



The Wisconsin Department of Justice Crime Scene Response team was on site in a residential neighborhood in Merrill on Tuesday, Jan. 18., to process the scene at a home where a female victim was shot and killed. **Tina L. Scott photo.**

28-year-old Merrill woman shot and killed in Merrill home

Suspect arrested and in custody in Lincoln County Jail on \$25,000 cash bond

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Twenty-eight-year-old Kayla M. Frank of Merrill was shot and killed late the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, at a home on E. Fifth Street in the City of Merrill.

The Merrill Police Department issued a press release Wednesday morning, Jan. 19, confirming that emergency services were dispatched to the residence at approximately 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 18. The call came in as an accidental discharge of a firearm, the release said.

“Upon arrival, a female victim was found to be unresponsive, and lifesaving measures were initiated,” Police Chief Corey Bennett said in the release. “She was transported to Aspirus Merrill Hospital, where she was ultimately pronounced deceased.”

Kayla leaves behind three children between the ages of four and eight. The children are being cared for by family members, her mother confirmed.

“She was extremely loved by a lot of people,” Lynn Frank, Kayla’s mother, said in a brief interview Thursday afternoon.

A GoFundMe page has been set up to assist the family



Kayla M. Frank, age 28, of Merrill, was identified as the victim of the Tuesday shooting. She is shown here in a photo with her three beautiful children, as her family and friends will always remember her. **Photo courtesy of the Frank Family.**

with funeral expenses.

Donors can contribute at: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/helping-kayla-frank-rest-in-peace>. “We are asking the community to come together to let the family say goodbye without worries,” the GoFundMe page reads, in part. “I hope everyone can open their hearts.”

Generations Funeral Home in Tomahawk is assisting the family with arrangements.

The shooting suspect, Tanner Harold Graap, age 27, of Merrill was taken into custody on scene and is currently incarcerated at the Lincoln County Jail on a \$25,000 cash bond. Preliminary charges of Homicide by Negligent



Tanner Harold Graap, age 27, of Merrill has been charged in the shooting death of Kayla Frank. **Photo courtesy of the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Department.**

See **SHOOTING** page 2

Gov. Evers, OCI announce cost of COVID-19 at-home tests to be covered by all health plans

New requirement comes from Biden Administration as Omicron cases surge

MADISON, Wis. — Gov. Tony Evers and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) announced effective Jan. 15, all health plans are required to cover the cost of over the counter, at-home diagnostic COVID-19 tests for their members. This requirement applies to both private health insurance companies and group health plans, like those provided by an employer.

See **TESTS** page 3



Puffy coats and child carseats create a safety hazard, as children can be ejected from the seats during a crash. Further, in this photo, there is no chest buckle to secure the child properly in the carseat. **Stock photo.**

Puffy coats and car seats don’t mix

Puffy coats may appear to be the perfect amount of insulation to keep your child warm in the coldest of Midwest winters, but did you know they can pose as a safety hazard for your little ones in car seats?

The extra padding might feel snug to the child when they’re tightly buckled in, but the extra material will compress in a crash and loosen the harness. According to Safe Kids Wisconsin, a puffy coat adds four inches of slack to car seat harness straps, which greatly increases the risk of injury to your child.

“The trick is to find the perfect balance between keeping little ones warm and safe in their car seats,” says Amanda Tabin, Safe Kids & Injury Prevention Coordinator at Aspirus Health. “Consider dressing them in thin layers, hats, mittens, socks or boots, and using the coat or a blanket over the straps of the car seat.”

See **COATS** page 3

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SHOOTING

from page 1

Handling of a Dangerous Weapon and Felony in Possession of a Firearm were filed in Lincoln County. Graap made his initial appearance in Lincoln County Court on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. by video means and was represented by Attorney Nicholas Grant Smith. He was charged with Count one: Homicide by Negligent Handling of Dangerous Weapon, Felony G, with two repeater modifiers and Count two: Possessing Firearm as a Convicted Felon, also Felony G, and with two repeater modifiers. In addition to the cash bond, Graap is prohibited from contact with the victim's immediate family and specific individuals, may not go within 500 feet of the crime scene, and may not possess any dangerous weapons and has a condition of absolute sobriety/cannot be on tavern/bar premises and no medications except prescription medications at prescribed dosages and may not have a passport.

Count one carries with it a penalty of up to \$25,000 and up to 10 years in

prison, or both. Because Graap is already a convicted felon, the repeat offender modifiers could increase the penalty by up to four more years in prison. Also, because he is a repeater with at least one felony conviction during the five years immediately preceding the commission of this offense, the court shall impose a bifurcated [two-part] sentence with a term of confinement of at least four years [other penalties and penalty enhancements still apply] that may further extend the sentence, and may not place the person on parole, according to Wis. Statute Sec. 939.6195(2) cited in the Complaint.

Likewise, count two carries with it the same penalties, repeat offender modifiers, and statutory bifurcation provision, which can result in an additional period of extended supervision.

In the Complaint filed with the court detailing the current charges, the shooting was confirmed to have occurred in the home where Graap was living on E. Fifth St. in Merrill.

The Complaint also indicated a law enforcement officer said the victim had injuries "consistent with

the entry wound of a bullet" in her upper back, along with injury to the interior of her throat.

According to that complaint, during a law enforcement interview with Graap, Graap admitted to using heroin the morning before the shooting and to grabbing a .380 caliber Smith and Wesson handgun and running toward the kitchen of the home while attempting to put the gun into his left inside chest coat pocket. Graap said he "ran into the door frame between an empty room and the kitchen and the handgun came forward with his finger on the trigger and went off."

Graap said he was between five and seven feet from the victim, who was sitting on a chair just inside the kitchen, when the gun went off and the victim fell out of her chair, and Graap said he saw blood coming from the victim.

Graap has 18 prior convictions dating back to May 2012, for offenses, including but not limited to: possession of THC, operating while intoxicated, resisting/obstructing an officer, theft, bail jumping (both as a misdemeanor and a felony), disorderly conduct, possession of methamphetamine, and use of a dangerous weapon. Several of these convictions were repeat offenses, and 13 of the 18 were felony convictions.

A Status Conference on the charges brought on Jan. 19 has been set for 2:30 p.m. on March 16, 2022, in Lincoln County Court.

As of Monday, Jan. 24, this matter is still considered an active investigation, according to the Merrill Police Department. The Wisconsin Department of Justice Crime Scene Response unit assisted with the investigation. Additional charges have not yet been ruled out.

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January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Know what to look for, and call law enforcement if you suspect human trafficking

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and one of the best ways to prevent human trafficking is for residents to know what it is and what to look for. Recognizing the signs and alerting law enforcement could literally save a life.

Human trafficking is modern day slavery. The Department of Homeland Security defines human trafficking: "Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. ... Traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to lure their victims and force them into labor or commercial sexual exploitation."

It happens right here in the United States, in every state, in communities large and small, and victims can be any age, gender, race, or nationality. It could be happening right here in our community.

Traffickers look for people who are vulnerable and susceptible to their influence, perhaps facing financial hardships, from a broken home or without a stable home life.

The common idea is

that human traffickers violently snatch up their victims and take them somewhere else where they may be forced into prostitution. That is one form of human trafficking.

But human trafficking can also take different forms. Human trafficking may begin in ways that are not obvious. Traffickers may engage a victim in a romantic relationship and then gradually manipulate the victim, using violence as a means of control when necessary. Fear of their traffickers frequently stops victims from getting help. In some cases, the victim is manipulated to fear law enforcement. Victims are traumatized and often feel helpless to help themselves, even in public situations where help is readily available.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) has a bureau dedicated to fighting human trafficking in Wisconsin through enforcement, education, and training, the DOJ said in a recent press release.

"The Human Trafficking Bureau within DCI promotes public safety through proactive enforcement, community outreach, specialized training, and operational assistance to law enforcement to identify, target, and prosecute traffickers statewide. The bureau also works with all levels of law enforcement to promote victim centered

approaches for investigations and conducts demand suppression operations to target customers and deter sex buyers who create the demand that fuels the crime of human trafficking," the release said.

