

ourtown

Waterford

Wisconsin



Area company offers full service for travelers

By Jason Arndt

EDITOR

Travelers often enlist the help of an area travel agency carrying decades of experience in the tourism industry.

Bon Voyage World Travel Experts, owned by Kari Mullikin, was previously known as Bon Voyage Cruise and Vacations before the establishment expanded to offer more services.

Mullikin has been involved in the industry for more than 35 years and offers travel guidance to tourists looking for destinations in the United States as well as abroad.

Bon Voyage, which has locations in the villages of Waterford and Union Grove, serves as a full service travel agency and

offers a vacation care concierge service to travelers hoping to create a memorable experience.

“There is such a demand for travel and there is a demand from clients looking to have somebody carry out their itineraries for them,” Mullikin said. “That’s where our business continues to grow.”

Bon Voyage employs nearly a dozen staff members who work directly with travelers in drafting destination plans.

Before planning a trip for clients, Mullikin said she often spends time speaking with them in an effort to gather information about the vision for the trip.

Additionally, Mullikin, a travel advisor, helps ensure clients understand rules and regulations for overseas countries, and have the necessary documents as well as offering airfare options.

Diverse clientele

At Bon Voyage, the agency serves couples, families, and solo travelers – anyone looking for a customized travel experience.

“We have a broad mix of clientele, so we are doing a lot of family vacations, a lot of extended generational type travel, where grandma is taking grandchildren, great-grandchildren on a trip,” Mullikin said. “We are also doing a significant amount for solo travelers. It’s very popular these days.”

She attributes the increase in solo travelers to the demand for more



Kari Mullikin



Bon Voyage World Travel Experts, based in Racine County, helps travelers achieve memorable trips such as Portugal.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Our Town*

personalized trips, where they can pursue their own interests, which can differ from those of friends and family.

“Clients are doing solo travel based on their specific interests,” Mullikin said.

Bon Voyage also helps clients with traditional trips, including those involving the immediate family, as well as couples celebrating a honeymoon or anniversary.

Bon Voyage has planned for trips to just about anywhere including Alaska, European nations, Hawaii, and the Caribbean islands.

While most destinations involve airfare, Mullikin said she also sees clients interested in road trips within the contiguous United States.

“We have some interest in driving vacations,” she said. “I had clients that wanted to go to the east to see the fall colors this year and we put together an itinerary for them.”

Client advocacy

The southeast region of the United States recently experienced back-to-back hurricanes, Helene and Milton, which destroyed parts of Florida.

While Bon Voyage had a small number of clients affected, it could have been worse, considering the storms happened

in the early fall compared to the summer when families with children often travel to Florida.

“If that hit at a different time of the year, although not hurricane season, but storm season, it would have affected us more so than it did,” she said.

“It really does bring home the value of a travel advisor,” she added.

A travel advisor, according to Mullikin, often serves as the client’s advocate during natural disasters or unplanned circumstances beyond the traveler’s control.

“When something goes amiss or unplanned – that is no fault of your own, it shows how important it is to have someone as your advocate,” she explained, adding that travel advisors help clients depart destinations, or find a safe place to stay, during unexpected circumstances.

Travel advisors are known to help find the best deals on flights, hotels, activities, and more and use their connections with many segments in the tourism industry.

Planning ahead

Bon Voyage, like many travel agencies, often stays busy even during light periods

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Welcome to **Our Town!**

Waterford began as a town of commerce in the 1800s because of its proximity to the Fox River. The waterway provided the perfect source of access and power for early settlers.

Settlers came to what would become the Village of Waterford in the late 1830s, led by Levi Barnes and Samuel Chapman. Because of its location on the Fox River, by the 1920s the area became the largest village in western Racine County featuring a hub of commerce and industry.

Today, the Waterford area is home to about 8,000 people, according to the latest U.S. Census. The community and the village have grown in the past 150 years with the additions of an industrial park, business park and downtown districts.

The area – which includes the Village and Town of Waterford, Village of Rochester and the Town of Norway – offers small-town living a short distance from big-city amenities.

Only 30 minutes from Milwaukee, the western Racine village and surrounding towns continue growing daily.

