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On the Water

WAUPACA | WAUSHARA

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ON THE COVER

Allen Lake in Hartman Creek State Park near Waupaca is a popular destination for park visitors. The lake is stocked with panfish, largemouth bass and northern pike and has an accessible fishing pier. The park is just one of several options for anglers wanting to try their luck. **Greg Seubert Photo**

Something special at The Wheelhouse

Chain O' Lakes dining experience

Open all year, seven days a week, The Wheelhouse has become known for its nightly specials.

"Everyday has a new special," according to owner Jeff Maiman.

Monday night's special is the pizza smorgasbord.

"We started that because most places are closed Monday nights," Maiman said.

Noting that most people have their go-to pizza favorites, like pepperoni and cheese, Maiman said, "We put out a variety to open up our customers horizons, so they can try more than what they're used to."

Tuesday night is the broasted chicken dinner with mashed potatoes, veggies, rolls and cranberries.

Wednesday is Rib Night with slow-smoked Kansas City style pork ribs, baked potato, cole slaw and fresh-baked corn bread.

"We smoke our own ribs and use our own sauce," Maiman said, emphasizing that everything at The Wheelhouse is made in house.

"Most restaurants are heat and serve. They purchase prepared food," Maiman said. "We grind our own sausage, we trim our own roast for the Italian beef, we make our own salad dressings. Nobody else can duplicate our products because we make it ourselves."

Maiman attributes The Wheelhouse's success to the consistency of its food.



Jeff Maiman is the owner of The Wheelhouse, located on the Chain O' Lakes in Waupaca.

Emily Conroy Photos

He also notes the consistency of the restaurant's service.

"A lot of my employees have been with me a long time," Maiman said.

Since opening on Memorial Day weekend 1978, on the owner's 21st birthday, The Wheelhouse has built five additions. In the year prior to opening, an addition was made to the kitchen.

Initially, The Wheelhouse offered pizza and Italian sandwiches. Its menu, like the building, has expanded to feature its nightly specials.

The most recent expansion was to create space for deep fryers so the restaurant could offer a Traditional Wisconsin Fish Fry on Thursday nights.

When asked why his fish fry is on Thursday instead of Friday, Maiman said, "Everybody already has their place to go on Friday nights."

The Thursday fish fry features cod, bluegill, perch and shrimp with slaw, home-made red potato salad and rye bread.

On Friday night, the fish specials are baked or pan-fried.

In addition to walleye and haddock, The Wheelhouse serves grilled or pan-fried cajun catfish with red beans and rice, slaw and rye bread.

Saturday's special is served all day. The special is in-house smoked brisket on grilled garlic bread with caramelized onions.

On Sunday night, the special is slow-roasted prime rib with The Wheelhouse's own burgundy au jus. It can be served either on the plate or as a sandwich on grilled garlic bread.


"Every special that we do, we sell out," Maiman said. "Make sure you get here early."

Among The Wheelhouse's additions has been the deck with outdoor seating and a bar.

Summer grilling events with live music occur outdoors, including Wing Dings, Sausage Fest, a Corn Roast that benefits the Waupaca Fire Department and others. The events start serving food at noon and the music begins at 1 p.m.

Scoopers Ice Cream, located in the restaurant's parking lot and open weekends during the summer.

The Wheelhouse is located in the Chain O' Lakes area, at E1209 County Trunk Q, Waupaca.

To visit their website, google The Wheelhouse. 



The Wheelhouse Restaurant on the Chain O' Lakes offers outdoor dining.



The Wheelhouse in Waupaca is best known for the fresh-made pizza.



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New owners at historic landmark

Chain legacy moves forward

By Emily Conroy

The sounds and smells of new construction has filled the Indian Crossing Casino over this past spring as new ownership renovates the 99-year-old historic landmark.

In 1925, Calvin Coolidge was president, the United States was five years deep into the Prohibition Era and the jazz age was hitting its peak of popularity.

Nestled on Columbia Lake in Waupaca, the Indian Crossing Casino was built for \$30,000 and would go on to become a legendary music venue for top musicians throughout the century.

