

— Fox Cities —

FEB 26

SPORTS

**Pulaski's
Deedra
Irwin**

**It's Cool.
It's Complex.
It's Biathlon!**

*Soldier Hollow,
Utah World Cup
Pursuit finish
March 2024.
Racing in front of
a home crowd.*



«« **OLYMPIC SPOTLIGHT:**
Kimberly's
Paul Schommer

FREE!



FEBRUARY 2026 PROMO SCHEDULE

*ALL TIMES AND PROMOTIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FAMILY NIGHT = DISCOUNTED DOGS, SODA & YOUTH TICKETS BUD NIGHT = DISCOUNTED BUD PRODUCTS

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13 7:05PM

Trade Workers Night / Bud Night /
Sportsman Night

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14 6:05PM

Dash for Cash / Family Night /
Post game skate with the team

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27 7:05PM

Pokémon Night / Mystery Drink Special

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 28 6:05PM

Wiener Dog Race / Bud Night



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From the Editor



Groundhogs, Valentines, presidents ... and winter sports! February may be the shortest (and coldest?) month of the year, but we in the Fox Valley know how to pack a lot of fun into those 28 days.

The Winter Olympics open on February 6 in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. The Fox Valley's own Deedra Irwin (Pulaski) and Paul

Schommer (Kimberly) will be competing in Biathlon—a fascinating sport you ought to know more about! Their stories begin on page 12.

Closer to home, consider a trip to the Resch Center to see the Green Bay Gamblers, one of the top junior ice hockey franchises in North America. Zach Wooten, one of the team's star players, answers our 20+ Questions, and we also hear from his coach, Bryce Reddick.

And speaking of coaches, we go One-on-One this month with Kaukauna Wrestling coach Jeff Matczak. The team finished its 2025 season 20-0, with a first-place finish in the Fox Valley Association Conference and yet another state championship: the team's fifth in a row. Matczak was just 24 years old when hired by Kaukauna, and he says he's never lost sight of "how darn lucky I was."

If you'd rather be a participant than a spectator in February, ice fishing is a great option! The Quinney Fishing Club, profiled by Greg on pages 28-29, has been a key player in the Lake Winnebago hard-water fishing community since 1954. They'll be hard at work as the sturgeon spearing season opens on February 14.

On the opposite side of the lake and further north, the Paynes Point Fishing Club considers itself "the coolest" fishing club on Winnebago ... check out Nicole's article on pages 20-21 to see if you agree! Their annual fisheree takes place February 13-15.

Even if ice fishing isn't your thing, you've got no excuses to be a couch potato! Abby McDaniel from the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau highlights (on page 7) the area's outdoor ice skating rinks and trails for hiking, fat-tire biking, and cross country skiing. You can even play tennis outdoors on heated courts in Neenah!

My advice? Enjoy this issue *indoors*, with your favorite warm beverage ... but then meet me outside to enjoy everything February has to offer! ■



Deedra with fiancé, Robby Burns, at the finish line of a World Cup race.

Diane

—Fox Cities— SPORTS

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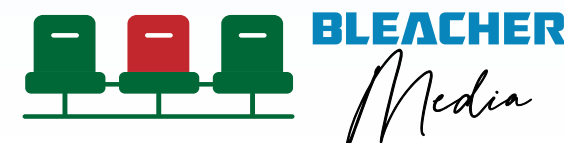
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Real Estate Update

HOMES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

MLS #	STATUS	LISTING TYPE	LIST PRICE	ADDRESS	MUNICIPALITY	SCHOOL DISTRICT
50313225	Active- No Offer	Single Family Home	\$235,000	7621 Widgeon Ln.	Larsen	Winneconne
2 bed, 1 bath, no garage, 480 sq ft, 0.14 acres, built 1955						
50315149	Active- No Offer	Single Family Home	\$150,000	819 Harney Ave.	Oshkosh	Oshkosh North
2 bed, 1 bath, 1 car, 1191 sq ft, 0.12 acres, built 1892						
50316845	Active- No Offer	Single Family Home	\$250,000	633 Cambridge St.	Wautoma	Wautoma
4 bed, 2 bath, 1 car, 1584 sq ft, 0.83 acres, built 1957						
50316845	Active- No Offer	Single Family Home	\$297,000	908 Meadow Ln.	Kaukauna	Kaukauna
3 bed, 2 bath, 1 car, 1714 sq ft, 0.26 acres, built 1957						
50317308	Active- Offer No Bump	Condo	\$399,900	2615 N Millbrook Rd.	Appleton	Appleton West
3 bed, 3 bath, 2.5 car, 2590 sq ft, 0.16 acres, built 1990						
50317308	Active- Offer No Bump	Single Family Home	\$259,900	1224 E Marquette St.	Appleton	Appleton North
1 bed, 1 bath, 1.5 car, 1566 sq ft, 0.16 acres, built 1961						
50318932	Active- Offer No Bump	Single Family Home	\$220,000	410 E Lincoln Ave.	Oshkosh	Oshkosh North
3 bed, 1 bath, 1.5 car, 1406 sq ft, 0.11 acres, built 1907						

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INSIDE FEB



Olympic headshot.

12-15 PACKER FAN AND OLYMPIAN DEEDRA IRWIN

“My mind loved the puzzle of the Biathlon,” Deedra explains. “It’s not just that you can ski fast, like in Nordic skiing. It’s that you can ski fast, efficiently, and under control enough to also stop in the middle of the race and have the focus and skill to shoot.”



7 OUTDOOR WINTER ACTIVITIES IN THE FOX CITIES

Winter in the Fox Cities does not always mean staying indoors. Cold temps and winter weather bring opportunities for a variety of outdoor winter activities for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.



16-17 A CONVERSATION WITH OLYMPIAN PAUL SCHOMMER

“I still feel more like a Wisconsin kid than I do an Olympic biathlete, and that’s ok.”

8-9 APPLETON EAST ESPORT TEAM

10 20 QUESTIONS WITH ZACH WOOTEN

“In the last minute of the game, we really like to have him on the ice.”

22-23 ONE ON ONE WITH JEFF MATCZAK

Little details matter more than any single large pursuit.

28-29 OUTDOORS WITH GREG SEUBERT

Helping keep the Winnebago System’s sturgeon spearing and ice fishing seasons safe.



- Alpine
- Italy
- Skeleton
- Axel
- Luge
- Slalom
- Biathlon
- Milano Cortina
- Slope
- Curling
- Moguls
- Speed Skating
- Deedra
- Nordic Combined
- Super G
- Gold Medal
- Paul
- Torch
- Hammer
- Triple Lutz
- Hockey
- Puck
- Winter

N	H	C	X	Y	E	M	O	L	A	L	S	A	P
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DID YOU KNOW?

- There will be 2,900 athletes participating in Milano Cortina, 1,538 men and 1,362 women.
- Team USA Olympians have won 330 Winter Olympic medals through Beijing 2022.
- The most decorated Team USA winter Olympian is Apolo Ohno, who won eight medals for short track between 2002 and 2010. Bonnie Blair and Eric Heiden are tied for the most gold Winter Olympic medals, with five medals in speed skating each.

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~ Jeanette



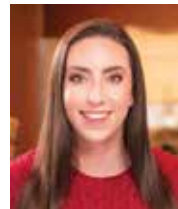
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Outdoor Winter Activities in the Fox Cities

BY ABBY MCDANIEL, FOX CITIES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



Winter in the Fox Cities does not always mean staying indoors. Cold temps and winter weather bring opportunities for a variety of outdoor winter activities for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.

Whether you currently enjoy ice skating, cross country skiing, running, or even sturgeon spearing—or are looking to try something new—your next winter adventure opportunities await!