The area boasts a variety of businesses such as boutiques, restaurants, a book store and more.

In addition to businesses and attractions, the greater community has celebrated notable achievements in the past year, including some representatives earning gold medals on the world stage.

One of the draws to the area is its event schedule with communities hosting many opportunities to enjoy the local flavor.

In the summer, the annual Fourth of July parade in Waterford is a big draw for visitors who join in with the community's Independence Day celebration. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church hosts its annual Country Fair in early June and events run in the village's downtown all summer long. Balloon Fest has also returned to Waterford after being moved to Mukwonago.

Additionally, Waterford River Rhythms performs regularly during the summer months in the village.

Add to that the fine fishing, boating and bike trails, and it's clear why many people often refer to Waterford as a "destination."

Fall in the village features Explore Waterford's River's Edge Art Walk and the annual Lion Club's chicken barbecue dinner.

The holidays are also celebrated in style on the first Saturday in December when the spirit of the season fills downtown with the annual Christmas Parade, sponsored by Explore Waterford. At the end of the parade, Santa Claus rides in on fire truck to light the village Christmas tree in the library and visit with the area children.

Winter also features an ice skating rink in 10 Club Park, which is open to all, weather permitting.

So, stop by for a visit and enjoy all Waterford has to offer!

2025 Waterford, Wisconsin

our town

An annual publication of WATERFORD POST & SOUTHERN LAKES NEWSPAPERS
209 N. Dodge St., Burlington, WI 53105
(262) 763-2575
www.myracinecounty.com

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above: The Super Tramp Tribute Band performs a song as part of the Waterford River Rhythms concert series during the final show of the 2024 season at Village Hall Park. Waterford River Rhythms hosts performances regularly at Village Hall Park during the summer.

CHAD HENSIK *Our Town*

on the cover: The community celebrated Independence Day with a parade on July 4 in the downtown area. A girl waves in admiration of a military vehicle while watching the parade.

ELENA LESHOK *Our Town*

OUR *Government*

VILLAGE OF WATERFORD

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www.waterfordwi.org
Administrator 262-534-7912
Assessor 262-534-3003
Attorney 262-534-6611
Building Inspection
262-894-2982
Clerk 262-534-3980
Court 262-534-1853
Engineers 262-348-5600
Fire Chief 262-534-3980
Library 262-534-3988
Police (non-emergency)
262-534-2119
Police and Fire (emergency
only) 911
Post Office 262-534-3255
Public Works 262-534-4069
Recreation Department
262-514-8200
Treasurer 262-534-3980

VILLAGE BOARD

The Village Board meets the second Monday of the month (fourth Monday as needed) at 6 p.m. at Village Hall. The Village Board trustees are:
Don Houston, president
Andrew Ewert
Adam Jaskie
Pat Goldammer
Troy McReynolds
Tamara Pollnow
Robert Nash

TOWN OF WATERFORD

415 N. Milwaukee St.,
Waterford, WI 53185
262-534-2350
www.tn.waterford.wi.gov
Assessor 262-893-6001
Attorney 262-534-6950
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Inspector 262-534-9236
Clerk 262-534-2350, ext. 1871
Treasurer 262-534-2350,
ext. 1870
Court 262-534-4880
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Fire Chief 262-662-3570
Police (non-emergency)
262-534-2119
Police and Fire
(emergency only) 911
Post Office 262-534-3255
Public Works Department
262-534-5705



from top: A voter from the Village of Waterford feeds her ballot into a machine during the Nov. 5 General Election; Judy Schouten (center) and Jody Beer issue a ballot to a voter in the Village of Waterford.

