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**Above:** In addition to the Merrill Fire Department on scene, the large volume of black smoke visible from Hwy. 64 and Pine Ridge Ave. drew curious passerby to the parking lot, as well, as many assumed a building in the area was on fire. **Below:** An automobile started on fire in the Walmart parking lot around noon last Friday, March 4, 2022. Submitted photos.



# Don't get scammed!

**TINA L. SCOTT**  
 EDITOR

Nearly every week, even in small cities like Merrill, residents are being scammed and losing money to unscrupulous thieves. But these thieves don't break into homes to steal. And they don't mug people or use brute force.

Instead, they use the telephone and their voice to steal, use text messaging, or use computers and email to steal, all by way of intimidation.

These thieves call residents or send emails or text messages and impersonate people in authority, threatening to arrest residents or start legal action against them, claiming residents owe money to the government, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue (WI DOR), the Social Security Administration (SSA), or some similar entity for an overpayment or some other debt.

Sometimes these thieves or scam artists switch gears and take a positive approach, promising to increase government benefits or telling residents their identity has been stolen and they will help them resolve the problem if they follow specific instructions, such as mov-

**IF YOU RECEIVE A SUSPICIOUS CALL**

- HANG UP!
- DON'T GIVE THEM PERSONAL INFORMATION
- DON'T TRUST YOUR CALLER ID
- DON'T GIVE THEM MONEY
- REPORT THE SCAM AT [OIG.SSA.GOV](http://OIG.SSA.GOV)
- DON'T BELIEVE THEM

[OIG.SSA.GOV](http://OIG.SSA.GOV)

ing their money into a new "secure" account.

In other cases, they tell residents they've won something but must take additional steps to claim their prize. Or they provide "links" for residents to click on that lead them to websites that enable these thieves to hack into computers and cell phones that may contain secure data such as credit card or banking information.

In still other cases, they infect computers with viruses that generate pop-up windows telling residents to call to clean up their computer and charging fees to callers for this "service" while also possibly hacking into secure data.

Unsuspecting residents too often trust these callers, texts, and emails, believing them, and following their instructions. This has led to residents losing both small and large sums of money. The Merrill Police Department frequently receives calls from Merrill residents who have lost money due to these scams.

**How to avoid being the victim of a scam**

While it can be intimidating to receive such calls, texts, or emails, rest assured reputable organizations and entities don't contact residents by phone, text, or email

*See SCAM page 3*

# MAPS Referendum on the April 5 ballot

2022 Referendum proposes no increase - or decrease - in taxes

**TINA L. SCOTT**  
 EDITOR

The April 5, 2022, Spring Election will include a Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) referendum, and it may look familiar to voters, as it is nearly identical to the 2018 MAPS referendum. It will read:

*Question: Shall the Merrill Area Common Public School District, Lincoln and Langlade Counties, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$2,500,000 per year beginning with the 2022-2023 school year and ending with the 2025-2026 school year, for non-recurring purposes to fund District operational and maintenance expenses?*

Voters can vote either Yes or No.

**MAPS press release explains the request**

A press release from MAPS explains the District is seeking voter approval to exceed its state-established revenue limits by \$2.5 million each year for four

years in order to sustain its current educational programming.

"Like many other Wisconsin districts," the release said, "Merrill has been struggling with persistent budget deficits due to declining revenue limit authority and increasing expenses. A revenue limit restricts how much money districts receive in state aid and property taxes. Districts are allowed to ask voters for permission to exceed the revenue limits in an operating referendum."

This referendum is non-recurring and would expire at the end of the 2025-2026 school year, just as the last referendum, which was approved by voters in 2018, is expiring at the end of this 2021-2022 school year.

**If approved, taxes should stay the same**

"We are projecting no tax increase because the 2018 referendum is sunsetting, and we are asking the voters to continue the funding at the same level for another four years," said Dr. John Sample, MAPS Superintendent.

A Yes vote on the referendum would keep property taxes at relatively the same as they were for last four years, as it relates to school funding, suggesting no increase. The new referendum would simply continue the previous funding at the same level, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

But neither would taxes decrease, which they would if the current funding expires and April 5, 2022, voters vote No on the referendum, since this year marks the end of the 2018 referendum funding.

**MAPS makes their case**

The MAPS Board of Education supports this referendum going to a public vote as a means of sustaining current revenue for the District.

Paul Proulx, a candidate running for election to the School Board on the April 5 ballot also supports it. "Regarding the referendum," Proulx said. "We are in a tough time for small schools, and because of the way the laws were changed in the past for funding, we now have to look at this type of creative financing to

operate our schools."

"It is truly needed to keep our schools in operation," he said. "The school system has made cuts wherever they can and continue until nothing else can be cut. Hence the need for the referendums."

According to MAPS, if the 2022 referendum is approved, the funds will be used to:

- Maintain class sizes at acceptable levels;
- Continue to offer regionally competitive salaries to attract and retain high-quality teachers and staff;
- Complete scheduled priority facilities maintenance, repairs, and replacements; and
- Sustain the current quality of programming for students.

MAPS said the funds from the 2018 referendum (which expire this year) were used to:

- Fund daily expenses for normal day-to-day operations;

*See BALLOT page 2*

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**132860**

# BALLOT

from page 1

- Maintain class sizes to maximize student learning and achievement;
- Update the techni-

cal education program, including enhancing the High School technical education (shop) classes and creating the fabrication lab (Fab Lab);

- Accomplish critical

building maintenance projects such as significant roof replacements at the High School and Field House, repaired heating and ventilating systems (HVAC), and some asbestos floor tile removal (abatement);

- Align MAPS salaries with neighboring districts to retain quality teachers and staff;
- Pre-pay debt to reduce interest costs; and
- Create a fund to manage major maintenance projects long term.

The MAPS press release detailed recent cost-saving measures including "closing schools and consolidating operations" and "eliminating staff positions," as well as "moving to a high deductible health insurance plan and a self-funded dental plan, and reallocating savings to student education."

"These are not easy decisions," said Sample. "We need to align quality resources to our students and, by doing this, we are seeing an increase in our student achievement," he said.

### The background

In 2018, MAPS put forth to voters a \$2.5 million operating referendum for MAPS schools, asking voter permission to exceed a state cap on tax collections by \$2.5 million per year for four years, thus increasing MAPS overall revenue from taxpayers by \$10 million over a four-year period to help cover operational costs, citing a shortfall in the budget. This was despite the fact that MAPS was paying off the final \$1.5 million payment on the prior successful referendum which had increased the mill rate [the calculation by which property is taxed] to allow for the construction of Kate Goodrich Elementary School [completed in 1998] and to make changes and additions to the former Junior High School so it could become what is now the High School and switch students between the two buildings.]

During 2017-18, the mill rate (used to calculate property taxes) was \$9 per \$1,000 of property value ... essentially \$900 on a \$100,000 property. Voters were told approving the referendum would cost an estimated additional \$6 per year for each \$100,000 of property value, while a failed referendum would drop the mill rate by \$2.04 per \$1,000 of property value, or \$204 on a \$100,000 property.

At the time the 2018 referendum was on the ballot, MAPS proposed that a successful referendum would replace the old referendum on the tax levy plus 6 cents. They proposed the 2019-2020 mill rate to be \$8.44 with a successful referendum and \$6.80 without, then for 2020-2021, \$8.25 with and \$6.62 without, and for 2021-2022, \$8.20 with and \$6.56 without.

At that time, MAPS said funding provided by the referendum would support industrial and technical education, maintain current programs, high-quality staff, and provide for priority building maintenance, items identified in a fall 2017 survey of district residents as most important.

Also at that time, MAPS had established a course of action to take if the referendum failed, which included closing Jefferson and Maple Grove elementary schools (saving \$780,000 in identified long-term building maintenance costs that would be avoided by closing those buildings). If that happened, Washington and Kate Goodrich elementary schools would then each house grades K-3, with Prairie River Middle School (PRMS) becoming a grades 4-7 middle school, and students in grade 8 would move to Merrill High School (MHS). Such changes were estimated to garner additional cost savings of \$951,000 in staff reductions.