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul offers the following signs to look for that could be indicators of human trafficking, but emphasizes: "If you come across a situation you believe to be human trafficking, do not intervene. Instead, document as much information as you can, and contact law enforcement immediately."

Possible indicators of sex trafficking and recruitment:

- Any minor engaged in sex acts for anything of value
- Individual of any age or gender appears to be watching and approaching youth, systematically trying to befriend strangers, promoting "modeling agencies," traveling crew employment, talent search websites, or other employment
- Crimes (theft, drug crimes) appear to be committed under the watch and for the benefit of someone else
- Tattoos that indicate branding of a victim by a trafficker
- Youth in possession of motel keys/cards, lots of cash, prepaid credit cards
- Individuals being constantly monitored, having no control over money or ID, with few or no person-

al items

• Minors under the influence of drugs/alcohol in the company of adults or much older youth

• Signs of physical abuse, fear, or malnourishment

• Lack of knowledge of his or her whereabouts or destination, numerous inconsistencies in his or her story

Possible indicators of labor trafficking:

• Individuals selling items or begging

• Signs of physical abuse, force, restraint, sleep deprivation, untreated injuries, or illness

• Groups of traveling sales or work crews sleeping in vehicles in parking lot

• Lack of knowledge of whereabouts or destination, numerous inconsistencies in their story

• Individuals being constantly monitored by someone, not allowed to speak for themselves, seeming fearful or submissive to a person who is speaking for them

• Individuals without their own transportation, who do not seem to be allowed to come and go on their own

• Individuals who do not carry their own identification or money, or have few or no personal possessions

• Mention of work conditions or wages being different than what was advertised or promised

The DOJ urges, if you or someone you know needs immediate help, call 911.

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

In Retrospective – Special Feelings

Dear Reader,

We have special feelings for people as we advance through life – that sweet girl in grade school and a quick kiss during play-time (who died prematurely of cancer); that guy in college everyone loved who embraced the socially downtrodden (felled by a sudden heart attack); that loyal friend who ran with the bulls in Pamplona (vanquished by melanoma). We all got those... and they got us. Enough said.



PATRICK J. WOOD
PUBLISHER

Author of "Dear Reader" and "Tapestry of Love and Loss"

COATS from page 1

Try this simple coat check, with steps provided by Safe Kids Wisconsin, to ensure your car seat is secure and there is nothing bulky between the child and the straps:

- Step 1: Put the coat on your child.
- Step 2: Sit them in the car seat. Buckle and tighten the harness.
- Step 3: Without loosening the harness, unbuckle it, and remove your child from the car seat.
- Step 4: Take the coat off.
- Step 5: Strap your child back into the car seat without adjusting the straps. If the harness is too loose, the coat is too thick to wear under the harness.

For more information about keeping your child safe in the car, visit www.aspirus.org/passenger-safety.

Pet of the Week



My name is **President**. I was transferred to LCHS from a different shelter back in April and I'm still waiting to find my forever family. I'm a shy 2 year old boy. I will need a family that is quiet and can take things slow with me. I get along with other cats. Dogs and kids may be too much for me, so it's best that it's only other cats. If you are looking for a great looking cat to add to your family, I'm your kind of guy. Please visit me soon!

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TESTS from page 1

"Testing continues to be a critical component of helping slow the spread of COVID-19 and keeping our communities healthy and safe, and thanks to this new requirement, COVID-19 tests are going to be even more accessible for Wisconsinites across our state," said Gov. Evers. "Especially as cases continue to surge and our healthcare providers are already stretched thin, we're encouraging Wisconsinites to take advantage of at-home testing and available local testing clinics so that our healthcare providers can continue doing their important work in our clinics and hospitals."

Under these new guidelines, required by the Biden Administration, COVID-19 tests may either be free or reimbursed by the insurer. Health plans and insurance companies are incentivized to set up a network of pharmacies or retailers so their members can conveniently order or pick up these tests that will be covered upfront.

"Access to testing is critical as Omicron continues to spread through our communities," said Insurance Commissioner Nathan Houdek. "This new requirement will

help stop the spread of COVID-19 by making it easier for everyone to test themselves at home."

If a health plan or private insurer establishes a network of pharmacies or retailers, then they are permitted to limit the reimbursement for tests purchased outside of that network to \$12 per test. For example, if a consumer chooses to purchase a two-pack of COVID-19 tests online through an out-of-network retailer for \$34, then they may only be reimbursed \$24 for the cost of two tests.

If a health plan or insurance company does not set up a network to prevent upfront costs for their members, then they must reimburse the full cost of the test, even if the

test costs more than \$12. Plans are required to cover eight individual tests per month for each person covered by the plan.

Health plans and insurance companies are not required to cover nor reimburse the cost of testing that is not diagnostic in nature. For example, a health plan is not required to cover COVID-19 tests that an individual takes on a regular basis as a condition of employment.

There are also testing options available for people who are uninsured. The state of Wisconsin has teamed up with Vault Medical Services to offer COVID-19 tests for everyone who lives in Wisconsin, with or without symptoms, at no cost. This new service allows

people to collect their own saliva samples for testing in their home. Visit COVID-19: At-Home Collection Kit to learn more.

"DHS supports the federal government's efforts to expand access to free at-home COVID-19 tests," said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. "To ensure everyone has access to free COVID-19 testing, we want to remind Wisconsinites that they can order an at-home collection kit at no cost. You do not need to have insurance to access our free service. Thanks to our partnership with Vault Medical Services, you can visit the DHS website to request a collection kit be mailed to you."



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OBITUARIES

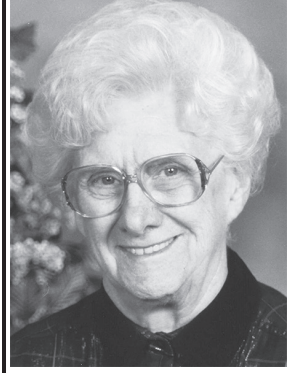


Bernice Irene Lebal passed away peacefully at Ladysmith Care and Rehabilitation on Wednesday, January 5, 2022.

She was born on September 12, 1927, in Ladysmith, WI to Ludwic Oscar and Goldie Marie (Mittenmeyer) Johnson. She was their only child.

After graduating from Hawkins High School she married Frederick Raymond "Fritz" Lebal on October 12, 1946. They raised their family and farmed in Price County near Kennan for twenty-five years. Blessed with abundant energy, Bernice also served as Town Clerk, worked as the janitor and cook for the Four Corners Elementary School, and clerked in Kraemer's General Store in Hawkins. She was a member of St. Michael's Church in Kennan.

Following her husband's death Bernice moved to Ladysmith. At the Ladysmith yarn factory she oversaw quality control and served as a union representative. She then worked at the



Holiday Gas Station and the Flambeau Pharmacy. Even in "retirement," she managed the Greenwood Senior Apartment, where she lived for 20 years.

Bernice was a take-charge, generous, gregarious person. She loved dancing and socializing. She visited area casinos and was a frequent winner. In later years she enjoyed playing bingo and dominos, reading, watching Packer games, and chatting with friends.

Being confined to her room for the past two years because of COVID was devastating for Bernice. She was a faithful member of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Ladysmith, and the family appreciates the many visits Deacon Doug made to comfort her. The kind care she received from the nursing home staff is also greatly appreciated.

Bernice was preceded in death by her husband and her parents. She is survived by her son Lawrence (Beatrice) of Merrill and daughter Susan of Eugene, OR.

A private family service will take place later this year. Nash-Jackan Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



Jeffrey Wallace Kottke left this world on Sunday, January 16, 2022 at 7:00 pm to be in the loving arms of the Lord. The pain of cancer and Covid that took his earthly life is now replaced with joy & gladness and NO more pain. Jeff was born on September 30, 1965 in Merrill, Wisconsin to Wallace and Judy. He married/divorced Renee Schult and had one daughter, Holly.