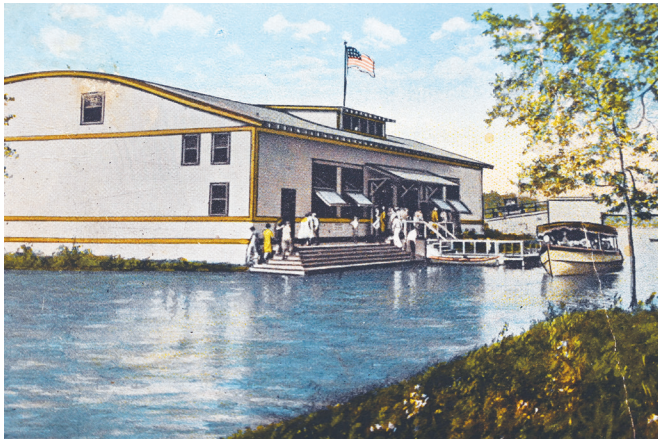
The building was constructed by William R. Arnold through the contractors Roy Rasmus and Walter Jensen, it had a 6,000-square-foot dance floor, large stage and parking space for 400 vehicles. The plan for the property has always been a music venue, for local and national acts to have a place to entertain the casino crowds.

The train station in Waupaca and the electric trolley that ran from the station out to the Chain O'Lakes brought in people from all over the state to watch the musicians of the era.

Arnold sold the property in 1930, after which it changed hands many times through the years.

A restaurant was added where Ding's Dock now stands in 1954 by James LaSage and his son, who owned the casino until 1960. The LaSages brought in acts such as Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Duke Ellington, with Louis Armstrong selling 2,000 tickets, \$1.20 in advance and \$1.50 at the door.

The LaSages sold to John Goeltzer who transitioned the business into more of a pop-rock venue with bands like the Beach Boys, Everly Brothers, Herman's Hermits, Buffalo Springfield and Ricky Nelson gracing the stage.



Tourists could purchase picture postcards featuring the Indian Crossing Casino.



New owners of the Indian Crossing Casino are busy renovating the historic building on the Chain O' Lakes.

New owners

Once again the Indian Crossing Casino will be transitioning into new ownership with the opening of the 2024 season on May 23.

Jim and Lisa Pekar, Thad and Amy Marcom and Michael Solberg will join the ranks of history with their new role as owners of the casino.

"On behalf of all the owners, the biggest thing is that we are keeping this a historic building, that we are trying to cater to all the people in Waupaca and people on the lakes, and the people that travel here for what it was 99 years ago really," Amy said. "This place could have really gone in any direction and we get to be a part of preserving that history and giving back to the community and bringing people in to Waupaca and our tourism here is possibly what most of us are feeling so great about."

Andrew Jordan, the Indian Crossing Casino general manager, has spent his career within the service industry, traveling outside of Waupaca for work. The Waupaca native is excited with his new position and being able to work in the community where he grew up.

"To come back and work in my home town, that has really excited me. To give back to this community that has been amazing to me," Jordan said. "That is pretty much why I am here, I am so excited right now to make this work and to be a part of something like this that has been around so long, that's just an honor to do that in general."

Renovations

The renovations at the casino include updates to the bar to allow for more space to serve people, adding more glass garage doors all the way down the side of the building facing the water,



The Indian Crossing Casino has been a popular tourist destination on the Chain O' Lakes for nearly a century.

refreshing the bathrooms, more seating, more craft cocktails and beer options, refinished dance floor and a larger kitchen, Jordan said.

"I think the important part with the renovation too is they wanted to keep the integrity and keep it the casino, and that's why the owners bought it, because it's such a staple here," said Beth Nash, who is in charge of marketing and public relations. "Keeping that charm and feeling that charm and feeling that people that have been coming here for years, it's still the casino, but elevated."

Keeping with the tradition of music, Nash said, there will be music featured four days a week throughout the summer, Wednesdays and Thursdays and two nights on the weekends. The music will be a combination of nationally touring acts and local musicians, she said.

Nash said national acts like Edwin McCain and the BoDeans have been booked in the summer line up, as well as local acts such as the Glam Band, Ask Your Mother, Star 69 and Boogie and the Yo-Yoz, to name a few.

Other new additions include more parking for boats off the water, with 20 boat slips and a nicely landscaped area for more seating, Nash said.

Jordan said the brown house next door will be turned into a tiki hut this summer, where he hopes to also feature solo musician acts.

"More of an elevated sports bar feel, but yet a resort feel to it as well. So you can feel like you're on vacation every day," Jordan said.