The 2018 MAPS referendum passed by a large margin, with 2,753 Yes votes and 1,696 No votes ac-

ording to an April 4, 2018, Merrill Foto News article.

### The challenge

In recent years, MAPS moved forward with part of the course of action they had planned to take if the 2018 referendum failed, despite the fact that it passed. MAPS has already closed both Maple Grove and Jefferson Schools, ultimately losing Maple Grove students to the Athens School District which decreased MAPS enrollment further and also accounts for some of the decreased staff numbers. The district shifted Jefferson School students to Washington and Kate Goodrich elementary schools in a realignment of grades and moved fifth graders to PRMS.

While students do not attend Jefferson School daily, MAPS still owns and maintains the Jefferson School building so that, even though students are no longer there, maintenance costs continue. When asked about the property, Sample said, "There are no plans for Jefferson at this time."

Now, in reference to the 2022 referendum, the recent MAPS press release said "If the 2022 referendum is not approved, the District will have to make significant budget reductions likely including:

- Reduction of approximately eight (8) staff in the first year, causing increased class sizes and elimination or reduction of some programs and services;
- Reduction of expenditures for technology, professional development, instructional software, and school activities;
- Reduction of maintenance of facilities, especially summer cleaning, and deferring expenditures for other priority building maintenance projects."

### Declining enrollment

Declining enrollment continues to plague MAPS and efforts to provide quality education within the budget.

Back in 2018, MAPS pro-

jected a steady decline in enrollment, citing 212 students enrolled as Juniors at MHS as compared to the kindergarten classes that same year totaling 133 students.

Each school district receives funds from the State of Wisconsin based on the number of students enrolled. As enrollment declines, so does State revenue, and in early 2018, MAPS said that State revenue had declined from \$29 million in 2010 to just over \$26 million based on the decline in enrollment. Since school districts in the state are capped at how much tax money they can levy on taxpayers, a successful referendum was needed to exceed that, in order to collect additional revenue from local taxpayers, to make up the difference.

"The budget deficit continues to grow faster than enrollment is declining" according to MAPS 2022 Referendum materials recently released.

By way of comparison with the 2018 numbers, there are now 182 students enrolled as Juniors at MHS this year and 124 kindergarten students enrolled in MAPS for the 2021-2022 school year.

Locally, Merrill has four parochial schools competing with MAPS for students in grades Pre-K through 8 and parochial high schools in some nearby communities that draw area students. Home schooling is an option, and open enrollment also draws students out of the district to attend other nearby schools such as and including the Maple Grove Charter School, now in the Athens District.

Current MAPS enrollment numbers for all grades shows some of the trends for Merrill, with many local students attending parochial schools and then transferring to MAPS at PRMS and MHS at the sixth grade and high school levels.

See **BALLOT** page 3



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## Lincoln County Snowmobile Trails in Zones 2, 3, and 4 closed

Due to deteriorating trail conditions, Lincoln County's funded snowmobile trails (County Administered Trails) in Zones 2, 3 and 4 closed at 6:00 p.m. Monday, March 7, 2022. Zone 1 trails remained open at that time.

All trails are closed to winter ATV use when the temperature is above 28 degrees F. Trails may be rough and icy in some areas.

Be aware of Trail Closed signs, stay on marked trails only, and respect private land. For up-to-date Lincoln County trail conditions, log on to: [www.co.lincoln.wi.us](http://www.co.lincoln.wi.us) or call our Trail Hotline at 715-539-1033.



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**SCAM** from page 1

in this manner.

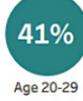
Official government entities, the IRS, the WI DOR, and the SSA, for example, do NOT call residents to tell them they owe money. They send letters on official letterhead with details about financial matters. They do not send text messages or emails with all or part of your secure data asking you to confirm the rest. They do not try to assure you they are "real" or "legitimate" authorities by sending photos of supposed government IDs or credentials.

Police and Sheriff's Departments likewise do NOT call residents threatening to arrest residents. Real arrests are done in person with an appropriate warrant.

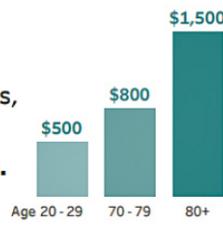
**What to do**

- Don't fall for intimidating phone calls, texts, or emails.
- Hang up on such callers.
- Delete such texts without clicking on any links or responding in any way.
- Delete such emails without clicking on any links or responding.
- Shred checks received in the mail from unknown people or businesses.
- If you get a pop-up on your computer telling you to call a particular number, don't call it. Instead, call a local computer professional for advice and assistance.

**Younger people reported losing money to fraud more often than older people.**



But when people aged 70+ had a loss, the median loss was much higher.



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Report gift card scams at: [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://ReportFraud.ftc.gov)

**How to recognize a scam**

- If a phone call, text, or email sounds suspicious, it probably is. Don't doubt your gut instincts.
- Do not give out your Social Security Number, credit card numbers, or bank account information to anyone requesting it, unless you have initiated the call to and for a valid reason, such as ordering a product or paying a medical bill at a local facility.
- NEVER make payments with gift cards or prepaid debit cards.
- NEVER make payments with wire transfers, internet currency, cryptocurrency, or by mailing cash.

- DON'T deposit funds for others and then pay them with cash or a check drawn on your account.
- Also, DON'T trust checks you receive unexpectedly from unknown people or businesses in the mail.
- NEVER call numbers that pop-up unexpectedly on your computer screen.
- NEVER give out your personal information via text or email messages.
- REPORT scams. Locally, contact the Police or Sheriff's Department or to report government scams, go to: [report-fraud.ftc.gov](https://report-fraud.ftc.gov). To report Social Security scams, go to: [OIG.SSA.GOV](https://OIG.SSA.GOV).

**"Slam the Scam" Day**  
March 10, 2022, is

National "Slam the Scam" Day, an outreach campaign designed to raise public awareness of Social Security scams and other government imposter scams, which is part of National Consumer Protection Week [March 6-12, 2022].  
Nationally, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported more than 396,000 complaints of government imposter scams in 2021, with almost nine percent reporting financial losses that totaled more than \$442 million.  
Don't be one of those caught unaware.

**Lincoln County Landfill closures**

The Lincoln County Landfill, N4750 Landfill Lane, Merrill, will be closed on Saturday, March 19, and Saturday, April 16, 2022, due to staffing shortages, according to a recent release from the Lincoln County Solid Waste Department. They will resume opening on the first and third Saturdays each month beginning in May.

See **LANDFILL** page 5

**Are you grieving the death of a loved one?**

Do you wonder if your actions and feelings are normal? Do you have some "Why?" questions? Do you sometimes have regrets or feel angry? Then GriefShare might be of help. Trinity Lutheran Church at 107 N. State St, Merrill will be offering this 13 week grief support program to any adult experiencing grief. GriefShare sessions will begin on Tuesday, March 15 at 6:00 in the church basement. Call Jeanne Wangen, (715-536-8695) or the church office (715-536-5482) to register.

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**BALLOT** from page 2

Declining enrollment means less State funding, as that is allocated on a per-student basis. And MAPS indicates they are already working with a budget deficit "due to revenue limits and increasing costs for operations and daily expenses."

Their proposed solution? "Control expenses, make reductions as needed, and seek approval for additional funding via referendum."

**2021-2022 MAPS ENROLLMENT**

- 4K - 125
- K - 124
- 1 - 120
- 2 - 116
- 3 - 114
- 4 - 123
- 5 - 121
- 6 - 168
- 7 - 175
- 8 - 198
- 9 - 185
- 10 - 225
- 11 - 182
- 12 - 189

**St. Vincent de Paul Free Clinic of Merrill closes permanently**

A press release from the St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) Free Clinic of Merrill announced it has closed its doors permanently effective Feb. 1, 2022.

"Since its inception in July 2004, the Free Clinic has provided medical care for hundreds of adults who were uninsured or underinsured in Lincoln County," the release said. "The goal was to provide a health care safety net for people until they could access standard clinical care."

In recent years, a source said, few people have been coming to or using the Free Clinic.