Jeff's pride and joy were his work and hanging Christmas lights everywhere and banana cream pie. You would have not met anyone more devoted to his job than Jeff. His perfect attendance at Merrill Manufacturing meant the world to him until cancer came into his life. Jeff was very good at fixing families and friends' vehicles and working on family farms. Jeff was the MacGyver of the Kottke family which he got from his dad and uncles.

Jeff is survived by his girlfriend Sandy Samuelson, one daughter; Holly, parents; Wallace and Judy, one sister; Wanda (Mike) Plisch, one brother; Chad (Ryan) Kottke, two nephews; Michael (Kortni Wolf) Plisch, Jacob (Sydney Ellis) Kottke, three nieces; Jamie (Tony) Talerico, Danyelle Kottke, and Isabella Kottke, great nephew; Fletcher Talerico, great niece; Makayla Talerico and many aunts, uncles, and cousins. His four-legged kid, dog Maggie Mae.

He was preceded in death by his four-legged dogs; Brandy and Grace, grandparents; Adelia and Walter Kottke, Louise and Herbert Neubauer, nephew; Jesse Roman, cousin; Wade Kottke and many aunts and uncles.

Jeff's family appreciates the dedicated caring hands at Weston Hospital. The doctors and nurses who provided the loving support Jeff needed to make him comfortable.

A funeral service was held on Monday, January 24, 2022 at 12:00 pm at Waid Funeral Home. A visitation was held on Monday, January 24, 2022 from 9:00 am until the time of service also at the Funeral Home. Interment to take place at Snow Hill Cemetery.

Waid Funeral Home & Cremation Service of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at www.waidfuneral.com.



Esther E. Dittmar, 84, of Merrill, passed away Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at her home under the care of her family and Interim Hospice.

Esther was born March 21, 1937, in Wausau, daughter of the late Fred and Margaret (Raasch) Henkelman. She was baptized on April 11, 1937 and confirmed her faith on May 21, 1950. She married Earl Dittmar in December of 1953. They later divorced but remained good friends throughout the rest of their lives. Earl passed away December 17, 2019. Esther worked as a waitress at the former Leck's Big Eddy and Hinz's Cork and Dyne, both in Merrill. She then worked at the former Semling and Menke (SEMCO) in Merrill for over 25 years. Esther ended her working years as a baker at Pine Ridge Restaurant.

In earlier years, Esther enjoyed embroidering and quilting. She gifted many of her quilts to her grandchildren. Esther also enjoyed vegetable and flowering gardening and entered several of her flower arrangements into the Lincoln County Fair competitions. She also made and decorated wedding cakes.

Esther was known by many as 'Gramma Esther' or 'Cookie Gramma.' She enjoyed making Santa face cookies and sharing them with everyone. Esther enjoyed cooking, playing Bingo, and going to the casino. She also enjoyed fishing and camping. Above all, Esther loved her family and enjoyed spending time with them, and the get togethers for game nights.

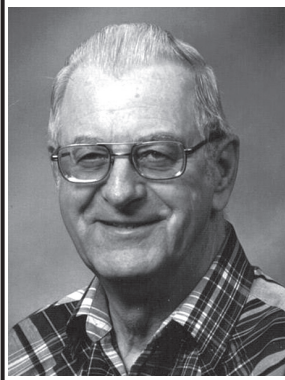
Esther is survived by three daughters, Dawn Mathis (Roger Williams), Diane Dittmar, and Darlene Mattson, all of Merrill; three sons, Dean Dittmar of Merrill, Doug Dittmar of Weston, and Dale (Lynette) Dittmar of Merrill; grandchildren, Arnie (Jennie) Mathis, Robert Mathis, Heidi Mathis, Kip (Sarah) Kreager, Brad Dittmar, Kristine (Chad) Upham, Christy (Christian) Lopez, Brandon Clark, Brittany Dittmar (Tyler Grams), and Mitchell Dittmar; grandson-in-law, Keith Tryba; great-grandchildren, Devon, Cash, Finn, Malakai, Callum, Gabby, Alexia, Declan, Sequoyia, Makenna, Kelsie, Allysa, and Hallie; great-great-grandchildren, Addie, Alivia, Carter, and Cameron; and brother, Fred Henkleman, Jr. of Merrill. Esther was preceded in death by her parents, Fred Sr. and Margaret Henkelman; son-in-law, Phillip Mattson; grandson, Kyle Kreager; brother and sister-in-law, Lawrence and Marianne Henkelman; and sister-in-law, Gerda Henkelman.

The celebration of life will take place at 12:00 P.M., Noon, Thursday, January 27, 2022, at the Eagle's Club in Merrill. The Rev. Scott Gustafson will officiate. The family will receive friends beginning at 10:00 A.M., Thursday at the Eagle's Club. Taylor-Stine Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Merrill, is assisting the family.

The family wishes to thank Interim Hospice for their care and compassion.

In lieu of flowers the family suggests memorial be made in Esther's name to the Lincoln County Humane Society, Trinity Lutheran Church, Merrill, or the MAC Home, Merrill.

Online condolences may be made at www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com



Harold F. Hopp, age 85, passed away peacefully on Saturday, January 22, 2022, at Pinecrest Nursing Home, Merrill.

Harold was born on August 7, 1936, in Merrill, to the late John and Ella (Moser) Hopp. Harold married Barbara Coey on December 24, 1956, at St. Stephen's United Church of Christ, Merrill. He was the loving caregiver for Barbara until she passed away. Harold worked as a tool and die machinist for over forty years. He

was a member of St. Stephen's United Church of Christ. Harold enjoyed hunting, fishing, baking, and gardening. He was an expert woodworker and in his earlier years he bowled and played volleyball. Harold loved spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Harold is survived by his daughter, Roxanne (Tony) Baumann of Merrill; two sons, Bert (Darcia) Hopp and Allan (Leslie) Hopp, both of Merrill; grandchildren, Kristina (Michael) Brown, Eric (Jaclyn Kunze) Hopp, Katelyn (Ben) Kollock, and Geoffrey Baumann; sisters, Phyllis (Fred Will) Frederick of Merrill, Lorraine Poi of Wausau, Vernette (Louie) Heuser of Tomahawk, and Darlene (Joe) Wimmer of Merrill; and brother, Roger Hopp of Gleason. Harold was preceded in death by his wife, Barbara Hopp; parents, John and Ella Hopp; and brother, Vernon Hopp.

The funeral service for Harold will be held at 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, January 29, 2022, at St. Stephen's United Church of Christ. The Rev. Michael Southcombe will officiate.

Burial will follow in Merrill Memorial Park Cemetery, Merrill. Visitation will be from 4:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. Friday, January 28, 2022, at the Taylor-Stine Funeral Home, Merrill, and again after 10:00 A.M. Saturday, January 29, 2022, at the church. Taylor-Stine Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Merrill is assisting the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Harold's name to the Lincoln County Humane Society.

Online condolences may be made at www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com



Curtis Brian Whitson went home to Jesus on January 18, 2022, at the age of 71. He was born to Chester and Clara [Bauer] Whitson on January 29th, 1950, in Culver City, CA. As a child, Curt enjoyed spending time with his older brother, Craig, playing sports (especially tennis), fishing, and getting into plenty of mischief.

Curtis graduated from Lutheran High School in Inglewood, CA in 1968. He worked as a machinist for Chevron Oil Corporation for 30+ years. In 1992 he married Laura Toshach, who unexpectedly passed in 1995. In 2005, he married Cindy Pickering in Tomahawk, WI. The family relocated to Merrill, WI in 2010.

Curt was a loving husband, father, and grandpa who adored his family and was always willing to lend a helping hand. He lived for entertaining at the family cottage and loading up his boat with as many people as possible to go jet skiing, tubing, and fishing (in his "secret" locations where the fish are known to always [or never] bite). He would even skip fishing to bait the hook and take off fish for anyone who was too grossed out to do it themselves. All followed by a fish fry and a night around the bonfire. The Packers and the Los Angeles Dodgers were his favorite teams to root for. Some of his hobbies included finding a great deal at yard sales and flea markets, collecting knives, woodworking, reading, watching old Western movies, having a margarita, and being involved in his church, Christ Evangelical Lutheran. Curt was a devout Christian and enjoyed singing in the choir and served as the church secretary for the last 8 years.