JASON ARNDT PHOTOS *Our Town*

Recreation Department
262-514-8200, ext. 1131
Sanitary District No. 1
262-534-4646
Sewer Emergency
262-534-2031
Waterford Waterway
Management District
847-921-9087

TOWN BOARD

The Town of Waterford Board meets the second Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m. at Town Hall. Supervisors are:
Teri Nicolai, chairperson

Dale Gauerke
Doug Schwartz
Tim Szeklinski
Robert Ulander

TOWN OF NORWAY

6419 Heg Park Road, Wind
Lake, WI 53185
262-895-6335
www.townofnorwaywi.gov
Administrator/Treasurer
262-895-6335
Assessor 262-542-3332
Building Inspector
262-895-2732
Clerk 262-895-6335

Fire & Rescue (non-
emergency) 262-895-7533
Municipal Court 262-895-3652
Parks & Recreation
262-895-6180
Police (non-emergency)
262-895-2195
Police and Fire
(emergency only) 911
Public Works Department
262-534-3025
Post Office 262-895-6078
Sanitary District No. 1
262-895-6400

TOWN BOARD

The Town of Norway Board meets the second Monday of the month in the Main Hall at Town Hall at 6:30 p.m.
Supervisors are:
Jean M. Jacobson,
chairperson
Robert Helback
Timothy Hansen
Michael Lyman
Ralph Schopp

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www.rochesterwi.gov
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262-424-6957
Clerk-Treasurer 262-534-1181
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emergency) 262-534-3444
Library 262-534-3533
Racine County Sheriff (non-
emergency) 262-534-5166
Police and Fire
(emergency only) 911
Post Office 262-534-6100
Public Works 262-534-1182
Zoning Administrator
262-399-3346

VILLAGE BOARD

The Village of Rochester Board meets the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. at Village Hall. Village Board trustees are:
Nick Ahlers, president
Gary Beck
Gary Beck, Jr.
Russ Kumbier
Adam Schaefer
Jeff Sterling

WATERFORD UNION HIGH SCHOOL

www.wuhs.us
100 Field Drive, Waterford
262-534-3189

Waterford Union High School has been educating students since 1905. Today, the school has an enrollment of more than 1,200 students who enjoy learning in a sunny, open facility.

A broad-based curriculum with more than 150 courses is in place to provide all types of educational opportunities for every student, from advance placement courses to vocational education.

Standard tests and ACT test scores place Waterford students above the state and national average.

WATERFORD GRADED SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.waterford.k12.wi.us
819 W. Main Street,
Waterford
262-514-8250

The Waterford Graded School District offers a comprehensive K-8 curriculum that is aligned with the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards, and adheres to a student-first philosophy.

Waterford is recognized statewide for its outstanding public education system. The district is characterized by above average student performance, teachers equipped with a variety of instructional strategies and excellent facilities.

Students also benefit from a low student-to-teacher ratio and a district philosophy that is committed to meeting the needs of all students.

NORTH CAPE SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.northcape.k12.wi.us
11926 W. Highway K,
Franksville
262-835-4069

North Cape School District is a K-8 elementary school located west of I94 on highway K and is a feeder school to Waterford Union High School.



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North Cape School focuses on a rich curriculum experience that challenges the students to think critically and problem solve in preparation for a global economy.

DROUGHT SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.droughtschool.net
21016 W. Seven Mile Road,
Franksville, 262-895-7778

Drought is a small public school with a private school atmosphere of small class sizes.

Students at Drought are high performing, with the majority scoring at or above state proficiency in all core subjects. The unique combination of old-school charm along with the rigor of modern day standards make Drought an ideal school for children to learn and prosper.

WASHINGTON-CALDWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.washcald.com
8937 Big Bend Road,
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262-662-3466

Washington Caldwell is a 4K through 8-grade school district in Tichigan (Town of Waterford).

Washington-Caldwell infuses technology in all grades with 1:1 iPads in third through eighth grade. Several



JENNIFER LINDNER PHOTO Our Town

above: The Trailside Twisters are at it again – this time giving back to the community by being good stewards of the land. Last March, second graders with their teachers Jennifer Lindner, Madison Loeffelholz and Erin Hoffman hit the Seven Waters Trail near Trailside Elementary to clean up litter and debris. After learning about covered modifications and landforms in social studies, the students voted to clean up the bike path to help prevent litter from making its way into the Fox River and beyond. **above:** Trailside students Harrison Croak and Josie Wendt finish filling a garbage bag after cleaning up Seven Waters Trail.

programs are available during or after school including Project Lead the Way, National Junior Honor Society, Lego Club, and K-Kids/ Builders Club (community focus).