"With the Affordable Care Act, better benefits offered by employers in a tight labor market, and with improved access to Medicaid, the number of patients utilizing Free Clinic services has dropped significantly," the release said.

"Although it was always hoped that there would be a time when Free Clinic services were no longer needed, it is still difficult to say goodbye to an organization that served patients and volunteers alike."

The staff and Board of Directors of the SVDP Free Clinic want to express their appreciation to the community for its support over the last 17 years. They also want to thank the St. Vincent de Paul Conference, medical and office volunteers, donors, pharmacists, the Lincoln County Health Department, and Good Samaritan Hospital (now Aspirus Merrill Hospital), as well as many others who made the clinic possible throughout the years. The Board of Directors; Sharon Karow, RN, SVDP Free Clinic Manager; and Kris Weisenfeld, SVDP Free Clinic Assistant Manager, urge those who have utilized the Free Clinic over the years to continue their medical care with a medical professional.

Please contact the Wausau Free Clinic or any other medical clinic of your choice and schedule an appointment for continuity of your medical care, they say. Former patients should contact Sue Norenberg of SVDP Outreach at 715.539.2666 for matters related to their medical records. As of March 1, 2022, all medical records from the SVDP Free Clinic of Merrill were transferred to the Wausau Free Clinic at 903 N Third St. in Wausau (715.869.4922).

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# OBITUARIES



**Dona (Wise) Edmund** passed away on March 2, 2022 at her home in Chloride. Dona was born to Norman and Hazel Wise on September 10, 1933. She grew up in a small town, Boston Ohio, and after graduating from High School in 1951, she worked as a Time Clerk in a local paper mill. There she met the love of her life, and she married Don Edmund on September 20, 1952. Her daughter Linda was born at the McChord Air Force Base hospital, near

Tacoma Washington in 1954. After their Air Force stint Dona supported her family as a grocery store clerk while Don finished school on the GI Bill. When Don joined IBM Corporation in 1956, his work meant moving many times, often from coast to coast. Dona became expert in selecting a new house and making it a home for her family. She lived in eight states in 20 years. In 1976 their job brought them to New Mexico, to the White Sands Missile Range. On Labor Day weekend, in 1977 while on a camping trip to the Gila National Forest, they found the ghost town Chloride. Dona said "this is where we need to be". They bought a derelict house that weekend, and began restoring it on weekends. In 1986 when Don retired from IBM, they moved to Chloride full time.

All her life Dona was interested in the things around her. She was immensely proud of her father who had been wounded in WWI. She remembered as a little girl she would accompany him to put flags on the Veterans graves on Independence Day. She was proud that she had a paper route, and rode her bicycle several miles a day in rural Ohio delivering papers to neighbors. After Linda was born Dona devoted her time to community activities. She served as Girl Scout Leader in most of the states she lived in. Shortly after she moved to Great Falls Montana, she called the Girl Scout Council to volunteer as a Scout Leader. They told her they did not need a leader, but that the annual Girl Scout cookie drive was just starting and they asked her if she would coordinate the sales in the 'North Half'. Imagine her surprise when a semi-truck and trailer backed into the driveway and began offloading cases of cookies. They filled a spare bedroom and both sides of a two car garage! They had not told her the North Half was the North Half of Montana. She accepted the challenge but she had another surprise coming. She did not realize that Montana was still a SILVER DOLLAR state, and the cookies were one dollar a box. When the dollars began rolling in she asked the Girl Scout Council personnel for help carrying the money to the bank.

After moving to Chloride Dona worked with many other community members to start the WCC&D Community Association. She enjoyed working with others to make the enchilada dinners and other activities into successful fund raisers. She led a full and interesting life, and enjoyed meeting and talking to visitors at the Pioneer Store Museum in Chloride.

Dona was preceded in death by her parents, two sisters and a brother. She is survived by her husband Don of the home, daughter Linda Turner of Chloride, two brothers and several nieces and nephews. Dona requested that in lieu of flowers any donations may be made to the WCC&D Community Association or to the Pioneer Store Museum.

Funeral arrangements are provided by the Kirikos Funeral Home. Burial will be at the Green Wood Cemetery in Chloride.



**David E. Lemon**, 64, of Merrill, passed away Sunday, February 27, 2022, surrounded by his family at Aspirus Riverview Hospital, Wisconsin Rapids.

David was born November 24, 1957, in Wausau, son of the late Floyd and Sylvia (Turner) Lemon. Dave graduated from Merrill High School with the class of 1976. He attended Lakeland University and Northcentral Technical College. Dave had worked for 23 years as an underwriting

trainer at Humana.

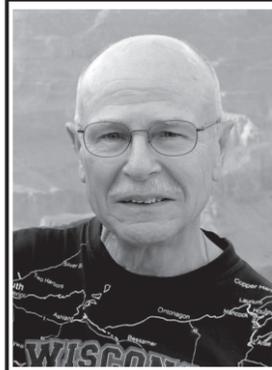
Dave enjoyed fishing and hunting. He especially enjoyed fishing trips with his family. He particularly loved hunting in Wyoming with his father and brothers. He enjoyed taking his daughter and her children to Great America and Bay Beach.

Dave loved people and was outgoing. He had a great sense of humor and could tell a darn good joke. Dave enjoyed cooking and entertaining, and loved going to parties. He loved singing karaoke and playing the harmonica. Dave supported his parents during their last years. He was one of the reasons Floyd and Sylvia were able to remain in their home as long as they did.

Survivors include his daughter, Tracy Lemon (Brian Piotrowski); grandchildren, Allyson English (Konnor Beyer), Jillian English (Dawson Woller), and Avery Piotrowski; siblings, Jean (Lonnice) Balthazor, Dale (Lynne) Lemon, Sue (Scott) Williams, Daniel (Debi) Lemon, and Amy (Mike) Stiver; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. Dave was preceded in death by his parents, Floyd and Sylvia Lemon; and sister, Marilyn Lemon.

Per Dave's wishes, no formal funeral service will be held.

Online condolences may be made at [www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com](http://www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com)



**James "Jim" George**

Our beloved James "Jim" George, age 77, passed peacefully at home from this life into Glory on March 3, 2022. His family was by his side. Jim was born in Columbia, South Carolina to William and Eloise (nee Howell) George. Jim had many aunts, uncles and cousins growing up and had fond memories of their get-togethers with pig pickin', shucked oysters, "bald" (boiled) peanuts and other wonderful Southern food. He also loved spending

summers with a childless couple who were friends of the family, helping them bring in their crops. Jim would tell us that while working in the fields on terribly hot summer days, there were so many watermelons around that he would often just crack one open to drink the juice to cool off and wash his hands.

Jim graduated from Eau Claire High School in Columbia in 1962. He earned an associate degree from Midlands Technical College. Jim worked for a civil engineering firm surveying traffic patterns. Later on he had to make a decision for his career path. His brother Fred was already working for the US Geological Survey and encouraged Jim to apply. He joined his brother at the Survey and worked there from 1967-1997. Jim married Trudy Laffer in 1967 and they shared four children. Jim had an opportunity for a promotion and the family moved to Merrill, WI in 1975. He loved fishing there and the change of seasons. He learned to endure the winters. In 1989 Jim married Susan LaMarche. Jim welcomed Sue's grown son, John, into the family. Jim and Sue had 32 blessed years together until his passing. In recent years, Jim was thrilled with the arrival of grandchildren and was able to meet the youngest one born just six weeks ago. Jim was a great husband, father, grandfather, and friend.

Jim loved family time and it was great if one or more of the children could watch a Green Bay Packer game with him. He loved to watch all football but especially those Packers! Jim also belonged to a couple of coffee groups and always looked forward to the camaraderie with his friends. Jim was known for his gentle nature; his steadfast faith in our Lord; his southern twang which identified him on the phone to many Merrill folks before he even told them his name; his utmost honesty; and his hearty appetite. Some of his favorite foods were grits with butter and cheese, Shealy's BBQ, DQ cake, Hoppin' John and collards. Jim loved to take long walks, and he appreciated the simple things in life. His faith was important to him, and he was a member of Bible Presbyterian Church for over 40 years. Jim was also a deacon for over 15 years and the building treasurer for many years. He enjoyed working with his hands, and after retirement from the Survey he worked part-time finishing wood on antique organs. Jim loved tools, and it was important to own the right tool for the job. He had a keen interest in anything mechanical and just needed to know or figure out "how things worked." He was great at telling stories and had many to share. Jim loved cars and often knew the type of engine in a car he saw on the highway as well as its model year. He once owned an Austin Healy which he dearly loved.

