are dealing with a restoration, great care is taken to preserve the stained glass. A visit is made to examine the piece while it is still in place, and both the glass itself and the frame are closely looked at.

Afterwards, a cost report is presented to the owner to be certain they know what will be involved. Once the owner understands what needs to be done and the cost, a rubbing is made of the piece, followed by the window being carefully removed and taken to the studio.

The old lead is removed, and the glass cleaned, and if new pieces of glass are required, they are provided in the appropriate color and cut to the correct



from top: Gilbertson's Stained Glass has made its home at 705 Madison St., Lake Geneva since 1999, when they purchased the building; Ed Gilbertson stands beside some unique stained glass windows in his studio; This abstract design in blues and a touch of red provides a welcoming door.

SANDRA LANDEN
MACHAJ
Spirit of Geneva
Lakes

shape.

Gilbertson's has produced many new pieces in the area as well. Two of the most recent ones were the Dungeons and Dragons windows at the Geneva Lake Museum and the panels created at the Lake Geneva Library during the recent remodeling.

“The Dungeons and Dragons pieces were designed by Jeffrey Eisley, who had designed for D&D when they were producing their books,” said Gilbertson. “So, it was only fitting that his designs be used in the works to hang in the Dungeons and Dragons display at the museum.”

The large panels that separate reading spaces at the library were a design that was originally in the Geneva Hotel that stood in Lake Geneva, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Since the library was designed by Wright's protégé, James Dresser, it seemed fitting to use that design in those spaces.

“Many of Frank Lloyd Wright's designs are now in public domain,” Gilbertson said.

The largest window Gilbertson's has created is one they are working on for a church in Germantown. Seven feet wide by 32 feet tall, it will consist of 8 to 10 separate panels.

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stained glass – whether large or small – begins with an idea. A customer will meet with Gilbertson to discuss the size and design, with budget often playing a part in how the piece comes together. Colors also play a part in the cost, in addition to size and intricacy, as yellow, orange, and red glass costs more.

From inception to final completion, a single window usually requires 4 to 12 weeks. Windows for a church, because of the size and the need to work with committees versus one person, usually bumps the time up to 6 to 8 months or more.

A visit to Gilbertson’s Stained Glass is a step into history. Pieces of completed clear leaded glass and stained glass works are on display, many of them for sale. Small side lamps and unique hanging lamps, several of which in a Frank Lloyd Wright style, are also popular. One hanging light is so unique that the pieces of glass needed to be heated and bent slightly to give the finished piece its curved look.

Customers can also view pieces in the process of being restored, which are on large work tables at the business.

While a stained glass piece can last forever, the lead framing often needs to be replaced and repaired over time. Gilbertson recommends getting older windows checked before they fall into the need for repair.

“We create new pieces of art and also provide historical restoration and conservation to pieces,” he explained. “We work to conserve in its original state before it needs repairing.”

Gilbertson’s Stained Glass Studio, an accredited member of the Stained Glass Association of America, is at 705 Madison St., Lake Geneva.

For more information, call 262-248-8022 or visit www.stainedartglass.com. The store hours are Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Vinery

When The Vinery, a well-known stained glass studio in Madison, closed due to the retirement of its owner, Josh Krogman and his partner, Shaina, purchased all of the supplies and made

from top: Inside Gilbertson’s studio, large tables are used to construct or repair big pieces and of course there are a variety of beautiful stained glass items throughout, many of them available for purchase.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

The Vinery carries a full line of supplies for stained glass projects; Classes are offered at The Vinery for kids and adults interested in learning how to work with stained glass.

COURTESY THE VINERY STAINED GLASS STUDIO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



plans to open a custom stained glass business in Whitewater.

“We were fortunate to also be able to purchase the name, The Vinery, from the owner, as it was a well-respected glass shop,” said Josh Krogman. “We moved the store to Whitewater, where we opened, putting our own touch on the new business.”