OUTDOOR ICE SKATING RINKS

- Appleton: Memorial Park, Erb Park, Jones Park, Highview Park, Colony Oaks Park, and Pierce Park
- Neenah: Washington Park, Green Park, Memorial Park, and The Plaza at Gateway Park (rental skates available)
- Menasha: Hart Park
- Greenville: Jennerjohn Park

FAT TIRE BIKING TRAILS

- Grand Chute: Art Lacker Park, Prairie Hill Park
- Appleton: Reid Golf Course
- Little Chute: LC Island Trails
- Appleton: Memorial Park
- Combined Locks: Memorial Park
- Fox Crossing: Woodland Prairie Park

PLATFORM TENNIS

- Neenah: Best Western Premier Bridgewood Resort Hotel has two heated platform tennis courts available. Check availability and make reservations through the Bridgewood Platform Tennis Club.

TRAILS AND RUNNING

- Winter hiking at High Cliff State Park
- Walk along Loop the Lake and the Fox Trot Trail or check out any of the 100+ miles of trailway in the Fox Cities
- For those looking to hit walking or running milestones in the new year, check out the Conquer the Frozen Tundra virtual run across Wisconsin coordinated by Fleet Feet Fox Valley. Log your miles and run the equivalent from Beloit to Bayfield!

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING AND ARIENS NORDIC CENTER

- Cross country skiing and snowshoeing at Bubolz Nature Center (rental skis and snowshoes available)
- Arians Nordic Center is home to 5k of lighted trails for cross country skiing (Limited ski rental options on-site)

STURGEON SPEARING ON LAKE WINNEBAGO

- Sturgeon spearing has been a long-running tradition on Lake Winnebago and utilizes the ice spearing technique to secure large sturgeon fish through the ice. These sturgeon on average are 59 inches (4'11") and roughly 50 pounds, but record catches can reach 6-7 feet in length and over 200 pounds. The sturgeon spearing season begins February 14, and many hit the lake and surrounding area businesses to celebrate. Waverly Beach Bar & Grille often serves as a festive hub for the annual event with a registration station, food, drinks, and music; it is the perfect location to experience this annual event, even as a spectator only.

The outdoor winter recreation season will be over before you know it ... so don't wait! Try out some of these activities today.

Check out the Outdoor Winter Adventure Guide at foxcitiesgreenways.org to start your next winter activity adventure! ■



Photo Credit : Chad Mazur

Looking to plan a tournament? *Let us help!*

Contact Matt and Abby at the Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau to discuss ways we can help you plan and promote your event and possibly even help you secure grant funding support!



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Appleton East High School Esports Builds Real-World Skills

BY NICOLE CAMPUZANO

Gamer tag, proc, aggro, snowball, damage per second (DPS); to a non-gamer, these terms might seem like a foreign language. However, to those whose passion is gaming, they are commonplace.

According to some estimates, there are more than 200 million video gamers in the United States. While many people might view gaming as simply a casual pastime or a hobby, there are some young people who have turned gaming into a competition, with real-world applications that carry both tangible and intangible benefits.

In less than 10 years, esports in high schools and colleges has grown in popularity and participation. At Appleton East High School, the esports team has proven their superior skills can take them to the state championship over and over again, while at the same time building real-world skills and friendships.

In 2018, the Wisconsin High School Esports Association (WIHSEA) was founded as a non-profit organization. According to its website, “a small group of volunteer educators and school staff who had been passionately working on developing esports in their own schools founded WIHSEA [...] to help develop infrastructure for interscholastic esports competitions and to be a guide for schools in Wisconsin with students who want to compete in esports” (wihsea.org). Since its founding, WIHSEA has gained a lot of momentum across the state, with 100 member schools “from every corner of Wisconsin.”

Amy McAloon, a teacher at Appleton East High School, heads the esports team, which is technically considered a club, alongside the athletics associate, Robby Henrickson. The Appleton East High School Esports team got its start in 2019, when McAloon was approached by former student Ashton Parker, whom McAloon refers to as “The Godfather of Appleton East Esports.”

“Parker asked me to start a competitive gaming club. I had no idea what that meant. He was an excellent student and passionate when he spoke about his love of gaming. He had heard of an organization that had just started in Wisconsin called the Wisconsin High School Esports Association. I decided to give it a try. At the beginning of the 2019–2020 school year, I made some announcements, and suddenly, I had a gaming club,” McAloon explains.

To McAloon’s surprise, they had 25 students show up to the very first meeting! “Not all of them wanted to compete. Most just wanted to meet other people at school who shared the same interests,” she says.

Though there was strong interest in the esports team from the very beginning, their initial season was not without roadbumps. “In our first season, we had to forfeit five of the eight matches due to technical issues. None of the students quit. By match six, we were able to compete,” McAloon says. After winning several matches, the team learned they could participate in the playoff matches that would ultimately take them to state. “We were the lowest-ranked team in Division 1, but we made it to the final round! Since that first year, we have qualified for the state tournament four other

times. In 2019, 2022, and 2024 we made it to the final round only to lose,” McAloon says.

Though the state championship is held in person at different locations across the state each year, McAloon explains that esports teams are not typically bound by location. All the weekly competitions take place online, so they can play against students from any participating school in the state. There are also community tournaments each month in which the coaches are allowed to play, too.



Appleton East High School Esports Team.

McAloon explains there are currently 31 students signed up for the esports team at AEHS, with many of them competing in various titles. They have both a varsity and junior varsity team, captained by senior Noah Kauth and junior Evie Miller, respectively. In December, the team competed in the state championship, which took place in person at UW-Eau Claire. The team competed in three categories: Rocket League, Fort Nite, and Marvel Rivals. They took home several trophies from the state competition.

McAloon says the team has had big success this year. They have had an undefeated season, and they won the Division 1 SuperSmash Bros. Ultimate finals. “In addition to winning the team championship, Appleton East had six students in the SuperSmash Bros. Ultimate Singles Top 64 Tournament. In this division, the top 64 players across all of the Divisions compete all season against each other. We had four students advance to the ‘Sweet Sixteen’ round.” Those students were senior Noah Kauth (whose gamer tag is “Abstract”), who took first place; senior Kyle Christensen (known as “Karlic”), who took third place; senior Zachary Rockey (who goes by “Cinderp”), who took seventh place; and junior Ben Salvo (or “Blurry”), who took eighth place. Other qualifiers included junior Troy Boelter (“Troytheboy”) and junior Everett Hagany (“Basilboy”).

McAloon reports that the benefits of gaming through a school-sponsored esports team are multifold. “The value of esports is that many of the students weren’t involved in other activities, [and] about half of the students were struggling academically,

but participating in the state competition was great motivation for them to pull their grades up, because they have to follow the academic eligibility requirements that any other sport has to.” Improved academics as a result of participation is only one of the benefits McAloon cited.

Through competing in esports, students who might otherwise sit on the proverbial sidelines are able to meet peers who share similar interests. McAloon asserts that the friendships and social skills her team has made by participating are invaluable. Esports, unlike many traditional sports, which require a certain level of physical athleticism, is open to anyone. Students who are non-verbal or who struggle with social anxiety can show up and engage with people who have similar interests.

Indeed, Zack Rockey explains that he struggled with social anxiety until he joined the esports team. “Esports has lots of applications. I was pretty anti-social, but [participating in esports helped me improve] my communication skills and my social skills by talking to more people,” he says. Nathan Grizzle, who also makes the morning announcements on Appleton East’s Patriot Productions, adds, “Esports has been a great way in high school to make more friends.” Another esports member, Trent Mueller, agrees: “Esports is a way to meet people—people who are shy— and have similar interests.”