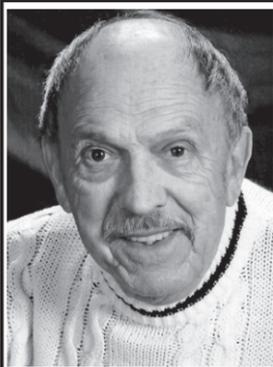
Jim will be sorely missed by his wife Susan and children: Ceree of Long Prairie, MN; Clinton of Wyocena, WI; Nathan of St. Paul, MN; Mitchell (Carolyn) of Oregon, WI and stepson John of Schofield, WI. He is further survived by grandchildren Esther and Adelaide, Louisa and Atlas. He was preceded in death by his father, William "Bill"; mother, Eloise; brother, Fred; niece, Dawn, and a number of aunts, uncles and cousins, all of whom he dearly loved.

The family thanks the members of Bible Presbyterian Church and others who have faithfully prayed for Jim through the years as he endured a number of heart surgeries and procedures. We thank Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice for their caring services, especially his nurse, Tina, who made it possible for Jim to stay at home through his final days.

A public visitation will be held on Friday, March 11th at 11:00-noon CST at Bible Presbyterian Church with the service at noon and a luncheon to follow. Pastor Andy Perry will officiate.

All are invited to attend. The service will be live-streamed on the Bible Presbyterian Church-Merrill, Wisconsin Facebook page with the title of Jim George's Funeral. Memorials may be given to Bible Presbyterian Church 1605 Hwy G, Merrill, WI 54452. There will be a separate service for Jim in Lexington, South Carolina at a later date where he will be laid to rest with his father.

Waid Funeral Home and Cremation Services of Merrill is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences are encouraged and may be made at [www.waidfuneral.com](http://www.waidfuneral.com).



**Lester Leavitt**, age 80, of Merrill, passed away at his home on Monday, February 28, 2022, while under the care of his loving family and Aspirus Comfort Care & Hospice Services. He was born on September 17, 1941, to the late LeRoy and Alice (Plautz) Leavitt in Merrill. Lester attended and graduated from Merrill High School. He met his best friend and the love of his life, Carol Barker, and the two were married on June 27, 1975, in Merrill, a union last-

ing 47 years. She survives.

Lester worked for Bolt Construction for over 55 years, a job that he was very skilled at. He loved helping friends and family with their building or remodeling projects, he even remodeling his and Carol's entire home. Lester was an avid outdoorsman and would look forward to his hunting and fishing trips, as well as going to the hunting shack with his family. He would also look forward to taking Sunday drives with Carol and the kids. Lester and Carol would enjoy their annual trips to Florida to visit family and he would love walking along the beaches. He also enjoyed canning, planting pear trees and making his raspberry jellies. Lester was also very proud of his well-maintained yard and doing a huge outdoor Christmas display every year. He also was known for having a green thumb and loved his Christmas cactuses. Lester is remembered as a very laid-back man that was very kind and giving to everyone that he knew. He was a member of the local #268 union, volunteered with the senior center delivering Christmas and Thanksgiving meals and was a lifelong member at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill. He will be sadly missed, but never forgotten.

Lester is survived by his wife: Carol Leavitt, sister: Karen VanSlate, stepdaughter: Beverly (Jeff) Bootz, stepson: Scott (Sandy) Plum, sisters-in-law: Helen Leavitt and Carol Leavitt and many nieces, nephews, and grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers: Thomas, Edward and Harold, sisters: Nancy and Lucille, stepdaughter: Elaine Wiedenhof, stepson: Wayne Plum and brother-in-law: Robert Van Slate.

The funeral service for Lester will be held on Friday, March 11, 2022, at 11am at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill. Pastor Adam Rodriguez will officiate. Visitation will be held on Friday, March 11, 2022, from 9am until the time of the service, also at the church. Burial at Merrill Memorial Park Cemetery will immediately follow the service.

In lieu of flowers, family requests that donations be made in Lester's name to the Lincoln County Humane Society.

The family of Lester wishes to extend their heartfelt thanks to Aspirus Comfort Care & Hospice Services and to Dr. Paul Thompson for their support and care shown to Lester and his family during his illness.

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](http://www.waidfuneral.com).

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**PUBLISHER'S LETTER**

**On bullies**

Dear Reader,

The world has spawned a lot of good people, and yet mixed within are some bullies too. Bullies disrupt and cause needless worries and strife. Sometimes their cowardly and insensitive actions cost the lives of innocent, loving, and productive people.



Vladimir Putin is the epitome of a bully. He ruthlessly took power in Russia after being an agent of the notorious and feared KGB. He hides behind walls and weapons to wreak havoc and destruction in his country and other free countries around him. He stamped out dissent from the Russian media, educators, intellectuals, artists, and poets. His agents attempted to assassinate Alexei Navalny, a Russian opposition leader who exposed Putin's theft of billions of government funds to build a palace of treasures for himself.

Hopefully we will find a way to restrain Putin from further carnage. But if not, I'm sure Satan has a fiery prison cell waiting for him after he surrenders his worthless life on earth.

**PATRICK J. WOOD**  
PUBLISHER

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

**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:**

Steve Hass is the clear choice to be Merrill's next Mayor. He possesses rare qualities in our world today, especially in politics and government. He is compassionate; he is humble; and he is honest. His devotion to this City is something to behold. No one who has ever met Steve could walk away thinking otherwise. They may have disagreed with his decision; they may have thought his position flawed; but none would ever say Steve didn't believe he works to make Merrill the best it can be.

Local politics is not immune anymore to polarization and partisanship, favors, knowing winks and nods, and moral or ethical ambiguity. Steve doesn't have to worry about that. He puts the needs of others before his own, and his conscience is always led by one thing: What is best for the citizens of Merrill. Steve consistently and honestly weighs his decisions based on that principle. Not only the businesses; not the City bureaucracy and departments; not specific individuals; but as a representative of THE PEOPLE. Sometimes it is easy to be infatuated by easy money, grants or "Buy now, Pay later." Steve has the experience to see past any fluff and understand what is really in the taxpayers' best interests.

We could ask for no better candidate. He is a servant leader, a disappearing breed, and I ask that you join me in making Steve Hass our next Mayor. We will be fortunate to have him.

- Jeremy Thompson  
Merrill, Wis.

**TO THE EDITOR:**

There are 14 Tax Incremental Districts (TIDs) in the City of Merrill. With this many TIDs, a portion of our property tax revenue (properties in TIDs) goes back into the Tax Incremental Fund (TIF) fund, and it's not going to pay for services.

How TIF's work. When the City Council approves a TIF, it freezes the amount of property tax dollars the schools, the parks, the county, and other taxing bodies get from that district for 23 years or until the TIF expires. If the schools were getting \$100 from a

See **LETTERS** page 7

**OBITUARIES**



**Jim Savada**

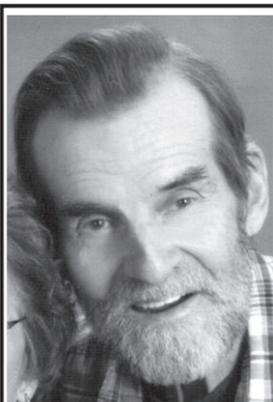
Our gentle, gracious, and much-loved father and husband, **Jim Savada**, passed away on Saturday, February 26, 2022, at Tomahawk Aspirus Hospital at 90 years of age. Jim was born in Minneapolis, MN, to the late Mary and Jack Savada. He moved to Merrill, WI, in 1965. Jim met Nikki Larson and they wed in 1968. They had two children, a daughter, Bry, a son, Connor, and a granddaughter, Eden.