Curt is survived by his wife, Cindy, and by his children: Russell (Amber), Natalie, Amanda (Ryan), Daniel, Leah (Cody), and Sarah as well as his grandchildren: Joshua, Carly, Marley, Alyce, Kingston, Kennedy, and Blake. Curt is also survived by his brother, Craig (Jan), nieces, nephews, cousins, and countless friends. He is preceded in death by his wife Laura, his parents, Chester and Clara, his mother-in-law Barbara Toshach, in-laws Don & Bev Pickering, and his niece Joanna.

There was a public visitation from 5-7 p.m. on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, at Waid Funeral Home in Merrill. On Wednesday, January 26, 2022, there was an additional visitation at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Merrill between 9-11 a.m. immediately followed by a service. Pastor Neal Behm officiated. A private burial will take place at Restlawn Memorial Park, Wausau, WI at a later date.

If you would like to make a donation in honor of Curtis, please consider Northland Lutheran High School.

Waid Funeral Home & Cremation Service of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at www.waidfuneral.com.

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK • JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 5, 2022

Excellence in education and service showcased at St. Mary's during Catholic Schools Week

JOY MARQUARDT

A small school with a big heart, St. Mary's Catholic School in Tomahawk commemorates National Catholic Schools Week Jan. 30 – Feb. 5 with service, faith, and a sense of community.

"Catholic Schools Week is an opportunity for us to showcase our little school," said Principal Rita Lee. "We may be small by design, but we are big on community. We don't always stop to let people see what is special about our school."

The national theme for the week, "Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service." will be celebrated at St. Mary's with special activities for the school and community.

"We have a real sense of community here at our school," Lee said. "It's always there, but it's more tangible during Catholic Schools Week."

The week kicks off Sunday, Jan. 30, with a special 8:00 a.m. mass involving students as greeters, ushers, cantors, and choir members. A church social follows, with cinnamon rolls baked by the school staff available for purchase in the Corpus Christi Center.

As a community outreach, students are invited to attend mid-week mass Tuesday, Feb. 1, at St. Augustine's Catholic Church in Harrison, with lunch to follow at the church.

A highlight of Catholic Schools Week, the traditional mass conducted by Bishop James Powers of the Diocese of Superior will be live streamed Thursday, Feb. 3, from Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Medford. Students from Tomahawk, Merrill, Medford, and Rhinelander, who generally host the event on a rotating basis, will view the virtual service together.

"The Bishop's mass is going to be virtual again this year due to COVID concerns," Lee said. "We were supposed to have hosted the event this year, but Medford has much better capabilities with the technology."

Another tradition during Catholic Schools Week, the school has chosen to support a local agency as a community service project. Proceeds from an all-school Penny War will be donated to the Ties That Bind, a Tomahawk charity which assists cancer patients and their families with needed resources, information, and supplies.

"We do a service project for Catholic Schools Week every year and also during the season of Lent," Lee said. "Regardless of what kind of service project we do, the goal is to teach our students that they are very blessed by everything they have and to raise social awareness that there are people out there who need a hand. Jesus always reached out to those in need, and that's an important part of our school. We are teaching them to be productive members of our community."

Throughout the school year, students have made cards for veterans, went caroling, and distributed



Christmas cards in downtown Tomahawk, among other service projects.

"In my classroom, I talk a lot about community service and kindness and love toward others," said kindergarten teacher Juanita Skubal. "We have been working on showing kindness and respect and spreading happiness to those around us."

Other activities during Catholic Schools Week will include special dress-up days, an all-school Spelling Bee, an outdoor activity day, a mini retreat revolving around the theme of Saints of the church, and activities with grandparents.

"My students are excited about the Spelling Bee, because they know that next year they will be participating in it, and they enjoy the special dress-up days," Skubal said. "There's an excitement during Catholic Schools Week among the students and staff. It's a good time for all of us."

Parent Christi Lobermeier has a son attending St. Mary's and a daughter who will be enrolled next fall.

"Catholic Schools Week is a fun way for the kids to take pride in their school," Lobermeier said. "I think it's important to take a moment to appreciate that we have a parochial school in Tomahawk where they can gather together and worship and pray."

Lobermeier, a member of the Home and School Committee, has shared her talents with the school as a volunteer in the computer lab, assisted with activities in the classroom, and helped with the Scrip Program, a fundraiser for the church and school.

"I like being a part of what is going on in the school; it's a sense of family," she said. "We chose St. Mary's

for its small class sizes and the family feel and the fact that the kids get to pray in school and worship during the week."

St. Mary's will be participating in the annual Many Gifts, One Nation: A Day of Giving to Catholic Schools held during Catholic Schools Week. The school will be accepting online donations from noon Tuesday, Feb. 1, until noon on Wednesday, Feb. 2, at: www.stmarysschooltomahawk.com. The event is sponsored by the National Catholic Education Association.

St. Mary's was recently accepted into the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, which allows families who have financial need and meet certain criteria to attend the school free of charge. It also enables a greater number of students to receive tuition assistance.

During the current academic year, St. Mary's was awarded the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation after a five-year evaluation process.

Upcoming events for the school, open to the public, include a Father/Daughter Dance at the Inshalla Country Club, Feb. 18; a Mother/Son Dance at St. Mary's Corpus Christi Center, Feb. 25; and the annual Spring Gala tentatively scheduled for April 22 at the Inshalla Country Club. The Spring Gala, the school's largest fundraising event, features a silent auction, dessert auction, Time and Treasure Raffle, and other activities.

Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year is currently available for all St. Mary's students and opens to members of its three supporting parishes beginning Jan. 31. Open registration for the community begins Feb. 14. For more information about the school, phone 715.453.3542.

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK • JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 5, 2022

Fun activities and faithful service carry on tradition of Catholic Schools Week at St. Francis

JOY MARQUARDT

With a balance of fun, faith, and service, St. Francis Catholic School in Merrill celebrates National Catholic Schools Week Jan. 30 – Feb. 5 with a full slate of activities.

“We will be doing activities relating to the theme of ‘Faith, Excellence, and Service’ during Catholic Schools Week,” said Co-Principal Kate Shimmel. “It’s a week to celebrate our students and staff for working hard and to give them some fun activities to do along with showcasing our faith.”

The celebration begins the week Saturday, Jan. 29, with a student-led mass at 4:00 p.m. at the church. Students will join three other Catholic schools Thursday, Feb. 3, for a live stream of a mass conducted by Bishop James Powers of the Diocese of Superior from Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Medford.

“We are very fortunate to be able to share our faith with others,” said Co-Principal Stephanie Vanstrydonk.

As a tradition of Catholic Schools Week, students will be participating in several service projects during the week to benefit the church and community. Students are planning to write thank you notes to the parishioners at St. Francis for supporting their school and are organizing what will be called a Souper Bowl to collect canned goods for the Merrill Food Pantry.

Outdoor activities will include building snowmen outside of the windows at Pine Crest Nursing Home for the residents to enjoy. Throughout the school year students have made holiday decorations for Pine Crest and Bell Tower and connected with residents through a Pen Pal Program.

“The students look forward to doing the service projects,” Vanstrydonk said. “They are learning to always be mindful of others and to realize how fortunate they are.”

In addition to the traditional dress-up days, snow shoeing, sledding, and other games and activities, students will be participating in an All-School Religious Retreat along with making gifts for their grandparents.

“We want them to have a balance between fun, faith, and service during Catholic Schools Week,” said religion instructor Kay Berg. “Everything revolves around those three things.”

Berg, who teaches weekly religion classes in each grade level, is busy planning projects, worship opportunities, and devotions to round out the week.

“We’ll be doing things like First Friday Devotions and the kids like to sing the Divine Mercy Chaplet, that’s like one of their favorite things to do, so we will probably be doing that as well,” she said.

Deacon Jim Arndt, who serves as Parish Life Coordinator and administrator of the school, uses Catholic Schools Week as an opportunity to connect with the students.