CATHOLIC CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

catholiccentralhs.org
148 McHenry St., Burlington
262-763-1510
www.facebook.com/

CatholicCentralHS/twitter.com/cchstoppers

Catholic Central High School, a four-year parochial high school, is an alternative choice to public schools for the Waterford and Burlington area. Accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Catholic Central serves the 17 area parishes and is committed to providing a Catholic-based education.

Spanky's prospering in new venue

By Jason Arndt
EDITOR

Waterford sports bar and grill touts bigger footprint with cozy atmosphere

Spanky's Sports Bar and Grill, of Waterford, began as a simple neighborhood tavern tucked away between the villages of Rochester and Waterford nearly seven years ago.

The family-owned establishment operated by husband-and-wife team Matthew and Karen Allen touts a cozy atmosphere and range of treats, such as cool drinks, homemade thin-crust pizza, fresh hamburgers, mouthwatering wings, and live local music, according to its website.

Since then, the Allens have produced the same high-quality food and atmosphere, but in a new building along the prominent Highway 36 corridor just outside the heart of downtown Waterford.

Spanky's, now at 403 S. Sixth St., Waterford, opened its new location in the spring of 2024 and has seen an increase in exposure while welcoming new customers, many curious about the establishment while driving on Highway 36.

"The pace of this place is totally different," Matthew Allen said. "We would have ebbs and flows of the old place, and now we are pretty much busy all of the time. It is a great thing for us. Business has been really good."

Although Allen admitted he enjoyed the simplicity of the former location on Jefferson Street, which was initially built as a residential property in the 1920s, the new building consists of more space for customers, a comfortable outdoor area, and more room for growth.

Last year, Allen reported Spanky's had more than 150 live performances presented by local and regional musicians, and expects to see the trend continue in the new venue.

"This is better long-term for us. It is a different feeling when you are on the main drag of Highway 36. We were tucked in between Rochester and Waterford at the old place. It was more of a neighborhood."



Despite the slightly different atmosphere, Allen said the menu remains unchanged, including the popular thin-crust pizza.

"When we first got here, we knew we wanted to focus on our daily menu and put all of our efforts into that," Allen said.

"We are still a bar that serves really good food. Even though 60% of our sales are food, we still want that bar atmosphere - a quintessential bar-style atmosphere."

He said Spanky's thin crust pizza accounts for most of the food sales.

"We are really known for our pizza. We are here every morning at 5:30 making our homemade crusts," Matt said.

New additions

Amid the transition, Allen acknowledged Spanky's needed to hire more employees, but he didn't precisely know how many until the doors opened at the new establishment.

"The first couple of weeks we were open, I could tell you it was overwhelming," he said. "This was very well received by the community."

In response to the overwhelmingly

supportive community, Allen has added dozens of new employees within the last month, and found no issues recruiting staff members.

"We anticipated we had to hire more people as we grew our business. From Day one, it was evident that we needed more people on staff. So, over the last 30 days, we have added 25 new people," he said shortly after opening in the new location. "When you have a new place that is bright and shiny, it is going to be an attractive place to work at."

Additionally, Allen recognized many new staff members, particularly servers and bartenders, had seen Spanky's booming business.

"If you are a server or a bartender, you want to go to a place that is busy. We have had no problems hiring people," Allen said.

Shortly before Spanky's moved, however, Allen hired Executive Chef Steven Mohr from Lake Geneva.

"He has been unbelievable," Allen said of Mohr's skill.

Servers are often seen bringing out other menu items, including appetizers, such as bang bang shrimp, cheese curds,



opposite: Matthew Allen, co-owner of Spanky's Sports Bar and Grill, stands near the large sign for the business, which is now along the Highway 36 corridor.

from above: Co-owner Karen Allen prepares to serve thin-crust pizzas to customers; Rob Kaiser makes a beverage at the new home of the sports bar and grill.

JASON ARNDT PHOTOS *Our Town*

chicken tenders, French fries, mozzarella sticks, onion rings, pulled pork loaded tots.

Other foods on the menu include soups and salads, various chicken and ham sandwiches, and much more, according to its website.

Family-owned

The Allens receive assistance from their adult children, Jacob and Samuel, on a regular basis making the establishment a true family-owned establishment.