He joined the United States Air Force in 1951 where he became an air traffic controller and held a top-secret clearance. After his military service, Jim attended the Minneapolis School of Art and became a commercial artist. Later, he started his sign painting business along with a golf driving range.

Jim had a desire to learn, enjoying public radio, informative TV, and old movies. Nikki and Jim played Jeopardy every day. He marveled at God's beautiful nature, the trees, the sky, the water, and this was evident in the watercolor paintings he did. We will remember Jim's industrious, honest, and considerate character. He will be missed and remembered always.

Memorial services for James Savada will be held on Friday, March 11, 2022, at 2:00 PM, at the United Methodist Church. Rev. Lisa Weaver will officiate. The family will receive friends for visitation from 12:00 PM until the time of services at 2:00 PM. Generations Funeral Home & Crematory is assisting the family. You may view Jim's obituary and leave online condolences at generationsfuneral.com.

**OBITUARIES**



**Ralph Voigt**, 84, of Merrill, passed away on Saturday, March 5, 2022, at Mount View Care Center in Wausau.

Ralph was born on November 12, 1937, in Merrill, son of the late Ralph and Ernestine (Kleinschmidt) Voigt. He married Arlene Uekert on September 11, 1965, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Rib Falls. She survives. Ralph worked as a bridge construction carpenter for most of his working years and later worked as a foreman for Edward Kraemer and Sons. In addition to these jobs Ralph also helped his wife with daycare in his off time from work, this is something both him and the children enjoyed.

Ralph was a kind man who helped others every chance he could, he was slow to anger and cared for those he loved. He often helped others with their lawn work and shoveling. Ralph enjoyed reading, polka music, taking walks, and spending time with his family.

Ralph is survived by his wife, Arlene Voigt of Merrill; daughter Carmen (David Taggart) Voigt of Merrill; son, Ralph L. (Tina) Voigt of Galesville; granddaughter, Molly (Nickolai Mueh) Kleinschmidt of Merrill; sisters, Dawn (Gerald) Schmidt of Merrill, Darlene (David) Herdt of Merrill, Carol (Mark) Pankow of Merrill, and Shirley Hopkins of Wausau; brothers, Wayne (Virginia) Voigt of Merrill, LaVerne (Linda) Voigt of Merrill, and Mike Voigt of Texas; sister-in-law, Phyllis Voigt of Merrill; and special daycare children, Ben Bonke, Tim Jahnke, Samantha (Jahnke) Klump, Dominic Greenlee, Miles Greenlee, and Michelle Tlusty. Ralph is preceded in death by his parents, Ralph and Ernestine Voigt; brothers, James Voigt and Gene Voigt; and brother-in-law, Donald (Carol) Uekert.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date. Taylor-Stine Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Merrill is assisting the family.

Online condolences may be made at [www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com](http://www.taylorstinefuneralhome.com)



**Sylvie (affectionately known as Dee) J. Wrzesinski**, 72,

Merrill, passed away unexpectedly at Medford Aspirus Hospital on February 14, 2022. Sylvie was born in Paris, France, on January 25, 1950, and soon after immigrated to the United States with her family. She graduated from William Howard Taft High School, Chicago, Illinois. It was in Chicago that she met Dennis Wrzesinski and they were married September 13, 1969.

Sylvie was a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and retired from Pinecrest Nursing Home. She also was a CNA with home health care. She put her loving ways and skills to good use by caring for her stepmother Jean and father during their last months and years of life. She was a devoted person who was always taking care of others. She enjoyed a good cup of coffee, rummage sales, listening to the radio, sending thoughtful holiday cards, taking pictures, collecting coins and \$2 bills, and spending time with family. She was especially fond and proud of her grandchildren.

She is survived by husband Dennis Wrzesinski, Merrill; stepfather Vernon Fenney, Merrill; sister Doreen (Al) Renken, Merrill; twin daughters Cindy (Kraig) Hanig, Merrill; Crisy Procknow, Portage; son Steven Wrzesinski, Merrill; nephew Rob (Polly) Cwiklik, Chicago; niece Jenny (Collin) Hudler, Alsip, Illinois; niece Heather Young, Madison; grandchildren Hugh Hanig, Merrill; Zachary Wrzesinski, Merrill; Keary Hanig, Merrill; Teddy Procknow, Portage; Carter Wrzesinski, Merrill; and her close canine companion Jenna. She is preceded in death by mother Fernande (Madeline) Fenney, Merrill; father Boleslaw Cwiklik, Chicago; stepmother Jean Cwiklik, Chicago; and brother Mike Cwiklik, Chicago.

To honor Sylvie (Dee), the family will have a private gathering in summer. Mid Wisconsin Cremation Society is assisting the family. Condolences can be left at <https://gb774.app.goo.gl/ZEKNE>

**BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**FEBRUARY 18, 2022**

Girl, Amelia Sue, born to Leigha Janssen and Brandon Graap of Merrill, AND

Girl, Breigha Noelle, born to Leigha Janssen and Brandon Graap of Merrill.

**FEBRUARY 20, 2022**

Girl, Reagan Eleanor, born to Danielle Maloney and Christopher Maloney of Weston.

**FEBRUARY 22, 2022**

Girl, Lucia Simone, born to Melissa Toldness and Jacob Toldness of Wausau.

**FEBRUARY 23, 2022**

Boy, Shadow Carias, born to Maria Rosa Cyzan and Justin Cyzan, of Marathon.

**Pet of the Week**



My name is **Remi** and I am very friendly and love to sit on my people's laps. I enjoy getting brushed and get along well with other cats and dogs. I have a small fear of strangers, but warm up quickly if given the time and patience to do so. My adoption fee includes my spay, up to date vaccinations and microchip! I was surrendered to LCHS along with my housemates (Turbo-my sister, Radar and Simba). Come check us all out soon!

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Visit the Lincoln County Humane Society, 310 N. Memorial Dr., in Merrill. Hours: MON. - SAT. 12-4 PM & SUN. 12-2 PM. Call the shelter at 715-536-3459, or visit us on the web at [www.furrypets.com](http://www.furrypets.com).

**LEGAL NOTICES**

**Legals**

7700

**ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS**  
**RECYCLED MATERIAL CRUSHING**  
The City of Merrill, Lincoln County, Wisconsin, will receive sealed bids for crushing approximately 10,000 cubic yards of recycled material. Bids will be accepted until 2 pm, March 23rd, 2022, at the City of Merrill City Hall, at which time they will be opened, read aloud and placed on file for further action. Bids shall be returned to the City Clerk's office located at 1004 E First Street, Merrill, WI 54452. Bid documents will be available from the City Clerk's Office Monday March 7th, 2022. Published Mar. 3 & 10, 2022  
WNAXLP

**ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS**  
**Street/Utility Construction Project**  
The City of Merrill, Lincoln County, Wisconsin, will receive sealed bids for a street and utility project. This project is located on E Tenth Street between N Center Ave. and Lake Street. Bids will be accepted until 2 pm, March 28th, 2022, at the City of Merrill city hall, at which time they will be opened, read aloud and placed on file for further action. Bids shall be returned to the City Clerk's Office located at 1004 E First Street, Merrill, WI 54452. Bid documents will be available Friday March 11th, 2022. Plan documents can be downloaded for a \$50.00 non-refundable fee by inputting Quest Project #8150069 (<http://www.questcdn.com/>). Paper copies will also be available from the City of Merrill Engineering Department for a \$70 non-refundable fee. The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids or to accept any bid deemed to be in the best interest of the owner and to waive any informalities in the bidding. Published Mar. 10, 2022  
WNAXLP

**BY THE COURT:**  
**DATE SIGNED: 2/24/22**  
**/s/ HONORABLE JAY R. TLUSTY**  
**CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE, BR I**  
**STATE OF WISCONSIN**  
**CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY**  
**Notice and Order for**  
**Name Change Hearing**  
Case No. 22CV23

**IN THE MATTER OF THE NAME CHANGE OF**

Ann Marie Pankow

**NOTICE IS GIVEN:**

A Petition was filed asking to change the name of the person listed above:

From: Ann Marie Pankow

To: Ann Marie Rankin

Birth Certificate: Ann Marie Rankin

**IT IS ORDERED:**

This Petition will be heard in the Circuit Court of Lincoln County, State of Wisconsin:

Judge's Name: Jay Tlusty

Place: Branch I, Lincoln County Courthouse, Merrill, WI 54452

Date: 4-13-22

Time: 11:30 AM

If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call \_\_\_\_\_ prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED:**

Notice of this hearing shall be given by publication as a Class 3 notice for three (3) weeks in a row prior to the date of the hearing in the \_\_\_\_\_, a newspaper published in \_\_\_\_\_ County, State of Wisconsin.