The shop is a full service place to purchase glass and glass-making supplies needed for all types of stained glass work. They have a large selection of glass available in a variety of colors and types.

“We welcome those who have never created a stained glass piece to sign up for one of our beginner stained glass-making classes,” Krogman said. “It is a way for the first-time creator to see if this is something they would like to continue learning.”

The beginning classes include all the materials needed for the project being taught and the students go home with a completed stained glass piece at the end of it. Glass cutters and a soldering iron are used in the class, and Krogman recommends a first timer try different glass cutters before deciding what works best for them.

In the class, the correct way of cutting glass, preparing the pattern, and foiling and soldering is explained in detail.

There are individual classes that complete one project in a session, or a five-week session for beginners to learn more complex work. Children 12 years of age and older as well as adults are welcome in the beginner class.

More advanced classes offered require that the beginner class be completed first. Contact Josh or Shaina at the store to set up a class.

The couple also works to repair a variety of stained glass pieces.

The Vinery is at 218 Elkhorn Rd., Whitewater. For more information, call 262-458-2209, visit the website, www.vineryglassllc.com or follow them on Facebook. Business hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The shop is closed on Sunday and Monday.



from top: Josh Krogman, owner of The Vinery, works on a large stained glass project; The Krogman family officially celebrates the opening of The Vinery, joined by Whitewater chamber staff.

COURTESY THE VINERY STAINED GLASS STUDIO
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Winterfest

Visit Lake Geneva celebrates 30 years of cool fun

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

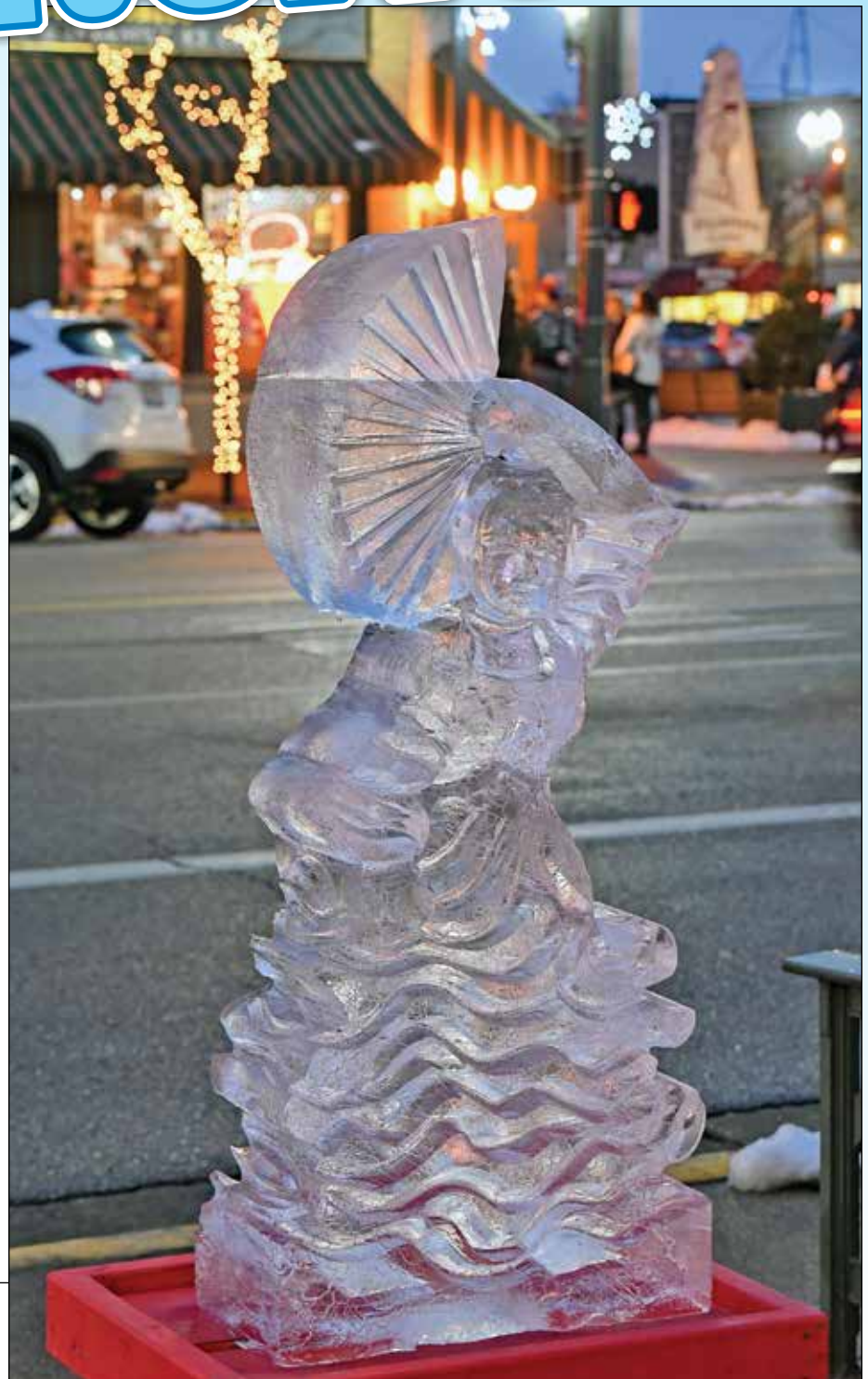
Each winter as January winds down, excitement is in the air as Winterfest is close at hand. For 30 years, Lake Geneva has sponsored this winter event that celebrates the joys of winter, including snow and seasonably cold temperatures, if Mother Nature cooperates.