Esports can also help students learn dedication. Another member of the team, Kyle Christensen, also plays high school and club volleyball. He believes that he has put in many more hours honing his gaming skills than he has to volleyball. He says, “Esports teaches you how to dedicate yourself to learning a skill.” McAloon agrees, and adds that “these kids are masters of fine motor skills. They literally think in 3D.” The fine motor skills they spend hours sharpening can be applied to other aspects of their lives down the road.

There are also tangible benefits that esports can facilitate. For example, the WIHSEA offers student scholarships. Senior Evie Miller, whose gamer tag is “Cucco,” was awarded a \$500 scholarship for live-streaming the SuperSmash Bros. Ultimate games for three years in a row. She is the official Smash Bros. announcer for the WIHSEA, which is livestreamed during state competitions. McAloon explains that there are also scholarships available for graphic design. These scholarships not only help students financially, they legitimize the passion for gaming that

these students have, taking it out of the realm of a hobby and into the real world of applicable skills for their future careers.

It was clear when speaking to McAloon that she has intense pride and respect for the students on the esports team. At one point in the interview, her eyes welled over as she explained the extreme personal growth of several of the students that she has witnessed firsthand. She explained that there have been students who were non-verbal who gained the confidence over time to speak to their peers through participation on the team.

She is also extremely impressed by the character of varsity team captain Noah Kauth. “He is a natural leader!” she explains. “When students are practicing with him, he will pause the match, announce what he is going to do next, and then explain to the team member how they should respond to his character’s actions. Yes, he is telling the other student how to beat him! [...] If a student is getting frustrated [...] he will calmly repeat his advice and say, ‘Yes, you can do this.’ He is amazingly positive with his peers.” Surely, those leadership and communication skills will serve any student well as they advance into future education and career opportunities.

Though esports is still relatively new to the high school and college sports scenes, it is making inroads for students who may have otherwise chosen not to engage with their peers or to venture outside of their comfort zones. This sport is growing every year, with more and more schools creating teams and becoming members of the WIHSEA. As more people begin to see this as a valid and valuable way for students to engage with one another and build skills, it is likely that this activity will meld into the mainstream. It is clear that the Appleton East Esports team has “leveled up” because of all the hard work they’re doing to build a strong community among all students. ■



Nicole Campuzano is an Antigo, Wisconsin native. She earned her bachelor's degree in English Education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She taught high school English Language Arts for several years. She and her family recently relocated to the Fox Valley, where they are enjoying the many exciting opportunities the area has to offer.

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20+ QUESTIONS

ZACH WOOTEN GREEN BAY GAMBLERS HOCKEY | FORWARD SECOND FULL YEAR IN THE USHL

WHO WAS YOUR FAVORITE NHL PLAYER GROWING UP? Patrick Kane.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE NUMBER TO WEAR AND WHY? Number 9. I watched Mike Madano in Dallas as a kid.

IF YOU COULD SWAP POSITIONS WITH A TEAMMATE FOR ONE GAME, WHO WOULD IT BE? Maceo Phillips.

WHERE IS THE FAVORITE PLACE YOU'VE TRAVELED FOR HOCKEY? Green Bay.

WHAT'S THE FAVORITE RINK YOU'VE PLAYED IN (OTHER THAN HOME)? Fargo.

IF YOU COULD PLAY ONE OUTDOOR GAME ANYWHERE, WHERE WOULD IT BE? Lake Tahoe.

WHO'S THE TOUGHEST OPPONENT YOU'VE FACED IN THE USHL? Last year when we played Muskegon was pretty tough.

WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO PREGAME SONG RIGHT NOW? Alive: Empire of the Sun.

WHAT'S ONE SONG THAT INSTANTLY PUTS YOU IN A GOOD MOOD? Whiskey Myers: Broken Window Serenade.

WHAT'S THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS THING YOU DO ON GAME DAY? Take a pre-game nap.

WHAT'S ONE HOCKEY SKILL YOU WISH YOU WERE BETTER AT? I'd like to be a better skater.

EARLY MORNING PRACTICE OR LATE-NIGHT GAME: WHICH DO YOU PREFER? Late-night game.

IF YOU WEREN'T PLAYING HOCKEY, WHAT SPORT WOULD YOU BE COMPETING IN? Golf.

TAPE JOB: SIMPLE OR VERY SPECIFIC? Pretty simple I would say. I just do white tape on the toe end of my blade.

ROAD TRIPS: WINDOW SEAT OR AISLE SEAT? Aisle seat.

WHAT'S ONE FOOD YOU COULD EAT EVERY DAY AND NEVER GET SICK OF? Breakfast sandwich.

BEST POST-GAME MEAL IN THE AREA? Chipotle.

WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO COFFEE ORDER? Plain cold brew or espresso shaker.

FAVORITE VIDEO GAME TO UNWIND WITH? Fortnite.

FAVORITE MOVIE TO WATCH ON A LONG BUS RIDE? Landman.

WHO'S THE FUNNIEST TEAMMATE ON THE ROSTER? [Forward Elliot] Gulley is pretty funny.

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE A COACH HAS EVER GIVEN YOU? One day at a time. Stay in the moment and be present.

WHEN YOUR HOCKEY CAREER IS OVER, WHAT'S ONE THING YOU HOPE PEOPLE REMEMBER ABOUT YOU? That I was a good teammate.

A Coach's Perspective

BY BRYCE REDDICK, ASSISTANT COACH | GREEN BAY GAMBLERS | PHOTOS SUBMITTED



WHAT STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT ZACH WOOTEN WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED WORKING WITH HIM? Off the ice, he is a great human being. On the ice, I was most impressed by his ability to blow by defenders.

HOW HAS ZACH'S GAME EVOLVED SINCE JOINING THE GAMBLERS? He has always been a reliable forward, but this year he has taken a massive jump with his ability to finish and produce.

WHAT DOES ZACH DO PARTICULARLY WELL THAT MIGHT GO UNNOTICED BY CASUAL FANS? He plays a 200-foot game. [200 feet is the length of a standard international ice rink.] As a coaching staff, we trust him in every situation.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE ZACH'S WORK ETHIC IN PRACTICES AND GAMES? His work ethic is second to none. He is always wanting to do extra after practice. He is a work horse in the gym as well.

WHAT KIND OF ROLE DOES ZACH PLAY IN THE LOCKER ROOM AND ON THE BENCH? He is an assistant captain, and he plays a huge role in regards to leadership. I would say he is more of a silent leader; he leads by example.

WHAT SITUATIONS DO YOU TRUST ZACH IN MOST DURING A GAME? He is a player who can play all situations for us. We trust him on the ice when we need a goal, and he is also a part of our penalty kill. In the last minute of the game, we really like to have him on the ice.

CAN YOU SHARE AN EXAMPLE OF A MOMENT WHEN ZACH REALLY STEPPED UP FOR THE TEAM? I would have to say his hat trick against Madison in early December 2025. We ended up winning that game 6-2. He is also not afraid to stand up for his teammates.

WHAT MAKES ZACH A GOOD FIT FOR THE STYLE OF HOCKEY THE GAMBLERS WANT TO PLAY? He is a team-first player, he can play in all situations, and he puts the team's success above his own personal success. He is being rewarded personally for it as well, but that's not his highest priority. ■



It's Cool. It's Complex. It's Biathlon!

BY DIANE BAST | PHOTOS SUBMITTED

In 2017, Deedra Irwin was 25 years old and already thinking of retiring from competitive sports.