Published Mar. 3, 10 & 17, 2022  
WNAXLP

**BY THE COURT:**

**DATE SIGNED: 3/3/22**

**/s/ HONORABLE ROBERT R. RUSSELL**

**CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE, BR II**

**STATE OF WISCONSIN,**

**CIRCUIT COURT, LINCOLN COUNTY**

**Amended Notice and Order for Name Change Hearing**

Case No. 22-CV-26

**Legals**

7700

**IN THE MATTER OF THE NAME CHANGE OF**

Christopher John Olson

By (Petitioner): Christopher John Olson

**NOTICE IS GIVEN:**

A Petition was filed asking to change the name of the person listed above:

From: Christopher John Olson

To: Christopher John-Sean Taylor

Birth Certificate: Christopher John Olson

**IT IS ORDERED:**

This Petition will be heard in the Circuit Court of Lincoln County, State of Wisconsin:

Judge's Name: Robert R. Russell

Place: 1110 East Main Street, Br. 2, Merrill, WI 54452

Date: April 4, 2022

Time: 1:15 pm

If you require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to participate in the court process, please call \_\_\_\_\_ prior to the scheduled court date. Please note that the court does not provide transportation.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED:**

Notice of this hearing shall be given by publication as a Class 3 notice for three (3) weeks in a row prior to the date of the hearing in the \_\_\_\_\_, a newspaper published in \_\_\_\_\_ County, State of Wisconsin.

Published: Mar. 10, 17 & 24, 2022  
WNAXLP

**CITY OF MERRILL COMMON COUNCIL MINUTES TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2022 Special Meeting**

**City Hall Council Chambers 6:15 p.m.**

1. Mayor Woellner called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. with following members:

Paul Russell – First District, Present - Remote

Steve Hass – Second District, Present

Rick Blake – Third District, Present

Steve Ossnes – Fourth District, Absent

John M. VanLieshout – Fifth District, Present

Mike Rick – Sixth District, Present

Mark Weix – Seventh District, Present

Steve Sabatke – Eighth District, Present

Derek Woellner – Mayor, Present

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment Period - None

4. Board of Public Works:

a) Consider award of M2022-01 infrastructure bid to Merrill Gravel & Construction, Co. for \$1,922,672.06

Motion (VanLieshout/Rick) to award the M-2022-01 infrastructure contract to Merrill Gravel & Construction, Co. Carried.

5. Motion (Hass/Rick) to adjourn at 6:19 p.m. Carried.

Minutes prepared by: Finance Director/Deputy City Clerk Kathy Unertl

Published Mar. 10, 2022  
WNAXLP

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS MERRILL MUNICIPAL AIRPORT T-HANGAR**

The City of Merrill, Lincoln County, Wisconsin, will be accepting proposals for the Design and Construction of a new Airport T-Hangar. Proposals will be accepted until 2 pm, April 6th, 2022, at which time they will be opened, read aloud and placed on file for further action. Proposals shall be returned to the City Clerk's office located at 1004 E First Street, Merrill, WI 54452. Complete digital documents will be available at <https://www.questcdn.com/> beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Monday March 14th, 2022. Preliminary plan documents can be downloaded for a \$40.00 non-refundable fee by inputting Quest Project #8150071. Paper copies will also be available from the City of Merrill Engineering Department for a \$50 non-refundable fee.

The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to accept any proposal deemed to be in the best interest of the owner and to waive any informalities.

Published Mar. 10, 2022  
WNAXLP

**LANDFILL from page 3**

"It is unfortunate that we have to close the landfill on these two Saturdays, as many locals depend on it for their disposal needs, but until we can refill some vacant positions, we will have to limit our Saturday hours to one day per month," said Solid Waste Manager, Dan Miller. Anyone with questions can contact Miller at 715.536.9636.

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# Movie Reviews

BY CHRISTOPHER STAMM  
GUEST MOVIE REVIEWER

## The Batman

(Now showing in theatres)

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

Rated PG-13 – for language, violence, and adult themes

Hello again, everyone. This week I bring you *The Batman*, and I am sorry to say for me it did not live up to expectations or potential.

First the good: This incarnation of Batman is based pretty solidly

in reality. Gone are the super fancy gizmos and gadgets, and this Batman is just a plain old vigilante with issues and a lot of money. Being played this time around by Robert Pattinson (sparkly Vampire Edward from the *Twilight* saga), he is a surprisingly effective Batman, and he did very well in that role.

Colin Farrell shows up as the penguin and, in my humble opinion, his portrayal is the best incarnation of the Penguin ever – just excellent.

Zoe Kravitz does an acceptable job of Catwoman, but she is no Michelle Pfeiffer.

The rest of the cast is fine, but the standout is Paul Dano as the Riddler. This is not the comic book Riddler we all know; he is a deeply disturbed psychopath and serial killer, and he is excellent in this role, probably because Paul Dano is just kinda creepy anyway.

Credit needs to be given to the Director, Matt Reeves, who helmed the fantastic *Planet of the Apes* Trilogy reboot. He went with a grittier detective story rather than an over-the-top comic book movie, and it came close to working. More on that below.

Now the bad: Long. This film is very long, with a running time of three hours, and there are some points where the film drags.

Of course, some woke nonsense had to be tossed in: Catwoman while scolding Batman talks about

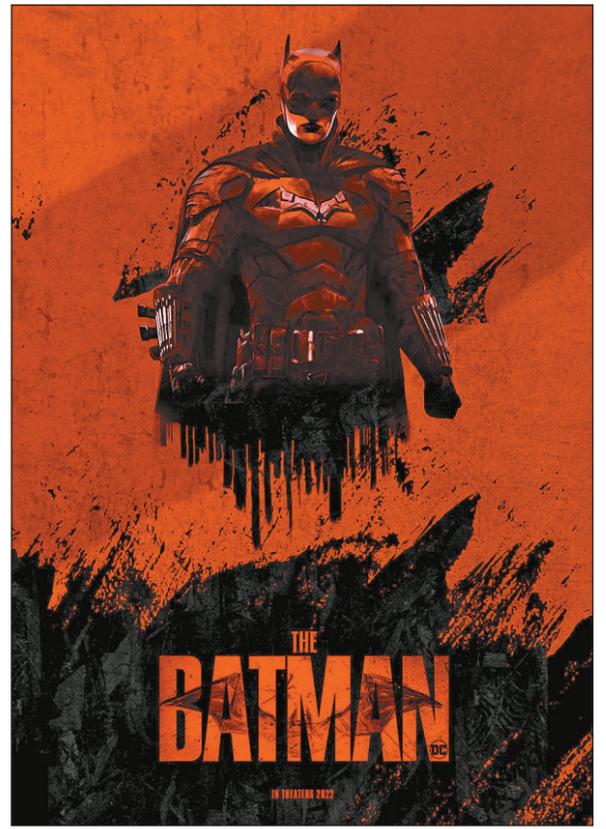
his “white privilege.” I mean seriously? He is a mentally unstable vigilante who runs around in a bat costume. Good grief.

Batman mentions a couple of times that he doesn’t do “guns,” so that should make the anti-gun folks happy.

And I mentioned earlier that Patterson does a great job as Batman, right? Well, that is true, but as Bruce Wayne, a big fat nope. He comes across like a little whiny emo kid with his pale skin and lanky hair and all sad because he has childhood trauma and his only solace are the billions of dollars he has. So sad.

And lastly, did I mention it’s long?