“It’s a good time to celebrate our great academics, and it’s a time for a little bit of relaxation and to take a step back and have a little bit of fun,” he said. “We want



the students to realize how fortunate they are to have a Catholic school in Merrill and how blessed they are.”

A faith-based education is incorporated throughout the school day at St. Francis along with regular religion classes. Each student has the opportunity to attend mid-week mass and to participate in morning and end-of-the-day prayer.

“We have Morning Prayer and we just introduced End-of-the-day Prayer this year to give thanks to God for the work that has been done in our school each day,” Arndt said. “Our faith isn’t something reserved for Sunday; it should permeate into the week and into everything we do.”

Parent Amanda Hoeft chose to send her son and daughter to St. Francis because of the small class sizes and the religious aspects of the school.

“We love St. Francis,” Hoeft said. “On a daily basis they have Morning Prayer and they attend mass on Wednesdays. I want my kids to be able to grow closer to God.”

Hoeft appreciates the tight-knit family atmosphere of the school and the caring support of the teachers and staff.

“Everyone is so supportive,” she said. “The teachers

are wonderful. They care a lot for the students and want them to excel to be the best they can be.”

Hoeft has been a volunteer with the Home and School Committee for several years with activities and fundraising events at the church and school, such as assisting with the annual Christmas Bazaar and Doughnuts for Dad.

“I’m part of a group of parents that helps with fundraising ideas and things like that,” she said. “I enjoy being involved with my children’s school.”

The annual St. Francis Friday Fish Fries and Cash Raffle, a major fundraiser for the church and school, will make a return Feb. 25 and will run through Apr. 8, for dine-in, carry outs, and delivery. The annual Spring Gala is tentatively planned for later in the school year.

St. Francis is currently taking enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year. For more information about the school, phone 715.536.6083.




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Elliott is December Youth Optimist at PRMS

Eighth grader Addelyn Elliott has been named Prairie River Middle School (PRMS) Youth Optimist for December 2021. She was nominated by Mrs. Bonnell who said, "Addelyn has the personality that can easily light up the grayest of rooms; she is the sparkle that shines through in any situation. Her warm smile and caring nature are two things that are never left behind."



and whether they care to share it or not, we need to always treat others with kindness and compassion."

"Addelyn is in many school activities," Mrs. Bonnell said. "She is in Track and Soccer, is a WEB (Where Everybody Belongs) leader, and is a part of the counselor advisors. She has received the Citizenship award, Student of the Quarter, and Honor Roll. After school, she participates in dance, plays Soccer at the Parks and Recreation Center, serves Christmas brunch to the elderly at Jenny Towers, and attends Gen180 at Highland Community Church."

Addelyn is the daughter of Nathan Elliott of Merrill.

"She is a leader by example, often remaining on the quiet, observant side, but the very first to stand and speak up on someone's behalf to correct a wrongdoing or unfair situation," she said. "She is mature beyond her years, but at the same time, a genuine eighth grade girl with an amazing heart and a knack to make those around her feel welcome, accepted, and valued. There is no doubt she understands the higher concept that everyone has a story,

Merrill celebrates Wisconsin Salt Awareness Week with education

"All the salt that we apply to roads and sidewalks ends up in our freshwater. Salt can be an effective deicer, but more isn't always better," said Rod Akey, Merrill's Public Works Director and City Engineer. "Salt prematurely ages roads and bridges and degrades freshwater lakes and streams."

"Merrill is working this winter to implement the following smart salting practices: calibrating equipment, incorporating the use of salt brine, educating operators, and avoiding the overapplica-

tion of salt," he said.

"Like Merrill, dozens of Wisconsin municipalities are striving to improve the winter maintenance programs and slow down the salting of our lakes, streams, and drinking water," Akey said.

"Many citizens, however, are not aware of the issue. It's for this reason that the Wisconsin Salt Wise Partnership, a coalition of organizations across the state working together to reduce salt pollution in our lakes, streams and drinking water, is hosting 'Wisconsin Salt Awareness

Week' from Monday, Jan. 24, to Friday, Jan. 28."

Wisconsin Salt Awareness Week aims to educate citizens on the issue of salt pollution: how salt impacts freshwater ecosystems, the role of water softening, ideas for teaching kids about salt pollution, and other ways to get involved. Speakers will stream live over YouTube from 12:30-1:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to share their knowledge and field questions.

Speakers at the event will include Bailey

Wilmoth (University of Toledo), Katie Cassidy (University of Minnesota - Duluth), Ken Bradbury (WI Geological and Natural History Survey), Kathy Lake (Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District), Lexi Passante (UW-Milwaukee), and Kevin Anderson (WI Dept. of Public Instruction). To tune in starting Monday, Jan. 24, at 12:30 p.m., check out the WI Salt Wise YouTube channel at bit.ly/wisaltwise or register at www.wisaltwise.com.

Unemployment Insurance 2021 tax statements now available online

MADISON, Wis. - The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is reminding state residents who received Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits last year that they must report UI benefits as taxable income on their 2021 tax returns, and that their 1099-G income tax statements for the year are easily accessible through UI's secure and confidential online

system.

Unemployment benefits including Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC), Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) and Extended Benefits (EB) are

considered taxable income for both federal and state income taxes, and the 1099-G form shows the amount of UI benefits a claimant received during the previous year.

To access 1099-G tax statements, claimants can go to the 1099-G Tax Information page then follow a few

See TAX page 14

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The views and opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Merrill Foto News, its publishers, Editor, or staff.

To the Editor:

All our friends here and around are ending the season of Christmas that brings to all of us a time of love and time of giving. We here that are living in Pine Crest are somewhat limited, but we have several great folks that bring to us and visitors a beautiful display for the season. As a resident here, I have been a part of those that have enjoyed the color and beauty that promotes the meaning of the birth of Christ. A tree that is adored with color and lights sends to all a message of love and joy. Soon all the color and light will be removed, but the reason for the season must remain with us all. Have a happy new year.

- AL CURTIS
MERRILL, WIS.

To the Editor:

Since it's once again election season, here's a partial list of what I've done on the county board: help steer two additions (rehabilitation and memory care) onto Pine Crest; help facilitate the management of Pine Crest to North Central Health Care when Lisa Gervais retired and NCHC ended as our best option; help create the civic engagement project at T.B. Scott library and assist in the rooftop solar installation; guide a multi-year contract between Social Services and HAVEN for HAVEN's services to the county; assist former supervisor Jim Alber draft a countywide advisory referendum on federal Medicaid dollars; be the lead guy on another referendum on medical marijuana; help Hans Breitenmoser with a countywide referendum on fair maps and gerrymandering; be in on the selection of two administrative coordinators and one corporation counsel.

There have been lots of other issues, discussions, debates and votes, but those are some of the highlights. If the citizens of Corning, Harding, and

the Town of Tomahawk don't think that's enough to merit my re-election—well, there are other candidates to choose from. Just go vote on February 15 and April 5.

- PAUL GILK
MERRILL, WIS.

To the Editor:

In the last statewide election, 44.8% of voters cast their ballots for the GOP. Gerrymandering by conservatives allowed this minority of voters to capture 63.6% of seats in the Wisconsin legislature. The minority party now controls the majority. This has been done everywhere the GOP has gained a majority of elected positions. The GOP has determined that conservative votes are more important and have more authority than other votes. Therefore the minority wins.

How far will this go? Already the GOP is trying to consolidate even more power for their minority by further gerrymandering. This assures that your vote, if conservative, will mean even less. Many people have fought for "one person, one vote." Conservative legislators have created a situation where their voters are

more important than others and therefore their votes count more. This is not what we are taught in school. However, GOP legislators, representing the minority, are trying to change that as well. They want to determine what type of history should be taught, what books are permitted, and what historical figures should be ignored.

The GOP cheats. They know the numbers and they know, all things being equal, they cannot win. They can only prevail by making "one person, one vote" a thing of the past. Look at the shape of the districts they have created and you will see the lengths they will go to cheat. They have made dishonesty and lies their platform.

- DOUG CURTIS
GLEASON, WIS.

To the Editor:

My son is 14 and has Autism. I am getting REALLY tired of hearing the rumor that this was caused by vaccinations. Many intensive, scientific studies have been done world-wide, concluding that Autism is a neurological disorder caused by the mutation of known genes in the genetic code.