She had participated in track and field, cross-country, and Nordic skiing throughout high school in Pulaski and at Michigan Technological University. "I grew up an endurance athlete," Deedra says, "and started Nordic skiing when I was 16. I skied all through college and on a professional team for two years with the Sun Valley Gold Team in Ketchum, Idaho."

A friend, Joanne Reid, wasn't sure Deedra was ready to retire just yet. She "told me about a Talent ID Camp that the U.S. Biathlon team used to put on to find promising skiers who could maybe learn how to shoot.

"I applied and ended up going to Lake Placid, New York for a camp at the Olympic Training Center there. After just one training session," Deedra says, "I was hooked!"

That was in the Fall of 2017 ... and just eight years after that training camp, Deedra is ready to compete for Team USA for the second time, in the Winter Olympics in Milan, Italy.

WHY BIATHLON?

"I thought it was the coolest thing I have ever tried," Deedra says.

"My mind loved the puzzle of the Biathlon," she explains. "It's not just that you can ski fast, like in Nordic skiing. It's that you can ski fast, efficiently, and under control enough

to also stop in the middle of the race and have the focus and skill to shoot.

"I'm still in awe of the complexity of it all," she admits. "I believe that uniqueness really drew me to the sport and has allowed me to continue to challenge myself in it every year."

Biathlon requires rifle-shooting accuracy under extreme physical stress. A biathlete must slow down her mind—in order to shoot accurately—at the same time her heart rate is high. We asked Deedra: How do you train for a sport like that?

"A lot of repetitions during the summer to form good habits physically and mentally for the winter," Deedra answers.

"You can probably say this for many sports: Great athletes are made in the off-season. Those long weeks in the summer include a ton of shooting practice, both with and without rollerskiing.

"We have some pretty great shooting coaches and team psychologists too," she says. "They help us work through the pressure and create winning habits for extreme focus on the range while racing."

A CULTURE OF SUCCESS

And speaking of winning habits, "growing up in Green Bay," Deedra says, "I definitely idolized the Packers players! Donald Driver was one of my favorite players growing up, and I think he was such an amazing role model for people all over Wisconsin.

"I remember doing projects in high school and college specifically about the leadership and success of the coaches, athletes, and team. It was so unique growing up around that aura."

Deedra found inspiration in the Packers. "I believe growing up near a professional sports team really inspired me to chase such a big dream," she says. "There is a culture of success, dreaming big and believing in the journey, surrounding the Green Bay Packers and the community around Lambeau."

And what was her "championship moment"? When did Deedra realize she belonged among the elite in her sport?

"My 7th place finish at the 2022 Olympics definitely helped my confidence to perform among the best in the world," she recalls.

That 7th place finish, in the women's individual event, was the highest-ever finish for a United States athlete in *any* international Biathlon championship.

Despite that milestone, Deedra says "it wasn't until maybe two seasons later—when I was able to perform more consistently and end the season ranked in the Top-40—that I truly felt I belonged."

EMOTIONAL MOMENTS

"Putting on my first race bib [at the 2022 Olympics] was emotional," Deedra recalls. "I was holding back tears all the way to the start gate because I knew once I started that race, I was officially an Olympian.

"In Beijing I cried a lot!" she admits. "Walking into opening ceremonies and seeing those giant Olympic rings hanging over the Nest is still one of my favorite memories from the 2022 Olympics. The sight and the feeling brought me to tears.

"Being able to represent not only the United States but every single person and community that has helped me become an Olympian is such a blessing. I would not have made it without everyone who encouraged me and supported me along the way, and I feel that when I put on the Team USA uniform."

TOUGH CHALLENGES

"I think that every athlete who reaches this level has been through countless physical and mental setbacks," Deedra says. When we asked about her toughest challenges, though, Deedra focused not so much on Biathlon as her high school sports career.

"I personally have gone through my fair share throughout my athletic career, starting when I was just 14 years old. I had a tachycardia episode while competing in a track and field race in middle school that caused me to pass out in the middle of the race.

Packers jersey gift to me during the 2022 Olympic games from Green Bay Packers President Mark Murphy.



Team USA Athlete Media Summit 2025.
Photo taken by Samsung.



Opening Ceremonies in the Nest in Beijing, China Feb. 2022.



2018 Olympic trials in Grand Rapids, MN three months into competing in Biathlon.





A Few Words from Mom

BY JENNIFER IRWIN

When Deedra strapped on skis for the first time in high school, no one could have imagined that one day she would compete in Biathlon at the Olympic Games. In fact, Biathlon didn't even enter her life until she was 25 years old. So how did this happen?

As a child Deedra tried many sports: soccer, swimming, basketball, running, then finally skiing. Growing up with one older brother and one younger brother meant countless backyard battles that fueled her competitive spirit. Some might assume she was a natural champion from the start, but that wasn't the case.



Mom, Jennifer and Dad, Rodney at 2023 World Championships in Oberhof, Germany. Their first time watching me compete in person in Europe.

Deedra worked hard, but she never won a WIAA cross-country or track and field state championship. Was she competitive? Absolutely. But she never stood on top of the podium. Her first major win came in 2010, when she claimed the Wisconsin Nordic Ski championship—just two years after taking up the sport.

In college, she didn't capture any NCAA titles either. These facts don't diminish her accomplishments—they highlight her resilience. Deedra faced setbacks and injuries, yet she never stopped showing up for practice, hitting the weight room, and planning for what was next.

The turning point came in 2015, when she qualified for the World Junior Championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan. That experience sparked a decision: After college graduation, she would pursue skiing professionally. Two years later, she tried Biathlon ... and the rest is history.

Today, Deedra has carved out her own path and continues to compete at the highest level. Our family is thrilled to travel to Italy to watch her compete in the Olympics—a privilege we missed during her first Games because of the pandemic. We are grateful for this opportunity and proud of the perseverance that brought her here.

Competing at this level is not for the faint of heart. Deedra is out of country from the beginning of November through the end of March. She gets the month of April off, and then May 1 training starts again. Her military commitment takes time as well, but she would not have been able to continue if it wasn't for them. As parents we tried to support Deedra as long as we could, but the cost became too much for us to handle.

Deedra is a reminder that success isn't always about early wins. It's about persistence, passion, and the courage to keep going. ■

"I was kicked off the track team for liability reasons," she continues, "and I was misdiagnosed weeks later, being told I just didn't warm up and eat enough. I silently suffered with symptoms throughout high school and college because I was afraid I wouldn't be allowed to compete if it happened again.

"It wasn't until I decided to compete in Biathlon 10 years later that I finally found a specialist at Bellin Hospital in Green Bay who diagnosed me with supraventricular tachycardia (SVT)—a rapid, irregular heartbeat in the heart's upper chambers. "I was set up to get surgery only a month later, and I have been symptom-free ever since. This was in 2017.

"It was definitely one of those things that I didn't realize was holding me back so much while I was racing. I just got used to managing it the best I could, but I was so afraid of having an episode that I didn't always push my hardest," she says. "I'm glad I found a doctor who took my symptoms seriously and was able to help me."

FAMILY MATTERS

"From an early age," Deedra says, "my parents encouraged my brothers and me to pursue sports and stay active. They gave us every opportunity to succeed.

"Now it's fun to see my family in the crowd and celebrate everything we have been able to accomplish. In March of 2024, I got to do a World Cup in Utah and 40 of my family members were on the side of the trails cheering for me. That race has meant more to me than any other race I've done to date.

"I've been super blessed to have a family that understands all the demands that reaching this level of sport means. My parents have given so much of their time and energy to support this crazy dream."

Deedra also acknowledges the importance of her coaches and teammates—even in an individual sport like Biathlon.

"I have an incredible support staff and super talented teammates to train with," she says. "Iron sharpens iron, as the saying goes. It is always more exciting to be a part of a team in which everyone is succeeding and striving for new personal bests.