While Matt and Karen work every day, their sons contribute to the establishment five or six days a week, Matt said.

In addition, he recognized long-time staff members, including some who have been with Spanky's since the

beginning, as part of the Allen family.

Spanky's is open 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. until midnight Fridays and Saturdays, and 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. Sundays.



Balloonfest

Waterford Balloonfest returned for another year last June at Waterford Town Park. The event, presented by Waterford Union High School and the Tichigan Lake Lions Club, brought hundreds of people who participated in several activities, including helicopter rides and drone races. Other activities included a craft fair, beverage tent, bounce houses and a rock climbing wall. Sarah Neder, of Delafield, joins her three children (from left) Owen, 1, Parker, 4, and Stephen, 6, inside a balloon at the Waterford Balloonfest. The Pure Magic Balloon Team offered the activity.

JASON ARNDT *Our Town*



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Local dancers went for the gold - and got it

Foursis athletes claim world title

Waterford representatives from the United States National Junior Pom Team couldn't believe they captured a gold medal at the International Cheer Union World Championships in Orlando.

By **Jason Arndt**
EDITOR

The United States National Junior Pom Team, composed of representatives from Foursis Dance and Gymnastics and Hartford-based Energizers Dance Team, entered the final competition in second place last April before producing an energetic performance to claim the world title a day later.

Deanna Schicker, owner of Foursis Dance and Gymnastics with three of her sisters, said the dancers took what they learned from judges' notes in the semifinal round and had a better routine the following day.

"Anything that they saw that we needed to work on, we were going to make sure that when we went on stage, that we were going to have a better performance," Schicker said. "On the second day, they had just an outstanding and energetic performance. They ended up winning, and they are world champions."

Trailing Japan after the first day, Schicker and team representatives acknowledged they might have had the needed score, but had to wait until final confirmation from judges at the competition.

"Nothing is ever solidified until you hear your name called," Schicker said. "After they announced the second-place medal going to Japan, I think everyone just let out so many screams and cries and joy that they had done it."

But that wasn't all for the partnership



from top: United States National Junior Pom Team members, including some from Waterford's Foursis Dance and Gymnastics, celebrate after they learned that they won a gold medal at the International Cheer Union World Championships at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando; Foursis Dance and Gymnastics members Greta Nielsen, Audrey Schoenfeld and Kendall Schicker show pride in the United States during the International Cheer Union competition.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS *Our Town*

between Foursis and Energizers, with representatives from both programs joining together to win a silver medal as members of the United States National Youth Pom Team, which equaled the performance from last year's world championship.

According to Schicker, the Youth Pom team finished a close second behind Japan,

which presented a challenge for both teams.

Audrey Schoenfeld, then-18, a member of the gold-medal winning team, said Japan was loaded with talent.

"They are incredible dancers and are a great team across the board," Schoenfeld said.

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

OUR *Area Churches*

BAPTIST

Honey Creek Community Baptist Church
(American Baptist)
35512 Washington Ave.,
Honey Creek
(262) 534-3585

CATHOLIC

St. Clare Catholic Church
7616 Fritz St., Wind Lake
(262) 895-2729
www.stclarewindlake.org

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
305 S. First St., Waterford
(262) 534-2255
saintthomaswaterford.org

LUTHERAN

Living Water Lutheran Church
(Wisconsin Synod)
6525 N. Milwaukee Ave.,
Wind Lake
(262) 895-3700
livingwaterlutheran.com

North Cape Lutheran Church
2644 124th St., Franksville
(262) 835-2206
northcapelutheran.org

Norway Evangelical Lutheran Church
6321 Heg Park Road,
Wind Lake
(262) 895-2281
norwaylutheranchurch.org

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church
145 S. Sixth St.,
Waterford
(262) 534-3639
stpeterswaterford.com

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Congregational Church of Rochester
103 S. State St.,
Rochester
(262) 534-6582
fccrochesterwis.com

UNITED METHODIST

Caldwell United Methodist Church
8504 Caldwell Road,
Waterford
(262) 363-2630
caldwellumc.org

Community Church
455 S. Jefferson St.,
Waterford
(262) 534-2313
extremefaith.org

NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Fox River Christian Church
238 E. Main St.,
Waterford
(262) 332-7047
foxriverchristian.org

Grace Church
257 Kendall St.,
Burlington
(262) 763-3021
gracechurchwi.org

TRAVELERS

• CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

of the year.