What is NOT known is what is causing these mutations, which are being passed down from parent to child. After much research on my own, I have concluded that these genetic mutations have been caused by our bodies being bombarded by chemicals for the past 70 years. They are everywhere; in our water, food, air, soil, clothing, building materials, and manufactured goods.

The RUMOR that Autism is caused by vaccinations began when a British doctor announced to the world some years back that his study proved this. Not long after, his study was proven bogus by the scientific community and he lost his medical license, but this rumor persists, thanks to ignorance and social media.

Yes, vaccines contain certain chemicals - infinitesimal amounts compared to the chemicals that we are exposed to daily, such as from coal-fired power plants and the 2 trillion tons of chemicals that are dumped on agricultural fields every year in the U.S. Lastly, it was clear to me that my son was not right at birth; long BEFORE he had his vaccinations. The truth is backed by scientific evidence if people will only believe it.

- HEATHER O'NEILL
TOWN OF HARDING, WIS.

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Merrill Chamber holds Job Fair on Jan. 28

More than 14 area businesses with immediate openings in our area will be there

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

The Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a Job Fair on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Merrill Enrichment Center, 303 N. Sales St., in Merrill.

Clyde R. Nelson, Executive Director of the Chamber said that with so many businesses in Merrill in need of employees, the Chamber of Commerce decided offering a Job Fair in the community would add value for Chamber members as well as other businesses and the community in general.

This event will be different from other job fairs, because at least 14 of the businesses that will be in attendance have immediate openings in our area. Attendees will be able to complete applications and talk to the respective companies that are seeking employees on the spot, Nelson said.

“Those seeking employment can make one trip and speak with over 14 different employers rather than running all over town or county,” he said. “It provides a one-stop job hunt location for those looking for employment.”

With unemployment at a record low, Nelson is hopeful area companies can at-

tract employees and talent from both our area and outside of Lincoln County.

“The most recent unemployment numbers indicate that Lincoln County has a 1.7% unemployment rate, which indicates that the County is considered fully employed. Those individuals that can work are already working,” Nelson said. “We are not alone in this situation.”

In adjacent counties, unemployment rates are similar. Langlade County is 2.1%, Taylor is 1.5%, Marathon is 1.5%, Price is 2.1%, and Oneida is 2.1%.

“It is important that we broaden our geographical reach on attracting and retaining new employees,” Nelson said. “We are currently advertising from the Upper Peninsula to Wisconsin Rapids and Wittenberg to Clark County. It is our hope that we attract individuals from these areas that may want a change of scenery and choose Merrill for a great place to work and live, in addition to those right here in our community who may still be seeking employment.”

As an added bonus, individuals who attend will be eligible to win door prizes, two drawings for \$25.00 in Chamber Bucks gift certificates.

See **JOB FAIR** page 13

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NEW YEAR NEW CAREER

Employers: Thinking outside the box to attract the right candidate for the job

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

The holidays are over, a new year has begun, and most of the part-time seasonal holiday jobs have come to an end. That leaves many of those seasonal part-time workers wondering if they should find another part-time or even a full-time job. And that provides a great opportunity for businesses that need to hire.

The key to finding and hiring a great employee is matching the right people to the right jobs. The current business climate, with "Help Wanted" and "Now Hiring" signs commonplace at many businesses, suggests that's not always as easy as it sounds.

Attracting the ideal candidate

Employers have the most hiring success when they develop a vision of the ideal job candidate for their job opening and market their job offer to that ideal candidate specifically, rather than creating a general or generic ad. Ads and job descriptions should be as specific as possible and should include the information that will appeal to the ideal candidate and provide that candidate with an incentive to apply for the job in the first place.

In the current market, where there are often multiple employers competing for candidates, employers need to be sure their job offers are competitive and put their best offers out there. Pay, benefit packages, longevity bonuses, profit sharing, time off, and flexibility are just a few of the

things potential employees compare before applying for or accepting a job offer. Company culture should also be carefully considered. Word gets around about how organizations treat their employees, and employees talk to their friends, family, and acquaintances which paints a picture of what working for the company is like, for better and worse.

Thinking outside the box

Employers may need to think outside the box of traditional hiring practices. Instead of hiring one full-time employee to fill a position, for instance, they may have more success hiring two part-time employees. Part-time positions, especially those with flexibility, open the position up to an entirely new pool of candidates, such as individuals who are retired or semi-retired, attending college, have kids in school, or just don't want to work a full-time job.

Employers could also consider whether certain jobs might be structured differently to appeal to more candidates and in particular, the kind of candidates they want to hire, with the qualifications and work ethic they seek. Is working from home an option? Flexible hours? Etc.

Delivering on promises

Most importantly, employers need to deliver on what they promise, to retain both new hires and current employees. They need to ensure their current employees are also being adequately compensated and fairly treated in

comparison to the new hires. Otherwise, they could lose their current staff and have to start the recruitment and hiring process all over again. Employees working for a company who learn new hires have a better "deal" than they have, despite their years of employment and dedication to a company, can become upset or disgruntled and even quit.

But the promise to employees is about more than just pay and benefits. More and more employees are concerned with the culture at work and how employers and employees interact with one another. It's not just about the paycheck; it's about how they feel when they're at work. And it's not just about jeans days and pizza at the plant. It's about the everyday interactions, employers showing confidence in their employees rather than micromanaging, and how management treats employees on a daily basis.

Employees want to feel like they're doing something that matters and making a difference, for the company or the community or the world at large, based on their particular contribution.

Managers make the difference in how employees view their contribution based on their interactions and communications with employees. There's a saying that employees don't quit companies, they quit managers.

Employers need to ensure that all of the managers in their company are delivering on the promises the hiring managers make. And that everyone, from the CEO to the maintenance and janitorial staff, are fairly treated and feel valued and respected and have a genuine understanding of how what they do for the company matters in the bigger picture.



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NEW YEAR NEW CAREER

Interview Etiquette Seven tips to help you land the job during the interview

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

You got the call: they want you to come in for an interview. Or perhaps you're applying at an employer that does on-the-spot interviews. Be prepared before you walk in the door. Here are five tips to help you land the job during the interview.

1. Show up. On time. Better yet, be early. This should go without saying, but a great number of employers in recent years report that job candidates don't even show up for their scheduled interviews. Plan ahead for possible delays and get there about 10 minutes early. This ensures you'll make your scheduled appointment and shows the employer you will also be prompt if hired.

2. Dress the part. Or one level up. Dress appropriately for the job you're applying for, or the level above that position, to make a good impression and demonstrate your understanding of the job and the work environment. Yes, it's okay to wear jeans for an interview if you're applying to work in a factory out on the floor. A three-piece suit would be totally out of place when interviewing for a welding position, for example. But even if it's a jeans-appropriate job, don't wear jeans with stains or holes or t-shirts with slogans and distasteful or distracting graphics. Likewise, clothing shouldn't be too revealing and makeup and accessories shouldn't be distracting. You want the focus to be on you and what

you're saying during the interview, not on your clothing or accessories.

3. Bring a copy of your resume or a list of your previous employers, with complete addresses, names, and phone numbers and a list of references with contact information, as well. This should be neatly typed, or if you don't have a computer, neatly printed so you can either refer to it when completing a formal application or give it to the interviewer to photocopy or keep.

4. Research the company in advance. Go to their website to get a feel for the business and what they do, who their clients or market are, and how large the company is. Check out their social media pages to get an idea of their presence and focus. Google the job title to get an idea of what the job duties and responsibilities for this position might entail, in addition to what may have been listed in any ads for the position. Talk to other people who work for the company, if possible, to get an idea of the company's work culture.

5. Come prepared to talk about, and focus your answers to questions on, solid examples of your positive traits, your accomplishments, and how you achieved those things. Employers are particularly looking for real-life examples of how you handled specific situations at work in the past. The best indicator of what you will do in the future is what you've done in the past, so the saying goes. Demonstrating how you've been successful in the past bodes well for your success going forward.