"I think any time you can surround yourself with competitive, talented, and knowledgeable people, the more driven you can be yourself."

MORE TO LIFE THAN SPORTS?

"Sport has just become my life," Deedra admits, "but I don't let it define me completely.

"I make sure to have some good hobbies and goals outside of sport ... but in general, my whole life, every day, revolves around being and becoming the best athlete I can be.

"What's great is that I have an amazing partner who understands the demands of what I do," she smiles. "[Snowboarder] Robby [Burns] is also an Olympian—we met at the 2022 Olympics—and he helps me balance sport life and real life. Having someone who understands my goals that I also get to grow my life with outside of our sports is so unique and fun."

Deedra is also proud to serve her country not only on Team USA, but also in the military.



Bib 1 wearing my high school uniform from the Ashwaubenon Nordic Ski Team at Wisconsin High School Sprint Championships in Madison, WI. 2009.

"Another thing that helps keep me grounded outside of my athletic life is my military career," she says. "I joined the Vermont National Guard in 2019 to be on the National Guard Biathlon team, and now I am a part of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program. I am a Human Resources Specialist and Platoon Sergeant for my team.

"It has given me a lot to do during my down time from being an athlete," Deedra says. "For me, the U.S. Army has been great for giving me that work-life balance and a career outside of just being an athlete."

KEEP SHOWING UP

Biathlon isn't widely understood in the United States. What does Deedra wish American sports fans knew about the sport?

"I would like them to know that it's a full-time job to get to the highest level in this sport, and we compete every winter—not just every four years at the Olympics!

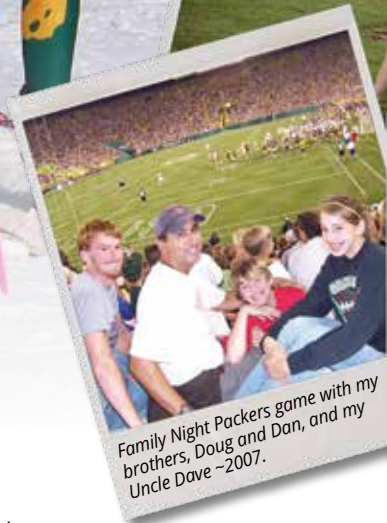
"It's really easy to support our sport and follow our journeys on social media and watch our races online. We are a small community," she says, "but ready to grow, and we look forward to introducing more and more people to our sport."

She also has a bit of advice for young athletes in Wisconsin and the Fox Cities:

"Whatever your dream may be," she encourages, "don't give up when it gets tough. You will surprise yourself if you just keep showing up and putting in the work. One day it won't be so tough anymore, and you'll be happy that you continued giving yourself a chance.



Pulaski Cross Country meet in 2010.



Family Night Packers game with my brothers, Doug and Dan, and my Uncle Dave ~2007.



Saluting the Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard, General Knight, after winning the 2021 Best Soldier Competition and getting named 2021 Soldier of the Year.

"Secondly," she says, "let your dream grow and change with you.

"I started out as a cross country and track runner who used Nordic skiing to stay in shape during the winter," she points out. "Then I tried skiing professionally, and I picked up a rifle at 25 years old. Now I'm 33 and going to my second Olympics in a sport I didn't even know existed when I was in high school!

"All because I just kept giving myself a chance at every fork along my road to the Olympics." ■



After 35 years as senior editor for the Illinois-based Heartland Institute, Diane Bast returned to the Fox Valley and now enjoys with her husband, Joe, a retirement of bicycling, kayaking, long walks, and tennis.

OLYMPIC SPOTLIGHT: Paul Schommer

BY DIANE BAST | PHOTOS SUBMITTED



Olympic biathlete Paul Schommer wrestled and ran cross country and track for Kimberly High School (Class of 2010), then attended The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota. At 33 years old, he's been participating in Biathlon for 10 years.

WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO BIATHLON, AND WHY WERE YOU DRAWN TO IT? During my time at Kimberly, we had a teacher (Mr. Verboomen) who was a Nordic skier and started the Kimberly Cross Country Ski Club. My older brother, Philip, was on the cross country running team at the time and was instrumental in getting the ski club started. Eventually I found myself joining for some practices on the football fields behind the high school, and slowly I got more and more involved. By my senior year of high school I was competing in races around the Midwest and qualified for Junior Nationals as a member of the Midwest Team.

Upon graduating from high school, I went to compete for The College of St. Scholastica (CSS) at the NCAA level in cross country skiing. At CSS I met Coach Chad Salmela, who is an ex-World Cup biathlete. He quickly took notice of my talents as a skier and started to put the idea of Biathlon in my head, as he knew the opportunities in the sport. Chad worked closely with me to develop me as an athlete, and he helped me become the CSS program's first All-American in cross country skiing.

Upon graduation in 2015 I decided to pursue Biathlon full time, and I have been doing so ever since. What really drew me into the sport was the complexity, both in the physical training and the shooting training. It is a sport that has so many variables that can allow you to have a great performance, but those variables can also keep you from one. The shooting in the middle of races can make or break your result, and this makes it one of the most exciting winter sports to watch.

WHAT EMOTIONS GO THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN YOU STEP ONTO THE COURSE WEARING "USA" ON YOUR UNIFORM? I have competed for the United States internationally for the better part of a decade now, and in a lot of ways putting on a USA uniform is pretty routine. That being said, when it comes to the Olympics it's a different story. For many of our events on the World Cup we have many sponsors, but when it comes to the Olympics all the sponsors are stripped away and all that is left is your country. With that comes a sense of pride, knowing that of all the people in the United States, I have been chosen to represent the country in Biathlon. It's a special feeling, and when I put on that Olympic USA uniform, I can't help but think about all the people who have helped me get to that point. Being able to share this Olympics with some of those people is going to be really special.

WHAT DO YOU WISH AMERICAN SPORTS FANS KNEW ABOUT BIATHLON? You are correct, not a lot of people understand Biathlon in the United States, but that is something we are hoping to change! In Europe, Biathlon is the most-watched winter sport, with in-person crowds reaching 60,000+ spectators, and there's a reason why. The combination of skiing and shooting means the race can change quickly and you really never know what will happen until the very end. It is a very competitive sport, with more countries represented and a field that is closer than any other Olympic sport. As a result, the field has become faster and faster, and shooting has continued to improve.

Because the sport's popularity continues to increase, the stakes have continued to grow. Commitment to the sport is essential if you want to be successful on the international stage. When it comes to training for Biathlon, we have one



month off of official training every year (April) and we train the other 11 months, with four of those months being the race season.

A typical training year for a World Cup athlete is between 700 and 900 hours of training, which equates to about 20 hours a week for the entire year. But training weeks can be upwards of 30 hours during the summer. When I say training hours, these are hours in which you are actively working out, whether it be running, skiing, biking, weightlifting, or more. We also have a lot of time doing other drills and shooting training, which means in order to be a competitive biathlete it has to be your full-time job.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG ATHLETES IN THE FOX CITIES? As a kid growing up in the Fox Cities, I never had dreams of being an Olympic athlete. I didn't know anyone who had done it, therefore I didn't think I was capable of doing it, nor did I know the opportunities that existed. In some ways, I was looking at the people around me, and what they were/ were not doing, to see what I should do.

But once I started to take the time to take a deeper look at myself, ask what is God calling me to do, and believe there might be a path for me that is not being traveled by many, that's when the adventure started. There are so many things in this world that are lying right outside of our comfort zone that can take us to places we never dreamed possible. Because they are outside of our comfort zone they may push us, cause pain, and force us to be challenged in ways that feel like it might break us. However, those challenges can be a refining power.