Beginning Jan. 29 and continuing through Feb. 2, the Lake Geneva Visitor Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce will be sharing a variety of events with the public, some that have been a part of Winterfest for years and others that are new.

The highlight of the Winterfest celebration has always been the snow sculpting championship, which brings state champions from across the country to compete for the national title. This year, in honor of the 30-year celebration there will be a change in the competition.

For years it has been known that not every state has a championship competition. Imagine states such as Hawaii or Arizona hosting such an event when the temperature is so mild. Since teams had to have won a state championship, this limitation prevented many snow sculptors from states that did not host a championship from competing at Winterfest.

So, this year the competition has been retitled. It is now the inaugural America's Snow Sculpting Invitational. In honor of the 30 years celebration, the invitees this year will be champions of the past 30 years of competition. In subsequent years, there may be other criteria to get an invite, but winning a state championship will not be



The ice sculptures on display downtown have a great amount of detail.

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one, thus opening the competition to more snow sculpting teams.

The name change is not the only difference. While the event will still feature the fifteen massive snow sculptures to be created in Riviera Place and Flat Iron Park, the judging of the event will be juried.

The jury members will be notable snow sculptors, other sculptors who work in large scale formats, and representatives of art and academia who will choose the top three winners.

There will also be two other award categories. The first is the People's Choice Award, which has always been enjoyed by the people voting and the winners. Visitors to Winterfest will have a chance to vote for the sculpture of their choice on Saturday at the Riviera.

The final award will be chosen by the sculptors participating in the contest. Being chosen by fellow artists is quite the honor.

"The teams consist of three members, and we have received entries from all over the country, including Alaska and Florida. They are presenting sketches of their plans which are posted online at the Visit Lake Geneva website," shared Deanna Goodwin, Vice President of Marketing of Visit Lake Geneva.

As we know, snow and cold weather has been sparse at times but there is no need to worry about there being ample snow for the sculptures. The snow making machines at Grand Geneva are put to work, creating several tons of snow which is then trucked to the Riviera and Flat Iron Park making certain that the sculptors have plenty of snow to create their designs. Of course, it's always nice to have some natural snow and a sprinkling of fresh snowflakes, which adds to the ambience of the event.