So think about potential interview questions in advance to be more prepared. Sidenote: Be sure you don't purposely or inadvertently badmouth previous employers during the discussion.

6. Be personable. Everyone knows that job interviews are stressful, but hiring managers are human, too. They understand. So be friendly and personable during the interview, be respectful and appropriate, and be genuine. Hiring managers are often looking for a person whose personality will fit into the workplace culture, every bit as much as they are looking for skills and abilities. Many managers agree skills can be taught, but finding a person who is a good fit to work with their existing team is critical to the success of their business and workplace morale.

7. Ask questions. Flip the tables and get answers to the questions you need to know to determine if this is the job for you. The interview is the time to determine whether this is the job you really want and whether this particular company matches your goals, personality, and temperament. It's not always about landing a job, but more about landing the job that is the best fit for you. If this job isn't that, it's best for everyone involved to identify that at this stage of the process.

With some advance preparation and a little research, you can approach a job interview proactively and increase your odds of landing the job that is a great fit for both you and the employer.

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119124

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120513



Job satisfaction matters

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

Employees want jobs they find satisfying, but employee job satisfaction is important for employers, too. Why should companies care? The bottom line is that highly satisfied employees affect the company's bottom line.

Employees who are satisfied with their jobs contribute directly to:

- **Decreased turnover** – Satisfied employees are less likely to leave, and employee turnover costs companies a lot. The time and expense associated with recruiting employees and training new employees, and lower productiv-

ity of new employees until they are fully trained, is costly. Retaining fully trained employees saves companies unnecessary expense. And let's not forget how the stress of being understaffed negatively impacts other company employees which creates a cyclical effect on their job satisfaction, so decreasing turnover and maintaining a stable workforce is critical at all levels.

- **Increased productivity** - Highly satisfied, engaged employees are more productive than their dissatisfied counterparts. Increased productivity equals higher profits.

- **Fewer workplace accidents and injuries** –

Dissatisfied employees tend to be less careful and less attentive than engaged, satisfied employees. That can lead to on-the-job accidents that can result in anything from short production interruptions to all-out company shutdowns as accidents are investigated. In addition, the company loses the contributions of injured employees if they are off work or on work restrictions as a result.

- **Increased effectiveness** – Businesses exist to serve a purpose, whether that is sales, service to their clients, manufacturing, or furthering the

See SATISFY page 13



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NEW YEAR NEW CAREER

SATISFY from page 12

mission of a non-profit. Highly satisfied employees are more committed to helping fulfill the company's mission.

• **Positive PR** – From a public relations perspective, happy, satisfied employees cannot be underestimated. They are loyal and speak positively about their employer to their friends, family, and out in the community. On the contrary, unhappy employees can inflict damage to an

employer's image which, in addition to reflecting negatively on the company overall, can make it more difficult to recruit new employees.

• **Fewer absences** – There's no doubt employee absences affect the company's productivity and the ability to achieve their mission. Happy, engaged employees with a healthy work-life balance take fewer sick days and often have fewer health issues resulting in longer-term absences.

• **Increased profitability** – All of the aforementioned factors cost the

company money, and that decreases profits. So increasing employee satisfaction increases company profitability.

Companies that value employee satisfaction and work to ensure their employees are highly satisfied create a company culture that draws more high-quality employees to their organization. They create a positive cyclical effect where their employees recommend other good employees for hire and the organization grows and thrives.

JOB FAIR from page 9

This is the first-ever Job Fair the Chamber has sponsored and Nelson anticipates there will be others. "Given the current climate of employers having a difficult time filling positions, the Chamber is looking at sponsoring these at least annually

and possibly on a semi-annual basis," he said.

"The Chamber would like to invite all those that are reading this to attend and talk to over 14 businesses about the jobs that they have available in this great community of Merrill," Nelson said.

Attendees just might find themselves on a brand-new exciting career path in Merrill.

Schools and Instruction 7100

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Town of Minocqua - Full-Time Electrician/Public Works: The Town of Minocqua will be accepting applications for a full-time position on the Town of Minocqua public works department. Qualifications include a valid Wisconsin Commercial Drivers License (CDL), a vast knowledge of driving trucks with plows & sanders with a GVW of 30,000 pounds or larger, ability to operate heavy equipment. Candidates with a Journeyman's or Master's electrical license are encouraged to apply. A complete job description and application is available on the town's website, www.townofminocqua.org. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Roben Haggart, Town Clerk 715-356-5296

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Trinity Christian Day Care is a ministry of Trinity Lutheran Church and School.



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This position supports the application of evidence based practices in the pandemic public health emergency response that align with the State of Wisconsin, in partnership with public and private organizations. Primary duties include assuring an adequate response specifically in the areas of public information, testing, contact tracing, disease surveillance and vaccination. Application forms are available at the Lincoln County Service Center 801 N. Sales Street in Merrill and our website at www.co.lincoln.wi.us. An equal opportunity employer.

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We will be conducting open interviews on **Friday, January 28** 2 - 6 PM at the Merrill Enrichment Center 2022 Job Fair for the following opportunities:

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Sports



Andy Lehman is inducted into the Merrill Wrestling Hall of Fame on Jan. 13, 2022. **Submitted photo.**



L to R: Jered Severt's sisters, Jamie Johnson and Tricia Crockford, and his mother, Denise Severt, accept his Merrill Wrestling Hall of Fame awards on his behalf. The awards were given posthumously, as Jered died in a tragic accident in April, 2021. **Submitted photo.**

Merrill Wrestling Program inducts two wrestlers into Hall of Fame

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

The Merrill Wrestling Program held their Hall of Fame Night on Jan. 13, 2022. Andy Lehman was inducted into the Merrill Wrestling Hall of Fame and was there to accept the award.

Jered Severt was inducted into the Merrill Wrestling Hall of Fame posthumously. Severt was also awarded the 2020-21 Merrill Assistant Coach of the Year Award. His family was there to accept the awards on his behalf.

Andy Lehman

“Andy was a great competitor for Merrill and went on to do some great things as a high school coach,” current Head Merrill Varsity Wrestling Coach Brian Suchocki said. “He is very deserving of the honor.”

Andy Lehman wrestled for Merrill from 1985-1987 and was a member of the 1987 team that finished third overall at the State tournament. Individually, he was a Conference, Regional, and Sectional Champion that year, and his Senior year he took sixth place in the State Tournament @ 145 lbs.

Andy graduated from UW-Eau Claire in 1992 with a B.S. in Secondary Education and earned a Master’s degree from UW-Whitewater in 1996. He became a high school Physical Education and Math teacher in the Evansville school district (between Janesville and Madison) in 1993. He continues to teach in Evansville and has lived there with his wife Sara and their children, Nick and Annika, since 1995.

His career also includes significant accomplishments as a coach at Evansville. Andy coached football as Head Freshman Coach [1997-2001] and as Varsity Assistant [2002-2012]; coached softball as Head Softball Coach [1994-1997] and as Varsity Assistant [2016-2018]; and coached wrestling [1993-2021] for 28 years, six as Head Coach and 22 as Varsity Assistant. In that time, he helped Evansville wrestlers achieve a long list of individual and team accomplishments.

Andy said one of his most memorable and cherished moments in his coaching career was having his son, Nick, compete as a member of the first-ever Evansville Wrestling

Team State Qualifier and having his daughter, Annika, as manager in 2014. He said being back in the UW Fieldhouse with his two kids was simply the best!