So if you have big dreams, take a step each day that helps you get a bit closer to that goal and know that one day you might find that you've slowly made your way there.

And I have to throw out a shoutout to Ariens Nordic Center in Brillion, because I believe there are some local Fox Cities kids who now have the opportunity to become world-class Nordic athletes right at home. The facility in Brillion that Ariens has

built is amazing, and I am excited to see locals take advantage of the trails and range there, knowing that one day there will be another local kid who makes their way to the Olympics.

WHAT MOMENT MADE YOU REALIZE YOU BELONG AMONG THE WORLD'S BEST BIATHLETES? I don't know if that moment ever fully comes, haha! I still feel more like a Wisconsin kid than I do an Olympic biathlete, and that's ok. I don't know I would say I belong here, but I am thankful for the opportunity and want to continue to have that perspective, as a thankful heart is a happy heart. ■



After 35 years as senior editor for the Illinois-based Heartland Institute, Diane Bast returned to the Fox Valley and now enjoys with her husband, Joe, a retirement of bicycling, kayaking, long walks, and tennis.



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FOX CITIES SPORTS

FEBRUARY 2026

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Decker Triple Crown 2026 to Pay Out \$20,000 in Cash and Prizes

BY DAVID SARNA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | MANAWA SNODEO

In honor of former Eagle River Derby Complex owners Richard and Audrey Decker, the 2nd Annual Decker Triple Crown ice oval racing series is being offered this coming season to all International Snowmobile Racing (ISR) legal Formula F-500 drivers. This will be a three-race series running in conjunction with the Pro Vintage Racing (PVR) scheduled events at three separate locations, plus a final.

Qualifier 1: WDCD Vintage Weekend, Eagle River: January 9-11

Qualifier 2: Wausau 525 Track, Wausau: January 31

Qualifier 3: Outagamie Conservation Club, Hortonville: February 7

LCQ and Finals: Manawa Snodeo, Manawa: February 21



Contestants will race for cumulative points at each race to be included in the "Top 10" and a front row starting spot in the final feature race at Manawa's Snodeo on February 21. There are bonus points available for attending each race and taking the green flag. There also will be a Last Chance Qualifier (LCQ) prior to the feature at Manawa, when 11th through 20th place will race off to pull two for a back row start in the final.



The Champion will receive a \$10,000 cash payout, delivered to the winner in \$1.00 bills in two sealed briefcases by police escort. Places 2nd through 10th will receive cash prizes totaling \$10,000 and merchandise.

This is a series and final you don't want to miss! ■

For more information go to the "Decker Triple Crown" Facebook page or www.manawasnodeo.org.

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- ★ F-500 Triple Crown LCQ at 12N; Final at 4pm
- ★ Radar Runs-Sleds/ATVs/UTVs
- ★ Swimsuit Radar Run at 2pm
- ★ WI Kitty Cat Racing
- ★ Vintage Snowmobile Show
- ★ Parade Ceremony-Noon

SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

- ★ WI Kitty Cat Racing (Finals)
- ★ Minibike/Lawnmower Ovals - TBD
- ★ Side By Side Oval Racing
- ★ Parade Ceremony-Noon

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Football Brings Ann McKee to Medical Career

APPLETON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ann Carolyn McKee, always Annie to her family, never had a choice—football would be an inescapable part of her life. Her father, Robert (Bob), played football all four years at Grinnell College in the early 1930s, when the Pioneers played the likes of Drake, Iowa, Missouri, and Oklahoma, and helmets were both leather and optional.



Growing up in Appleton at the east end of Alton Street, three blocks from the Lawrence campus and across the bridge from Whiting field, Annie was the youngest of five, with two older sisters followed by two brothers. She was immersed in football from a very young age. The McKees' closest friends, with whom they always shared Thanksgiving, were the Dillons, whose father, Ade, was the revered long-time head football coach at Appleton High School.

All five McKee kids went to Lawrence; their dad was a research chemist at the Institute of Paper Chemistry, then an affiliate of Lawrence. When sister Ginny was there, she dated (and eventually married) Menasha's Fred Flom, who was a football captain and star running back/linebacker. A few years later, brothers Bob and Chuck would both be all-conference players on championship teams, the last of which (1967) was the last undefeated team in Lawrence history.

Ann spent only her first collegiate year at Lawrence pursuing art. Then, with the Vietnam War raging and Fred Flom now a POW, she decided she wanted to make a difference in the world and become a doctor. She transferred to the University of Wisconsin

and eventually followed in Chuck's footsteps to medical school at Case-Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Following medical school, Ann completed residencies in Internal Medicine and Neurology at Cleveland Metropolitan General Hospital under the tutelage of Maurice Victor, a world-renowned neurologist, and Betty Q. Banker, an internationally recognized neuropathologist. For Ann, neuropathology was a revelation—a perfect combination of the visual and the intellectual.

Ann completed a third residency in Neuropathology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Initially her main field of interest was Alzheimer's Disease, and one day, while examining under the microscope the brain of a famous boxer with supposed Alzheimer's, she saw evidence of a very different condition: chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). This was an epiphany.

Several years later, Chris Nowinski, a former Harvard football lineman and then professional wrestler who had suffered several debilitating concussions and wanted to learn more about the long-term effects of repeated head injuries, asked Ann if she would be willing to examine the brains of certain football and hockey players. For Ann this was the melding of two great passions, so she immediately said an enthusiastic "Yes!"

Along with Bob Cantu, a renowned neurosurgeon, and Bob Stern, a neuropsychologist, Ann and Chris formed the Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy (CSTE) and Ann developed a brain bank dedicated to the study of the long-term effects of repeated head injuries. This brain bank is now the largest in the world dedicated to the study of CTE, holding more than 1,700 brains. The CSTE has become the Boston University CTE Center directed by Dr. McKee, and she has become the world's foremost authority on CTE, having personally examined more brains afflicted with CTE than anyone else on Earth.

CTE is a devastating disease that causes progressive, irreversible dementia. It is the terrible, incurable, but preventable downside of playing collision sports. Today it can be diagnosed only by post-mortem examination (autopsy) and there is no known treatment. Dr. McKee is determined to find the means of diagnosing CTE during life and developing effective treatment. ■



Frozen and Fun: Paynes Point Hook & Spear Fishing Club

BY NICOLE CAMPUZANO



Just south of Neenah, Wisconsin, on the shore of Lake Winnebago, is the Paynes Point Hook & Spear Fishing Club. The club was established in May 1979 with the goal of “fostering conservation and conservation education, promoting and educating in the areas of sportsmanship, stewardship, fairness, and safety in all aspects of outdoor sports including fishing, hunting and other activities” (pphsf.com). The club is also tasked with plowing and maintaining roads, treelines, and bridges on and around Lake Winnebago during the winter months. Club President Darryl Lehman and Secretary Jacob Vanderloop shared some insights into the club and some of the exciting things the club makes possible.

Lehman joined the club in 2006, and he’s been president since 2011. He says that when the club was first established, there was a window of a couple of months for people to join for only \$25. Those who chose to join at that time are now the club charter members. One of the main reasons the club was formed was to gain access to the lake, as well as to start building bridges for winter access. Lehman explains that the club purchased a property to build its clubhouse in the early 1990s.

The club also purchased a home right on Lake Winnebago next to the clubhouse for the purpose of creating a lakefront rental. The house can be rented for \$250 per night and “comfortably sleeps” seven people. Vanderloop is happy to report that the club “rented it out over the past few years and has paid it off. It continues to be a rental on VRBO.” This rental home creates a source of revenue the club can use toward achieving its goals.