Two out of five stars for this one, folks. It’s not a bad film, but it’s not what it could have been, and did I mention at any point that it’s long?



## Olson is January Youth Optimist at PRMS

Eighth grader Jace Olson has been named January Youth Optimist at Prairie River Middle School. Ms. Danielle nominated Jace saying, “Jace is one of the hardest working students that I’ve had the pleasure to work with. He strives to do well in school and enjoys learning. Jace’s attitude, work ethic, and dynamic personality make him stand out in a crowd. There hasn’t been a single day in class when he hasn’t been able to make us all laugh out loud.”



Olson

“Jace has a kind soul and a natural ability to help others,” Ms. Danielle said. “Countless times I’ve seen Jace help his peers when he sees them struggling. He is accepting of everyone and displays kindness wherever he goes. Jace always does what is asked of him and he is continuously seeking out opportunities to motivate his peers and bring fun into the classroom. I’m honored to nominate him for this award. Jace has received student of the quarter, honor roll and is a part of student council. He participates in Football, Basketball, Wrestling, and Track & Field. He is involved in Youth Rugby and Youth Group at St. Johns. He is described as determined, hard working and advocates for others.”

Jace is the son of Jamie Pieper of Merrill and Jothan Olson of Merrill.

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MERRILL FOTO NEWS

**Student of the Week**

This Week's Featured Student is **Carter Schmidt**  
Son of **Tim & Mandy Schmidt**  
Carter is in the 4th Grade at Washington Elementary School. He was nominated by Ms. Buntrock.

**What is your favorite subject in school? Why?**  
My favorite subject in school is math because it is easy and fun. Math is a subject that all of the class can participate in and work together to solve problems. I like doing school class work as a whole.

**What is your favorite part of school? Why?**  
My favorite part of the day is going to gym class because we get to burn off energy and spend time with friends. I also enjoy participating in music class because the teacher is nice and we get to play instruments. I am excited for our next lesson on learning the ukulele.

**What would you like to do/become someday? Why?**  
When I grow up I want to be a Marine. My family members have previously been in the military and I want to follow in their footsteps. I would eventually like to have a military career of flying naval planes.

Carter is a student that our class can count on! He leads by example and is always willing to step up and help others. He works hard and is not afraid to challenge himself. That consistent effort shows in the progress he is making with his math and literacy skills. Carter is taking the responsibility to prepare himself as a positive person and a great student at middle school next year.  
- Ms. Buntrick

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## Burrow is January Youth Optimist at MHS

Kayla Burrow has been named January Youth Optimist at Merrill High School. Mrs. Polly Koebe nominated Kayla. "Kayla is a student in my College Algebra class. I also got to know her as she is working at Ana Blair's Boutique," Mrs. Koebe said. "Kayla is a hard-working young lady and, even though we can work on some challenging concepts, Kayla always has a smile on her face and a positive attitude about what we are doing. She is very helpful to those around her and encourages them to see the positive. When she is working at Ana Blairs, she is always sunny, polite, and very helpful when I am browsing in the store."



Burrow

smile is infectious and can brighten any room. Kayla takes challenging classes offered at Merrill High School, so she is not afraid to be challenged and does it with positivity and open-mindedness. She is a very hardworking young lady, who knows what she wants to do with her future and works extremely hard towards it; she does it with an attitude of optimism, diligence, and confidence".

At MHS, Kayla has participated in Student Council, Junior Optimist, and Raise Your Voice (designing display cases).

Outside of school, Kayla is actively involved with St. Francis fish fry and cinnamon roll sales, Camp Forest Springs, Pine Crest, and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

After graduation, Kayla plans to go to Mount Mary University to get a Masters degree in Dietetics. She wants to work in a children's hospital with kids who have health-related problems where they would need a dietitian to help them out. She is the daughter of Amber and John Burrow.

## LETTERS from page 5

TIF district when it was created, that's roughly all they'll get until the TIF expires. Any extra tax money, generated by rising assessments or new development, goes into the TIF fund.

Think about this. If the schools, NTC, police, fire, parks, and county can only get \$100 from a TIF district, what do they do when their expenses go up to \$200? They have to raise their levies - the amounts they each get from the property tax pie - to compensate for the money diverted to the TIFs. When they do that, property taxes go up. No matter what the city tells you, TIFs are tax hikes, plain and simple - the more you create, the higher taxes go.

The tax base will not increase until these TIFs expire, leaving the burden of the increased costs of services to the tax payers. Prepare for property taxes to rise for years to come.

- Rick Romatoski  
Merrill, Wis.

### TO THE EDITOR:

My name is Clyde Nelson, and I am running as a Write-in candidate for the 4th Aldermanic District in Merrill. I too, did not make this decision lightly. If you choose to write-in my name on April 5th, I would be proud and honored to serve you, the residents of the 4th District.

Recently, my opponent questioned my loyalty to the residents of the 4th District and the taxpayers of Merrill.

For the record, my opponent failed to mention my current affiliations in Merrill, which are the Knights of Columbus where I serve as the Grand Knight, St Francis Xavier Finance Council, Merrill Area United Way (Past President), Lincoln County Fair Association, Habitat for Humanity, Volunteer at the Merrill Area Food Pantry, and a member of the Merrill FFA Alumni. Previously, I represented Good Samaritan Hospital while on the Northwoods Ascension Board, a member of Merrill Rotary (Past President) and a Sapphire Paul Harris Fellow, volunteered with Junior Achievement at Kate Goodrich School, and assisted with the planning and volunteering at the annual June Dairy Month breakfast held at the MARC.

Within City government, I am the Chairperson of the Redevelopment Authority and sit on the Marketing and Communications Committee.

Over my tenure in Merrill I have represented all the citizens of Merrill through the countless hours of volunteerism with non-profits and work

on City Committees.

- Clyde Nelson  
4th District Write-in Candidate  
Merrill, Wis.

### TO THE EDITOR:

Imagine you are about to make the final payment on a four-year loan. Then the bank contacts you and says they have decided you should continue making your payment for another four years. They need your money for at best, vaguely defined reasons. It won't cost you any more than you were paying and your budget will remain unchanged. Knowing all the facts, would you agree to such a scenario? That's pretty much what happened in 2018 when the MAPS operating referendum passed. Back then, however, few citizens were aware that an outstanding debt (the Kate Goodrich School) had been paid off. Had that fact been widely reported, (a lie of omission) I suspect the results may have been different. Had we voted NO, our taxes would have gone down a noticeable amount. In essence, we continued to make the payment on a satisfied loan. Now MAPS wants us to do it again.

This latest referendum request comes barely a month before election day. That's pretty short notice. I find the brazen guile of the MAPS board and administrators to be insulting. Inflation is running wild. People are hurting. This poorly conceived referendum is just another slap in the face to the beleaguered taxpaying citizens. On April 5th we have a rare opportunity to vote for a reduction in taxes. IT'S YOUR MONEY! Please vote NO on the MAPS Operating Referendum.

- Jeffrey Krall  
Merrill, Wis.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

\*Letters must be 250 words or less (There will be no exceptions to this. Any letter longer than 250 words will not be printed.)

\*All letters must include full name, address and phone number of the composer. Phone numbers and addresses will not be published, but will be used for verification purposes if necessary.

\*Letters will be published at the discretion of the Editor. While letters on most any topic will be published, any letters deemed derogatory, inflammatory, slanderous, or involving vulgar language, will not be published.

\*Letters will be published on a "first come, first served" basis. Any letters which we are unable to publish in the printed newspaper will be run online at [www.merrillfotonews.com](http://www.merrillfotonews.com) and may be printed in the paper at a later date if possible.