“None of the success I achieved as a competitor or coach in the sport of wrestling would have been possible without the high-level, knowledgeable, and superior coaches I had from Junior to Senior High,” Andy said in his acceptance speech. “I would like to acknowledge my former coaches who I hold in the highest regard and have the utmost respect for – without them, I would not be standing here before you tonight. Junior High coaches were Arvo Britten and Dave Belfiori. Senior High coaches were Head Coach Roger Wendorf and Assistant Coaches Leo Leiskau, Marty Loy, Terry Manning, and Randy Hill. Also, a sincere ‘thank you’ to my teammates through the years for helping to push me each and every day in practice! I have fond memories of the hard work, success, disappointment, and everything in between. Lastly and most importantly, a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to my

See **HALL OF FAME** page 16

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK
Callum Wheeler, a Freshman at Merrill High School (MHS), has been named Athlete of the Week. Callum started wrestling in fourth grade as a Junior Jay, then continued wrestling at Prairie River Middle School (PRMS), and this year started on the JV team for the first meet and was then pulled up to become a member of the Merrill Varsity Wrestling Team. Callum started playing Football in the sixth grade at PRMS and played on the JV 2 Merrill High School Team this past fall. He started running Track in the eighth grade at PRMS and plans to run Track and Field for Merrill High School this spring, as well.
When not in school or participating in sports, Callum likes to hang out with friends playing video games or fishing; lift weights at home or at the high school; fish; and hunt deer, ducks, and geese. He is also looking for a part-time job.
Callum is the son of Christy Lopez of Merrill and Jason Wheeler of Antigo. At this time, he is still undecided about what he will do after high school.
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Gleason Ice Oval Races rev things up in January

Gleason's racing season is full speed ahead

TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

The Gleason Ice Oval Races had engines revving up starting Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, as ATV's, snowmobiles, and carts kicked off the Gleason racing season.

Racers and race fans came out to enjoy the brisk weather, compete in the races, and cheer on their favorites racers. With registration a couple of hours prior to racetime, racers can register to compete in stock, improved, modified, and super modified racing classes, and there are racing classes for pee wee competitors, who are 12 years old or younger, as well. The Gleason Community Club, N5335 State Hwy. 17, in Gleason, hosts the

races on their oval ice track in January, February, and into March each year. Upcoming events are scheduled for Feb. 5 (night race), Feb. 19, and Mar. 5.

The Wisconsin Kids Snowmobile Racing Association (WKSRA) will also hold their races at the Gleason Ice Oval Race Track on Feb. 12.



The Gleason Oval Ice Races were the setting for these four ATV riders to compete against once another on Saturday, Jan. 8. L to R: Jason Haltinner #89, Max Baumann #07, Jake Steiner #47, and Michael Schmidt #28. **Joseph Frederick photo.**



From L to R: Austin Mosher #00, Trent Lapsenberg #72, Karson Baumann #72, and Zander Brown #43. **Joseph Frederick photo.**



Lucy Marczak was racer 118 in her pink Marczak Racing ride out on the ice on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022. **Joseph Frederick photo.**

Movie Reviews

BY CHRISTOPHER STAMM
GUEST MOVIE REVIEWER

355 (Now showing in theatres)

★★★★☆

Rated PG-13 - for language and violence

355 was the designation of a female spy during the revolutionary War, the identity of whom was known only to General Washington, and commonly believed to be Betsy Ross.

355 is a very fun, action-filled, smart film about a group of female spies from various countries who team up through a series of events to stop a device capable of hacking into

any secure system in the world from falling into the wrong hands.

The action starts from "go!" in Columbia and gallivants around the world from that point on. I have to be honest with you - I was only moderately interested in 355, because I had this preconceived notion that this was just another ham-fisted attempt at a "#MeToo" movie, so that being said, I was very pleasantly surprised at how good this one really is. Smart writing, solid story, very solid action sequences, and good casting all combined to make 355 a fun afternoon at the cinema.

Leading the cast is Jessica Chastain as the defacto leader of our intrepid band of spies, and that team is cast

with some solid actresses who do a great job: Penélope Cruz, Diane Kruger, Lupita Nyong'o, and Bingbing Fan filled out the team.

Our villain of the story is the always-reliable Jason Flemyng. 355 doesn't really break new ground here, but they do take the standard spy story we all love and breathe a little bit of fresh life into that genre. It has just enough twists and turns that, to its credit, do not come out of nowhere, however, eagle-eyed viewers may catch the clues as the film progresses, to keep things interesting and fun.

Worth the price of admission, 355 gets a solid three out of five stars from me for its well-crafted story and performances. This is a fun one, folks. Take the time to catch it on the big screen.



2022 Merrill High School Winter Sports Schedule

Basketball Girls (Varsity, JV, & JV2)			
Thurs. Jan. 27	Stevens Point (JV & JV2)	Home	5:45 pm
Thurs. Jan. 27	Stevens Point (Varsity)	Home	7:15 pm
Thurs. Feb. 3	WI Rapids Lincoln (JV & JV2)	Away	5:45 pm
Thurs. Feb. 3	WI Rapids Lincoln (Varsity)	Away	7:15 pm
Basketball Boys (Varsity, JV, & JV2)			
Fri. Jan. 28	Stevens Point (JV & JV2)	Away	5:45 pm
Fri. Jan. 28	Stevens Point (Varsity)	Away	7:15 pm
Tues. Feb. 1	Rhineland (JV & JV2)	Home	5:45 pm
Tues. Feb. 1	Rhineland (Varsity)	Home	7:15 pm
Ice Hockey Boys (Varsity & JV)			
Thurs. Jan. 27	Stevens Point (JV)	Willett	5:00 pm
Thurs. Jan. 27	Stevens Point (Varsity)	Willett	7:00 pm
Tues. Feb. 1	WI Rapids Lincoln (JV)	Marathon	5:00 pm
Tues. Feb. 1	WI Rapids Lincoln (Varsity)	Marathon	7:00 pm
Thurs. Feb. 3	Rhineland (Varsity)	Away	7:00 pm
Ice Hockey Girls (Varsity & JV)			
Fri. Jan. 28	River Falls (JV)	Baldwin	4:00 pm
Fri. Jan. 28	River Falls (Varsity)	Baldwin	6:00 pm
Sat. Jan. 29	Somerset (Varsity)	Away	11:00 am
Sat. Jan. 29	Somerset (JV)	Away	1:00 pm
Thurs. Feb. 3	Chippewa Falls (JV)	Marathon	5:00 pm
Thurs. Feb. 3	Chippewa Falls (Varsity)	Marathon	7:00 pm
Wrestling Boys (Varsity & JV)			
Thurs. Jan. 27	Wausau East (Varsity)	Away	6:00 pm

The Sports Calendar of events is sponsored by:



PROTECTING THE GREATER GOOD



HALL OF FAME from page 15

parents, Rich and Nancy Lehman, for supporting and believing in me - know that your support never went unnoticed or unappreciated!"

"In closing, I'd just like to say that I am sincerely humbled, grateful, and honored to receive this recognition tonight," he said. "Wrestling for the Merrill Bluejays was and still is something I feel blessed to have been a part of. This wrestling program helped to shape and mold me into the person I am today. Best wishes for continued success to Coach Suchocki and his staff! Go Big Blue!"

Jered Severt

"Coach Severt was a friend and a coach on our staff last year," Suchocki said. "He is greatly missed, and I'm proud to see him inducted into the

Merrill wrestling Hall of Fame."

Jered "Kermit" Severt started wrestling when he was just five years old, participating in grade school tournaments with several cousins. He wrestled in Junior and Senior High School. He was a proud recipient of the Ogre Award (awarded to individuals who get the most out of the ability they have), earned fourth place at the State Tournament as a Senior, and was a member of the Team State Championship teams in 1992 and 1993. Many of his High School teammates became his valued and lifelong friends. Jered had hoped to continue wrestling at UW-Stevens Point, but injury cut that short.

Jered went on to become a teacher and never lost his love for the sport. Along with teaching, Jered coached wrestling at all levels and in every school district where he taught - in southern and

northern California, in New Richmond, Wis., and then in Colorado, and finally back to his roots, here in his hometown.

"Wrestling was more than just about the sport for Jered," his Hall of Fame bio read. "He always attempted to bring out the best in those he coached, not only in wrestling but in life. He wanted to teach wrestlers skills and improve their athletic ability, and build their character, as well."

Jered died in April 2021 at age 46. The son of Jim and Denise Severt, he is also survived by his children, Ashton and Lincoln, and siblings, Jamie and Tricia.

"His positive influence lives on in those whose lives he impacted on and off the wrestling mat," his post-humous induction into the Merrill Wrestling Hall of Fame read.

His memory, and his influence, lives on.