Although the club owns these two properties, things weren’t always this way. When the club first got its start, they had only one plow truck and one set of wooden bridges. As time went on and the club was able to, it expanded. Currently, Lehman explains, they have three newer plow trucks, five truck bridges, and two UTV/ATV bridges.

Lake Winnebago is a 131,939 acre lake, which draws thousands of people for ice fishing each winter. Lehman says, “Having three plow trucks helps speed up the process of plowing our road system after significant snow falls or strong winds that create a lot of drifting snow on the lake. It isn’t uncommon to spend half a day plowing and moving the bridges when needed. I don’t even want to try to count all the man hours that go into getting everything ready, and then plowing and moving bridges all winter long, but I would guess it is close to 1,000 hours.” That time, Lehman explains, is all volunteer work.

“We typically maintain a treeline and road that goes out five miles towards Faro Springs Road on the east shore of the lake. We also maintain a road that connects with Otter Street Fishing Club in Oshkosh and the Brickyard Fishing Club that maintains a road out of Calumet County Park, along with other roads that members use to access commonly used areas for sturgeon spearing,” Lehman says. He estimates the club spends between \$3,000 and \$4,000 on gasoline alone, not to mention several thousand dollars on repairs and maintenance to the vehicles and bridges.

All this plowing and maintenance is done in the name of accessibility, as well as safety. Obviously, being out on the frozen lake comes with certain risks, but by plowing roads and



maintaining vehicle bridges, the club helps encourage people to drive in areas that are considered safe. This is especially important for people who may be unfamiliar with the lake and the treeline that points back to the club’s landing.

Vanderloop explains the club is always looking to expand membership. The club is especially interested in recruiting youth members “who can get involved in making a difference in the community.” Current membership is between 500 and 600 members, with 64 lifetime members. There are even some lifetime members as young as 7–12 years old.

All proceeds the club raises are to be used for conservation and conservation education. The club has used some of its funds to donate to causes they feel line up with the club’s goals. In the past, the club donated \$1,000 to the Town of Neenah Fire department. This year, they made a \$5,000 donation to the Neenah High School Fishing Club to help them purchase a trailer.

Every February, the Paynes Point Hook & Spear Fishing Club holds its annual Fisheree during opening weekend of sturgeon spearing on Lake Winnebago. Though the parking is out on the icy lake, the Fisheree events take place inside the heated clubhouse. This year, the Fisheree will be over Valentine’s weekend, February 13–15. Vanderloop was happy to share that they’ve got many great sponsors, including Team WinnebagoLand, Accurate Fire Protection, Kessler Fahrenkrug Funeral Home, Jacobson Auto Service, Brazee Hardware, Down to Earth Landscaping, Burnsies Guide Service, Tennie Jewelry, Cellars Wine and Spirits, D&D Amusement Games, Amusement Devices, and many more.

He affirms that anyone is welcome to attend the event, including non-club members.

There will be live music each night with performances by Power Play Trio, Jed, and Star Six-Nine. There will also be a big raffle on Sunday afternoon. Details about the event can be found on the Paynes Point Hook & Spear Fishing website. ■



Nicole Campuzano is an Antigo, Wisconsin native. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English Education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She taught high school English Language Arts for several years. She and her family recently relocated to the Fox Valley, where they are enjoying the many exciting opportunities the area has to offer.

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ONE ON ONE

BY DIANE BAST | PHOTO BY PAUL STUMPF

COACH JEFF MATCZAK

KAUKAUNA HIGH SCHOOL
WRESTLING COACH

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN COACHING? 34 years

WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND IN WRESTLING? I competed in my first wrestling tournament in 3rd grade, with very little practice. My parents put me on a bus with my 5th grade brother and otherwise strangers and that took us to Coleman, one of the only tournaments in Northeast Wisconsin. I wrestled for four years at Pulaski High School, then four more at UW-Oshkosh. Kaukauna was my first and only teaching job.

WHAT IS YOUR COACHING PHILOSOPHY? Develop quality young people. I wrote those words on a college paper for a coaching class. Me and Steve McDaniel agreed with those words and wrote them on a marker board in his living room a few years later at Kaukauna. We have not wavered since. Before skills, conditioning, and the games, everything starts with character development.



WHAT DOES THE TEAM DO IN TRAINING THAT IS KEY TO ITS SUCCESS? There was a time when I thought we did things different. But I have learned that the best teams are all doing similar things. WHAT we do is not as important as HOW we do it. We have to teach the students what that looks like, and then they have to decide if that is really something they value.

PLEASE DESCRIBE THE MOST MEMORABLE MATCHES YOUR TEAM HAS WON. Some of my most memorable matches are 2005 Appleton North, 2011 Oshkosh West, and 2013 Wausau West. Those were all painful losses, but they did so much to shape the people and this program over the past 20 years. Those tough defeats and many more helped us to sharpen our sword and kept it from going dull.

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE THE TEAM AFTER A DISAPPOINTING LOSS? Don't sugarcoat it, don't make excuses, face the music. Pay respects to your opponent, because they have sacrificed just as much as you have. If you have really committed yourself and done things right, a loss should sting hard for a short time ... but then you just have to face the fact that nobody is immune to losing.

DESCRIBE YOUR PROUDEST COACHING MOMENT? Being selected as a coach for Kaukauna at 24 years old. That seemed rare at that time. Teachers took head coaching jobs back then and coveted them for 20-30 years. I did not lose sight of how darn lucky I was. It felt really good knowing that people believed in me and valued my ideas, even though looking back some of those were really bad ideas.

There were numerous proud team moments, and I'm proud of every student who put their foot on that line in the orange uniform. I can't quantify any of that to what makes me proudest. But all of that came possible by people I'm forever indebted to for giving me a chance.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST LIFE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED FROM BEING A COACH? You have to build trust. You can't tell someone they're cool and fine to be a buddy when red flags are waving. Being honest and sincere might require hurt feelings in the moment, but everything is driving towards a better outcome. Little details matter more than any single large pursuit.

WHAT LEGACY DO YOU HOPE TO LEAVE AS A COACH? The citizens of Kaukauna invested in a young, unproven person and got a fair return on that investment. ■



After 35 years as senior editor for the Illinois-based Heartland Institute, Diane Bast returned to the Fox Valley and now enjoys with her husband, Joe, a retirement of bicycling, kayaking, long walks, and tennis.

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Your 0.0 Sign Doesn't Have to Define You

BY GINA GLOVER

Do you have a voice in your head that says, "I'm just not a runner"? The one that whispers it when you see someone jogging past, or when friends invite you to join them for a 5K?

You need to know something: That voice isn't telling you the truth about your capabilities. It's just repeating a story you've told yourself so many times you've decided to believe it.

Being a runner isn't about speed, distance, or natural athleticism. It's about putting one foot in front of the other, again and again, until the person who said "I could never" becomes the person who does.

A few years back my husband accompanied me to the Friday night "packet pickup" for the half-marathon I was going to be running the next morning. After checking in and getting my bib number and T-shirt, along with free product samples and coupons from local businesses, we were encouraged to capture a photo at their picture booth, which was complete with signs and banners to hold up. I chose a sign listing the half-marathon distance of 13.1 miles and my husband, who doesn't run, pointed to another sign and joked "that one is for me." The sign read: 0.0

We had a good laugh, but that 0.0 sign stuck with me. It made me realize how easily we decide what we can't do without ever trying, and then we hold onto that story like it's gospel.

"Every able-bodied person can be a runner," according to Gordon Bakoulis, a Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) certified coach who has been coaching runners at all levels since 1985. The key is to start with a gradual approach to running in order to prevent injury and establish consistency around strength-training and recovery days.