The new outdoor area is what Amy said she is most excited about and being able to offer full service outside facing the lake. Fresh menu

Jordan has also revamped the menu, adding many new items as well as keeping some of the classic food items from the previous owner's menu. Jordan stressed the importance of creating a menu that sources ingredients locally to keep food fresh, saying there are very few frozen items they will be using.

Jordan will be working with Wisconsin Food Hub out of Turner's Food Market, which is close to the casino. He said he wants to get to more farmer's markets to get seasonal fresh vegetables.

They will have a menu for everyday, as well as a brunch menu, continuing with the weekend brunch tradition started with the previous owners, Jordan said.

Amy said they will be launching something called "The Channel" which will be a service people can subscribe to in order to get updates on what is happening at the Indian Crossing Casino that week.

"We want the place to be a destination and an experience, not just a place come and get a burger, there's going to be so many things going on for so many different types of people. A gathering place," Amy said.

The casino will still be hosting weddings, with the hiring of an event coordinator.

Amy also said that the casino will be open year round.

With the new ownership and management, they are excited to begin the summer, Jordan said they always want something to be going on, to entertain their customers.

"We want to make sure everything is executed perfectly, the food is going to be amazing, the drinks will be great, service has to be amazing for people to come back and brag us up and make sure we're the place to be," Jordan said.

The historical photos and information in this article were obtained through the Waupaca Historical Society. 


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Legends on the water

A peek at the ski season

By James Card

FREMONT – This year the record-breaking Webfooters Water Ski Show Team will be delving into an Arabian Nights theme. Each year the team assembles a water ski show based on a playful theme. Last year was a Candyland theme and a narrator named King Candy acted as the master of ceremony surrounded by props of gingerbread man cookies, lollipops and gum drops. Some of the skiers wore pink wigs and had candy-colored ski suits.

The 2024 theme, “Legend of the Lamp,” touches on the Middle-Eastern folktale, Aladdin and his Magic Lamp. The spectators will witness two rivals clash for control of the mystical genie of the lamp. One rival who seeks harmony faces off against the other who desires domination. The genie’s choices will determine the city’s fate as they engage in a climactic battle for power.

Flying carpets are part of the Arabian Nights mythos and it would not be surprising if the Webfooters were able to pull off some kind of replica stunt. Besides making giant human pyramids and skiing in unison, the Webfooters have many trick ski jumpers on their team that perform acrobatic jumps off the ramp located directly in front of the bandstand bleachers. The Legends



In 2022, 14 Webfooters participated in the biggest human pyramid composed of 93 people which put them in the Guinness Book of World Records. **James Card Photo**

of the Lamp show has been underway since the dead of winter.

“We start in the gym in January. We have mats beneath us and we’re climbing with ropes that are tied off secure. We hang onto the ropes to climb our pyramids and we have a lot of spotters around. We do that though April and we try to get on the water in May,” said DeAnn Landsverk, the club’s engagement director.

Show times

The Webfoooter shows are free and held every Wednesday and Sunday at 6 p.m. in downtown Fremont. Their bandstand is directly across from the Neuschaefer Community Library on Wolf River Drive.

During one Sunday in late July, one show will be canceled for the Wisconsin State Water Ski Tournament that is held at Red Sands Beach on Lake Wazeecha near Wisconsin Rapids. It’s their big tournament of the year. The Webfooters are a Division 1 team and traditionally have been highly competitive and usually send skiers to the national competition.

Record breakers

Webfooters have participated in four successful attempts at setting Guinness Book of World Records titles since 2019. In 2022, 14 Webfooters participated in the biggest human pyramid composed of 93 people which put them in the books. These local skiers work with two groups, the Big Pull, a mostly upper Midwest group, and the Chain of Records, a Florida-based group that recruits the best skiers from around nation and the world. The records have become so big that there is not a single water-ski team in the country that can pull off such stunts, hence, Fremont-area Webfooters are recruited for the world record attempts.

Webfooters welcome people of all ages. Some are barely kindergarten age and the older youth are learning to form their first pyramids. “We have skiers all the way from three to all the way into their 60s. And a lot of families ski together,” said Landsverk. To get involved, join up or become a sponsor visit www.webfooters.org.

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13105

Amherst Marine opens new facility

Annual boat show planned

By James Card

STAFF REPORTER

WAUPACA – The weekend of March 15-17 was the grand opening for Amherst Marine.