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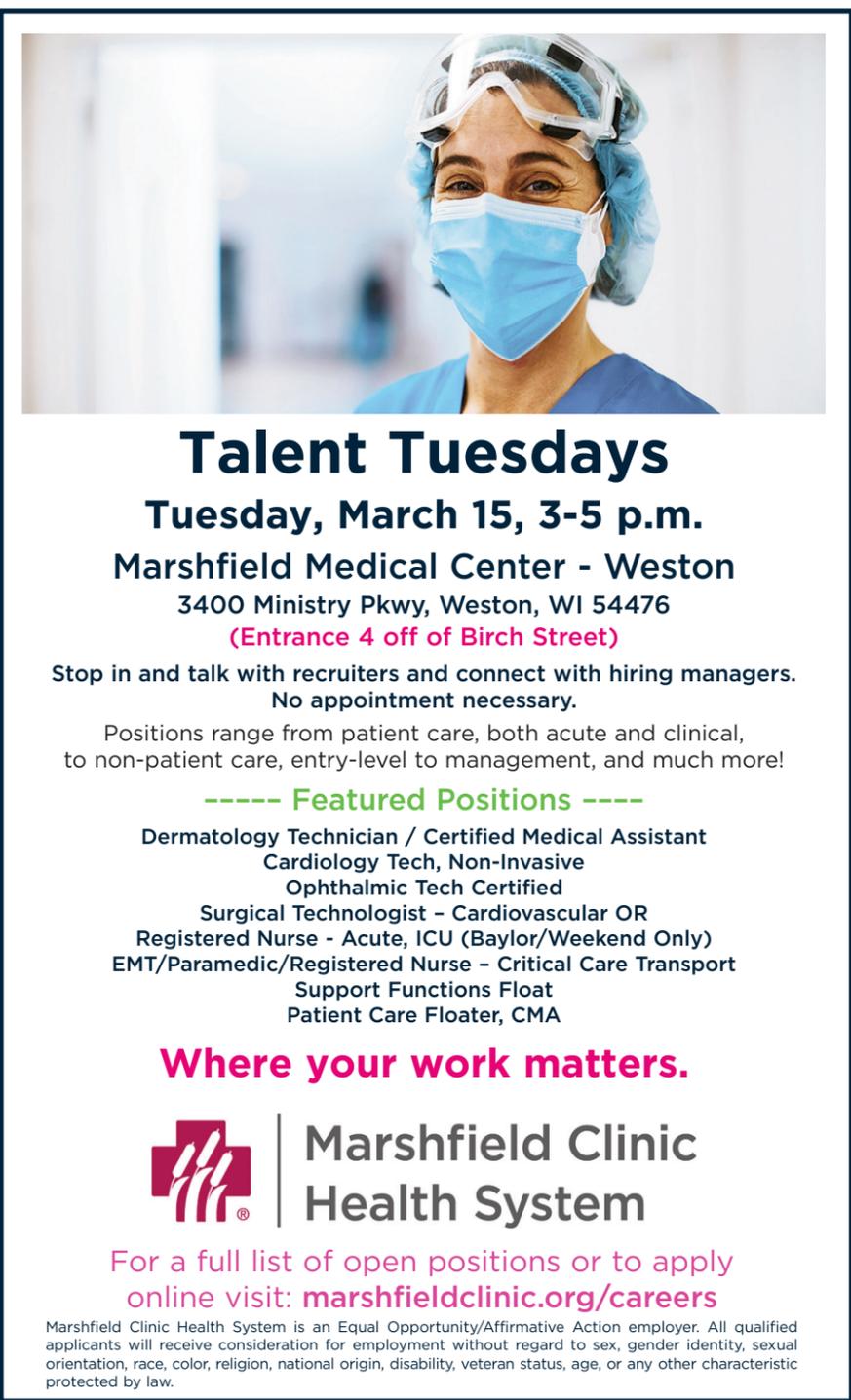


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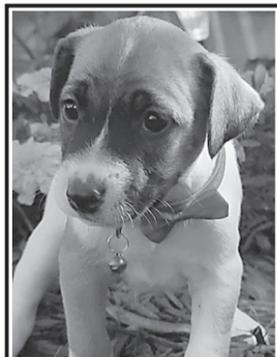
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# Central Wisconsin Storm wins the WIAA Girls Hockey State Championship

## Sabatke of Merrill celebrates a win

**TINA L. SCOTT AND ROSE SKIC**

Dru Sabatke, a Senior at Merrill High School, joined her teammates and headed to State last Wednesday, March 2, 2022, as part of the Central Wisconsin Storm (CW Storm) Girls Hockey Team. The lone bluejay, #23 Sabatke played alongside other female hockey players in north and central Wisconsin as a member of the co-op team comprised of players from Wausau East, Wausau West, DC Everest, Marathon, and Mosinee, as well as Merrill, currently being hosted by the DC Everest School District and playing under DC Everest Co-op.



Dru Sabatke of Merrill holds the Central Wisconsin Storm's Championship Trophy. Submitted photo.

Sabatke, who said she is passionate about hockey, was excited for this opportunity for her team and had high hopes of winning

the Championship, and those hopes became reality when the ladies created their own winter storm at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison and came away with the win and the WIAA Girls Hockey State Championship title.

The girls competed against the Metro Lynx (Middleton Co-op) at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday, March 3, 2022, and beat them 4-1 in the semi-final, with Merrill's Sabatke making one of those goals, advancing them to the finals on Saturday.

In Saturday's game at 12:10 p.m., the ladies took on the

team from Onalaska and won the Championship 5-0 in a complete shutout. Sabatke assisted with one of those winning goals, as well. The girls worked together in true teamwork fashion to achieve and celebrate the win, earning Central Wisconsin Storm their fourth State title in the last 14 years. They previously won Championships in 2008, 2012, and 2017, as well.

Dru was named Co-MVP of the Tournament in Madison, elected by Wisconsin Prep Hockey coaches

See **HOCKEY** page 12

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Merrill's Dru Sabatke is a member of the Central Wisconsin Storm Girls Hockey Team, WIAA 2022 State Champions! Submitted photo.

### HOCKEY from page 11

and media. This year she was also selected for WIAA Second Team All-State, All Independent First Team, and Wisconsin Prep Hockey Girls All-Tournament First Team. In addition, this year Dru was nominated for Wisconsin Prep Hockey Defensive Player of the Year and was a finalist for the Wisconsin Prep Hockey Molly Engstrom Award.

Skating since she was three years old and playing hockey since she was four, Dru first played for Merrill Youth Hockey

from Mites to Pee Wees. Then she spent one year playing in Eagle River on the U14 Girls Team. She began playing for CW Storm as a Freshman and credits her Dad for encouraging her to play hockey.

Dru has always played defense and enjoys it. She will finish her high school career with her National Team, Wisconsin Selects. She will play in Oshkosh on March 11-13 for Central Districts and then move on to Nationals in West Chester, Penn., from March 31 to April 4.

**CW Storm/DCE Co-op 2021-2022 record: 22-3 (win-loss)**

## 2022 Merrill High School Spring Sports Schedule

**Baseball-Boys (Varsity, JV & JV2)**  
Practice Begins Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Softball-Girls (Varsity & JV)**  
Practice Begins Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Soccer-Girls (Varsity & JV)**  
Practice Begins Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Track & Field-Boys (Varsity & JV)**  
Practice Began Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Track & Field-Girls (Varsity & JV)**  
Practice Began Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Golf-Boys (Varsity & JV)**  
Practice Begins Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>.

The Sports Calendar of events is sponsored by:



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## ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Merrill High School (MHS) Junior **Alayna Pozorski** has been named Athlete of the Week. Alayna has been playing Point Guard on the Merrill Varsity Girls Basketball Team since she was a Freshman. She also plays summer league basketball for the Ultimate Team Camp (UTC) Fire Team.

Alayna enjoys her metals class at MHS and said she also likes math. She has a part-time job working at Pine Crest Nursing Home as a Dietary Aide. When not working or at school, Alayna likes to hang out with her friends and family – going shopping, to the movies, out to eat, or attending sporting events like MHS Football and Boys Basketball games and Brewers baseball games, and she is also a Green Bay Packers fan.

The daughter of Rhonda Pozorski of Wausau and Glenn Pozorski of Merrill, Alayna has a 3.33 GPA and plans to attend Northcentral Technical College to pursue an apprenticeship and become an electrician.



**Alayna Pozorski**

Athletes highlighted in this feature are selected by the Foto News editorial staff, not by the sponsors.

Please direct comments or suggestions to [fotonews@mmlocal.com](mailto:fotonews@mmlocal.com)

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