For example, Mullikin has begun scheduling trips for clients for 2025, 2026, and even 2027.

"Right now we are booking a lot of travels through 2025, much of Alaska is already sold out in 2025, and we are already booking into 2026," she said.

She suggests people start sooner rather than later, particularly for some destinations.

However, Bon Voyage can still assist in planning trips on short notice, in as soon as four months in advance, depending on the destination.

Bon Voyage World Travel Experts, 116 N. Milwaukee St. Waterford, and 1014 Main St., Union Grove, is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at both locations.

For more information, visit bvworldtravel.com.



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Creating smiles for the next generation

Lenz Orthodontics breaks ground on new facility

Lenz Orthodontics, of Waterford, broke ground on a new state-of-the-art facility in 2024, designed to accommodate more patients seeking the services they offer.

By **Jason Arndt**
EDITOR

Owned by Dr. Michael Lenz, son of founder Dr. Mark Lenz, who started the family practice in the City of Racine, the planned standalone facility sits next to the future ProHealth Care Inc. clinic at the corner of highways 35 and 164 in Waterford.

The planned expansion further solidifies the Lenz family's commitment to the Waterford community and beyond.

Michael and his wife, Mary, who owns Waterford Smiles, have raised two children in the community.

"We wanted to stay in Waterford," Michael said. "My wife and I live here. My wife was born and raised here and we raise our two kids here now."

Additionally, since ProHealth is opening a new clinic, Michael said the planned expansion will serve as an ideal fit and could become a hub for healthcare.

"With ProHealth going in next door and their new clinic, it felt like a natural location for a healthcare corridor in Waterford," he explained.

Increased space

Lenz Orthodontics opened its Waterford location about 14 years ago at 725 Cornerstone Crossing.

However, since 2010, the business has seen increased demand for services. As a result, they wanted to create a standalone clinic with improved amenities in an effort to bolster patient comfort.

"The community has grown and so has our practice," Michael said. "So, we decided to open a standalone clinic that would give us way more rooms to see the patients that we need to see. It will be more spaced out. The waiting room will be larger and there will be more bathrooms for patients."



from above: Team members from Lenz Orthodontics Congregate at the future site for the business during the groundbreaking ceremony; Lenz Orthodontics, a family-owned company plans to open a new facility in Waterford, which is tentatively slated to open next spring. From the left are: Mary Lenz, of Waterford Smiles, daughter, Sarah, son, Charles, and Michael, of Lenz Orthodontics.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS
Our Town

In addition to Waterford, Michael has seen other nearby communities grow – such as Muskego, Burlington and Mukwonago – which could bring in more patient traffic.

According to a news release from Explore Waterford, the building is designed by Nolan Carter Architectural Design, and will be built by Pinnacle Construction, with an estimated completion of next spring.

First Citizens Bank provided financing for the project.

"This new building is a significant milestone because it represents a major step forward in being able to serve more patients," Michael said in the news release. "With its advanced design and expanded space, we will be able to enhance the quality of care."

Mentorship

Mark Lenz began what grew into a family business in the City of Racine about 40 years ago.

He received both his doctorate of dental surgery and a certificate of specialty in orthodontics with a master's degree from

Marquette University School of Dentistry.

A board-certified orthodontist, Mark served as an assistant clinic professor in the orthodontic department at Marquette University School of Dentistry for about 10 years, the Lenz Orthodontics website states.

Michael continued the family's legacy, studying at Marquette University, and then followed in his father's footsteps.

"He and I worked together for a couple of years and my dad was an incredible mentor to me," Michael said.

Lenz Orthodontics offers services related to Invisalign, metal and clear braces, and gummy smile treatment, according to its website.

Michael said Lenz Orthodontics helps "achieve a healthy bite and a beautiful smile" for patients.

The planned expansion looks to solidify the Lenz Orthodontics mission.

"We look forward to many more years of creating beautiful and healthy smiles in an inviting and spacious location," Michael said.