Their new building is located off State Highway 10 near the County Trunk Q intersection.

They opened earlier after Labor Day weekend and spent the next months performing their fall winterizations and getting settled into their new home.

“We knew we wanted to do a grand opening but winter wasn’t really the time to do it. This was a good time to do it and I think we will do an open-house boat show around the same time of year moving forward,” said owner Max Verhagen.

Amherst Marine focuses on sales, service and storage. They do general service work and will install electronics, locators, trolling motors, stereos and lighting accessories.

In the winter they will do re-decking work and furniture work. For overwinter boat storage, they take reservations up until Aug. 1.

Existing customers get first priority and there is an ongoing waiting list. They store roughly 300 boats per year and in the future they plan to build more storage facilities.

They sell Crestliner fishing boats, Harris pontoons and Mercury outboards and have a service center for boat and motor repairs. Also they stock the accessories: tubes, tow ropes, water skis and boating fixtures. They added one interesting new watercraft to their line-up: foil boards made by Flite.


These boards look like something out of a science fiction movie. It looks like a small surfboard but underneath is an elongated keel and affixed to that is a stabilizer fin and a propeller. It is driven by a rechargeable electric motor and the rider can control the speed with a handheld trigger remote. There are various models and they cruise up to 30 miles per hour. It’s like a surfboard, jet ski and stand-up paddleboard rolled into one. They range from \$7,000 to \$12,000 depending which model. Verhagen said the foil board produces a wake smaller than a small outboard motor—just a small ripple.

“One of the big struggles we have out on the Chain is the popularity of wake boats and the damage that has done to shorelines. I am a watersport enthusiast myself. I hate to see the restrictions but I understand where they are coming from. This is a transition to some-



Amherst Marine’s new flagship store is located at 875 Weller Lane, just outside of Waupaca near the County Trunk Q and State Highway 10 intersection. **James Card Photo**

thing different. Rather than needing the wake of a boat in order to propel yourself, this is a silent sport you can get into and have the same enjoyment out of that you can have from behind a wake boat. So the price tag is relatively steep but compare that to the cost of a wake boat,” said Verhagen.

In the new showroom hangs a wooden duck-hunting skiff from the 1920s. It was restored by local craftsman Bob Buss of Waupaca Boat Works. 



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Amherst Marine held their grand opening on March 15-17. Besides selling boats, they also offer all kinds of marine services and also boat storage over the winter. **James Card Photo**

WAUPACA COUNTY

Allen, Hartman, Mid and Marl lakes

HARTMAN CREEK STATE PARK

By Greg Seubert

Hartman Creek, located seven miles west of Waupaca at N2480 Hartman Creek Road, Waupaca, includes access to four lakes: Allen, Hartman, Mid and Marl.

Hartman Creek State Park was a fish hatchery before the park was established as a state park in 1966.

Dams created Allen, Hartman and Mid lakes, as well as Grebe Lake. Marl Lake can be accessed at the Whispering Pines picnic area, a park property located off of Whispering Pines Road.

The park is located on part of the terminal moraine of the Wisconsin glacier and potholes, gullies and springs feed the lakes.

The lakes include panfish, perch, largemouth bass and northern pike. Fishing piers accessible to persons with disabilities are located in the Allen Lake and Whispering Pines picnic areas.

Anglers of any age can check out basic fishing equipment for at the park office. Call the park office at 715-258-2372 to find out what equipment is available. 🌊



Allen Lake Picnic Area, Hartman Creek State Park, Waupaca County

WAUSHARA COUNTY

Hartford Lake, George Sorenson Natural Area

By Greg Seubert

The George Sorenson Natural Area, located at N3853 11th Ave., Hancock, became part of the Waushara County Parks System in 2001.

Named for a long-time Waushara County Board chairman, the county purchased the 70-acre parcel with the help of a 75% state-lakes grant.

The purchase included 75% of the shoreline of 8.9-acre Hartford Lake, named for Lyman Hartford, who settled the area in the early 1900s. Some maps list Hartford Lake as Lyman Lake.

The undeveloped shoreline has a wilderness feel that is unique to this area.

The natural area has a diversity of ecosystems. The 30-foot-deep lake and adjacent shoreline are popular for fishing and swimming, while the heavily wooded uplands have several steep slopes that provide a good workout for hikers and snowshoers. 🌊



Hartford Lake, George Sorenson Natural Area, Waushara County

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