The snow sculpting will begin on Wednesday, Jan. 29. Once the snow is distributed to the assigned building sites, the teams will begin their work, often through the night to complete their sculpture in the allotted time.

Working with the Visit Lake Geneva Team this go around will be Melinda Kempfer Pearson. Melinda's father Gene Kempfer was one of the original founders of the snow sculpting competition in Lake Geneva. Melinda also oversees the world competition held annually in Stillwater, Minnesota.

"Melinda has relationships with the most talented snow sculpting teams in the country and that goes back to when she was a kid helping out her dad here in Lake Geneva and for many years since," said Stephanie Klett, CEO of Visit Lake Geneva. "This new format opens up the competition to a bigger pool of talented sculptors from around the country, not just winners of state competitions, so expect to see an even wider range of incredible works of snow art in 2025."

While many visitors enjoy the completed sculptures on Saturday and Sunday, some



from top: The runner up for 2024 was a Minnesota for their sculpture, Mischief Maker; This sculpture, named 2 Bugs Fighting, was created by a second team from Minnesota and won third place.

COURTESY VISIT LAKE GENEVA *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

choose to see the sculptors at work earlier in the week. They use basic tools and often work through the night with lights to guide their work. Seeing the sculpture emerge from a rectangle of snow is quite an experience.

Last year the winning team was from the home state of Wisconsin, with two Minnesota teams earning second and third place honors.

The People's Choice awards saw North Dakota grabbing the first place award, and a different Wisconsin Team placing second. Third place was awarded to the Wisconsin Team that finished in the top spot in the official competition.

One never knows what teams will come up with the best designs and execute them accurately. The teams selected to compete in the next event can be found on the Visit Lake Geneva website.

Scattered throughout the area there are also some sculptures created by students from local schools. While not as large or complex as the professional ones from the competitors, it's easy to see the talent of potential future snow sculptors.

Another draw during the event is the ice sculptures, which will again be scattered throughout downtown Lake Geneva. There will be 50 ice sculptures in the downtown business district. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy a walk to check out the ice sculptures,



browse local stores and stop for a drink or a meal at one of the many local restaurants.

Both the snow and ice sculptures will remain on display until they melt which is entirely dependent on the weather. Sometimes they will last through most of the following week; other times, they melt quickly.

And that's not all planned for this busy winter weekend.

"On Saturday, the Riviera will be open as a place to warm up. Live music will be playing during the day to keep up the festive mood," Goodwin said. "Come in, warm up and peruse the food booths where snacks may be purchased. And don't forget to vote for your favorite sculpture."

The 30-year anniversary of Winterfest will offer another activity that's sure to provide fun and laughter – Human Dog Sled Races. Most people have seen pictures or perhaps seen the dogs in person pulling sleds through the snow. Now picture the sled being pulled not by dogs but by humans complete with the Musher and a passenger along for the ride.

Groups of six will sign up for this fun activity including a musher, a rider, and four human pullers. So, pull a group together and register for this fun event on the Visit Lake Geneva website. These races will be on Sunday, Feb. 2.

For many visitors – especially the younger children – one of the favorite events during Winterfest is to spend time by the campfires on the shore of Geneva Lake. Warm up by the fire and sip on hot chocolate while enjoying the winter lake view.

Winterfest is proof that Lake Geneva is more than just a summer resort destination. Make a day or weekend of it and enjoy fun times outdoors in the refreshing winter air.

For more information call Visit Lake Geneva at 262-248-4416 or checkout the website, visitlakegeneva.com.

from top: This beautiful ice sculpture in front of the Visit Lake Geneva office offers an ideal opportunity for a photo; Visitors shop in downtown Lake Geneva while enjoying the many ice sculptures on display during the fest; To reach the top of the mound of snow it is sometimes necessary for competitors to climb on it.

opposite, from top: Last year's first place winner from the home state of Wisconsin created this sculpture titled Trust Me; Sculptors add final touches to their entries as the sun sets near Geneva Lake.

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