For more information, including hours of operation, visit lenzorthodontics.com or call 262-534-3010.



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Indie bookstore thriving in downtown Waterford

Reads by the River Gifts and Books has been serving the Waterford community and beyond for nearly three years.

By **Jason Arndt**
EDITOR

Since opening in 2021, co-owner Kelly Klein, who operates the business with husband, Steve, said she never anticipated seeing the establishment in the heart of downtown Waterford show rapid growth.

“It has far surpassed anything we could have expected. People have really supported us, not only in the community, but we have a lot of customers who travel here,” said Klein, who has seen customers come from Waukesha County communities and other areas in southeastern Wisconsin.

She attributes the growth to a loyal customer base that supports independent



booksellers, instead of big-box bookstores, such as Barnes and Noble.

“People who love bookstores really want to support an indie bookstore and are willing to travel to get their books,” said Kelly.

Dream becomes reality

Kelly worked as an early childhood special education teacher, owned a photography business, and spent time as a stay-at-home in between both careers.

While she was in the workforce, Kelly always wanted to open a bookstore, which she enjoyed as a child with her mother.

“I have always loved reading, loved reading books since I was little,” Kelly said.

“I spent a lot of time in bookstores with my mom throughout the years. She and I were both big readers. It was something that we loved doing together,” she added.

Before opening in Waterford, she looked

at other locations, including one in the Village of Rochester before launching the establishment.

When the historic downtown Waterford structure became available, she pounced on the opportunity, adding it came at an impeccable time.

“The time was right in my life where this space became available and I was ready for a change,” Kelly said.

While Reads by the River offers readers a solid inventory, the establishment also facilitates multiple community events, including book clubs, author visits, and other events.

Reads by River hosted New York Times best-selling author Shelby Van Pelt recently and drew nearly 400 avid readers to Waterford Union High School.

“We do a lot of events and that was by far our biggest event up to this point,”

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

from top: Steve and Kelly Klein, co-owners of Reads by the River Books and Gifts, work behind the counter at the store, which is in the heart of downtown Waterford; Steve Klein organizes books at Reads by the River; Kelly Klein shows off the children's section of the bookstore that is offered for younger readers.

JASON ARNDT PHOTOS *Our Town*

Waterford's Ruland claims discus gold in world championships

Mike Ruland always wants to see his children succeed through hard work and determination like any dedicated father.

By Jason Arndt
EDITOR

His son, Bryce, a 2024 Waterford Union High School graduate, did just that at the World Athletics U20 Championship in Lima, Peru last September by capturing a discus gold medal as a representative of USA Track and Field.

When Bryce first discovered he won, throwing 205 feet, 4 inches on Sept. 1, he quickly embraced his father and certified coach as part of the celebration.

"Honestly, you can't describe," said Mike, whose voice crackled and was on the brink of tears as he spoke during a Sept. 13 interview at Waterford Union High School. "Just to see someone work so hard and



have an experience like that, I was very, very proud. To me, it doesn't feel real. You always wish for your kids to work hard."

A two-time WIAA Division 1 State Champion in the discus throw, including a state meet record of 212-01, Bryce entered the Peru competition ranked 14th in the world.

Bryce, who spent a week in Peru preparing for one the last scheduled

events, had a simple objective on the world stage.

"I was kind of just looking to make finals and hopefully the podium. Then things came together really well," Bryce said. "It was really good competition. The guys behind me were pretty close."

Bryce didn't just win gold for the United States. He became the first athlete to capture the coveted medal in the event since 1996 – a fact that came as a surprise for the Waterford athlete.

"I didn't realize it has been that long," he said.

He qualified for the world championships from a national meet held in Eugene, Oregon, shortly after he achieved his second consecutive state discus title.

High potential

As a youngster, Bryce would often throw the discus in his driveway under supervision of Mike, who saw immediate potential.

Using a lighter discus, he threw 60 feet, with some landing in neighbors' yard. That necessitated the Rulands to find another venue.

"We started throwing discus in the driveway. It started with a lighter discus when he was younger," he said. "I knew right away that he would have talent."

Since then, Bryce collected multiple accolades at Waterford, including a school record in the event, en route to earning a spot on the Division 1 University of Iowa track and field team.

Bryce, soft-spoken by nature, has managed his achievements with a humble demeanor.

"He has always been soft-spoken. I think he likes to celebrate with his close



from top: Bryce Ruland (left) wears his gold medal alongside his father, Mike, last September at Waterford Union High School.

JASON ARNDT PHOTO *Our Town*

Bryce Ruland showcases the American flag after he won the discus gold medal at the World Athletics U20 Championships in Lima, Peru last September.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Our Town*

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

BOOKSTORE • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

she said. "But we do a lot of events."

Events include cocktails and conversation at Waterford Stillhouse, where about 30 people can attend and visit with authors, she said.

Kelly said the conversation includes a question and answer forum with the author.

"It is really a great and intimate gathering," she said. "People have usually read the book in advance and have great questions. We do those monthly."

Additionally, on a quarterly basis, Reads by the River hosts a cookbook club at DW Coffee in Rochester.

Other events included the an author fair at Low Daily brewing in Burlington that featured 25 local writers promoting their latest titles, Kelly added.

Planning ahead

Reads by the River has been

proactive in introducing new releases to its inventory.

"I pre-order books usually a few months in advance because we look at catalogs of books that are coming out," Kelly said. "Right now, I am working on orders that are coming out in January through May."

Following trends, and using her three years of experience as owner, Kelly said she has been able to plan more efficiently in bringing in new books.

For customers seeking a specific title, Reads by the River orders the book, and places them on hold for them to pick up.

"We also take special orders," she said. "Our shop is only 650 square feet and we have a lot of books. But we can't have everything."

For more information, including upcoming events, visit Reads by the River at readsbytheriver.com or follow them on Facebook.

RULAND • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

friends," said Mike.

Calm and collected

While Mike admitted to seeing Bryce have some rattled nerves at the state meet, noting the younger Ruland placed pressure on himself, that was not the case on the world stage.

"I did see him get a little bit flustered, I think at the state meet because I think he was putting a lot of pressure on himself," Mike said. "What was interesting to me is when he was at worlds, you could tell he was at a different place. He was there

having fun, he was enjoying it. Given the magnitude of the event, he was pretty calm."

For most athletes, being one of the last competitors to take the stage could bring some anxiety.

For Bryce, he simply focused on the task at hand, including cheering for 100 of his teammates.

"I was just staying in the moment and watching other people go," Bryce said. "We knew that going in. It was just a longer wait."

Bryce will look to continue his throwing career for the Hawkeyes.

DANCERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Dancing with confidence

Kendall Schicker, then-17, daughter of Deanna, didn't exhibit anxiety the second day.

"We were very confident and excited to get out there and show them that we wanted to win," Kendall said. "Everyone cheering for you is very exciting. It motivates you to put out your best performance and make everyone proud watching at home."

Schoenfeld agreed.

"Knowing we were in second place on that second day automatically lit a fire underneath our team and pushed even harder," Schoenfeld said.

Braylin Saglin, then-14, who represented both teams, recalled hearing one of her squads had captured the gold.

"I couldn't believe it. My heart like stopped," said Saglin, whose mother, Becky, co-owns Foursis with Deanna and their two other sisters, Alicia Padilla, and Christina Gaudynski.

"Coming from second from the day before, it was shocking knowing that we went up so far

to know that we just won. It was crazy to me."

Saglin, unlike Schoenfeld and Kendall Schicker, had the daunting task of balancing responsibilities for the Youth Pom and Junior Pom teams.

But Saglin said she worked diligently to put forth an equal effort on both squads.

"It was definitely challenging," Saglin said. "You had to make sure you had the effort for both teams. Practicing with everyone made us stronger. Everything got easier as time went on to make sure you were giving your best effort."

Schoenfeld couldn't put the squad's accomplishments into words but said she felt fortunate to earn a selection to represent the U.S. and Waterford.

"I am just super grateful for the opportunity to compete for (the U.S. National Junior Youth Pom team), getting to win and bring that title home to small town Waterford," Schoenfeld said.

Foursis Dance Gymnastics had a total of 28 dancers on both teams.



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