There are many programs that soon-to-be former members of the "0.0 Club" might want to check out. One is Jeff Galloway's Run-Walk-Run Method, which incorporates strategic walk breaks to help control fatigue and minimize significant running injury. Jeff Galloway was an All-American collegiate athlete and a member of the 1972 U.S. Olympic team in the 10,000 meters. He is a race director, coach, and author of numerous books on the sport of running, and he continues to be a competitive runner ... at 80 years old.

A second option is called ChiRunning, which was developed by ultra-marathoner and Tai Chi practitioner Danny Dreyer in the late '90s. This program is especially good not only for beginning runners, but for those recovering from injury.

And another program beginners have found helpful is offered by a local running store, Fleet Feet Fox Valley. No Boundaries is a 10-week training program for new runners with in-person workouts in the spring and concluding with a 5K (3.1 mile) celebration race on Global Running Day in early June.

Your 0.0 sign doesn't have to define you. Unless, of course, you're happy with where you are—and that's okay too. But if there's even a small part of you that's curious about what you're capable of, don't let that old story be the reason you never find out. So, what will your sign say? Will it still read "0.0" a year from now, or will you look back and realize that the hardest step wasn't the first mile—it was deciding to take it? ■



The author with Jeff Galloway at the Fox Cities Marathon Expo in 2015.



Gina Glover is a professional speaker, career coach, and founder of Gina Connects LLC. She specializes in helping individuals and organizations build meaningful connections through her signature keynote, *The 5th Question™*. Since 1996, Gina currently serves as president of the Wisconsin chapter of the National Speakers Association. A coach's daughter and parent of student-athletes, she inspires audiences with stories that bridge the sport of cross country and leadership.

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By JOHN GURHOLT

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The Lawrence Effect: Taylor Svoboda's Journey

SUBMITTED BY LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY



When Taylor Svoboda arrived at Lawrence University, it wasn't just about choosing a school: It was about choosing a place that wouldn't force a choice at all.

"What initially drew me to Lawrence University was the feeling that I didn't have to choose just one path—I could truly have it all," Svoboda said. She wanted to compete at a high level in basketball, be challenged academically, and grow as a person beyond the court and classroom. Lawrence stood out as a place where those ambitions weren't just possible—they were intentionally connected.

That promise has been fulfilled in ways she never expected. Beyond competing and excelling in her coursework, Svoboda has immersed herself in the inner workings of athletics, gaining hands-on experience in leadership and administration. "Being immersed in an environment that values character, mentorship, and impact has shown me how powerful athletics can be beyond competition," she said. The experiences have clarified her future and sparked a passion for a career in sports, where she can support and develop others the same way Lawrence has supported her.

DESIGNED FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

One of the defining features of Lawrence's support for student-athletes is its commitment to making excellence sustainable. "Lawrence University has played a significant role in supporting my ability to balance high-level academics with athletics by intentionally creating an environment where student-athletes are set up to succeed in both areas," Svoboda said. A recent addition—a dedicated academic space near the athletic facilities with access to tutors—has made a demanding schedule far more manageable. It's the kind of thoughtful infrastructure that allows student-athletes to move seamlessly between practice and study without sacrificing either.

And the support goes beyond spaces and schedules. "Lawrence has also demonstrated its commitment to student-athletes through faculty engagement and communication," she said. Svoboda participated in a seminar with professors focused on the student-athlete experience, helping faculty better understand the realities of balancing coursework, practices, travel, and competition. Those conversations fostered collaboration and led to real solutions, strengthening the partnership between academics and athletics.

The university's small classes and close-knit academic environment mean that support is never far away. "Knowing that my professors are accessible, understanding, and invested in my success has allowed me to fully engage in both academics and athletics," she said.

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

For Svoboda, women's basketball has been a classroom for leadership. "Women's basketball has shaped my understanding of leadership in ways that extend far beyond the court," she said. Early on, she learned the foundation of servant leadership: putting the team first and leading through effort, preparation, and consistency. "Those early lessons taught me that leadership is not about position or recognition, but about impact."

Her perspective deepened during her senior season, when she tore her ACL on the first official day of practice. "Without the ability to contribute on the court, I had to redefine what leadership looked like for me," she said. Leading from the sideline taught her vulnerability: being honest about struggle, asking for help, and allowing others to see strength in adversity.

This season, she's focused on leading through connection. "Loving my teammates—who have become my family—has been the most meaningful way I've led," she said. She's become a vocal presence, offering encouragement and perspective while taking the time to truly know her teammates as individuals.

That approach has shaped her professional aspirations as well. "Sports are a relational field, not a transactional one," Svoboda said. Whether she's working with student-athletes, coaches, or colleagues, she wants to lead with empathy, authenticity, and service—values she's cultivated at Lawrence.

MENTORSHIP THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Svoboda credits much of her growth to the mentors who have shaped her journey. Head coach Riley Woldt has been a constant source of challenge and encouragement. "He consistently challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone," she said. Assistant coaches Bri Hauge and Spenser Hogg emphasized positivity and resilience, helping her reframe obstacles as opportunities for growth.

Other leaders in the athletic department have provided hands-on mentorship that few undergraduates experience. Athletic Director Jason Imperati and Associate Athletic Director and Senior Woman Administrator Michelle Detwiler entrusted her with meaningful responsibilities across collegiate athletics operations. She's helped develop leadership workshops, design new gym decals, and assist with game-day operations—experiences that have given her a behind-the-scenes understanding of how college athletics works.

"Their guidance has not only expanded my skill set but also solidified my passion for a future career in college athletics," she said. Svoboda has seen firsthand how leadership, service, and impact intersect—lessons she plans to carry forward into her professional life.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE VIKINGS

For prospective student-athletes considering Lawrence, Svoboda offers honest guidance. "Lawrence is not for everyone—and that is what makes it so special," she said. The university asks a lot: It challenges students academically, pushes them athletically, and encourages personal growth that can feel uncomfortable at times. But for the right person, it's transformative.

"To be a Viking means holding yourself to a higher standard both on and off the court or field," she said. It's about working tirelessly on your education, character, relationships, and team ... and embracing something greater than individual success.

"It will push you to rise to the standard you set for yourself—and in doing so, help you become the person you are capable of being," she said. For Svoboda, that's exactly what it has done: helped her become a leader grounded in service, connection, and purpose. ■

Whole Foods for the Healthy Heart

BY KATE HARRELL JENKINS, MS, RD, CSSD, LD | YMCA DIETITIAN AND PERSONAL TRAINER, NEENAH-MENASHA



We all know exercise is good for the heart, but it's even better to pair exercise with nutrition. In this article, we will explore the benefits whole foods can provide for the heart, as well as how you can integrate heart-healthy strategies into your daily life.

Whole foods benefit the heart in many ways. Some that we will explore are an increase in fiber, heart-healthy phytonutrients, plant-based proteins, and healthy fats. In addition, the benefits of whole foods include what is found less in them vs. processed foods, including less sodium, less added sugars, and less inflammatory fats.

LET'S EXPLORE MORE!

Fiber aids in reducing cholesterol. Fiber-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains also offer other heart-healthy benefits to the body. A certain type of fiber, called soluble fiber, may be particularly beneficial in cholesterol reduction. And as a bonus, soluble fibers are also very healthy for our gut!

- Fiber-rich foods include whole grains, whole fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, beans, and other plant-based proteins
- Soluble fiber sources include oats, barley, flax seed, chia seeds, whole grains, apples, pears, and legumes

Phytonutrients are nutrients specific to plants that help to reduce disease risk. There are many phytonutrients that have benefits

specific to the heart. Benefits include reducing inflammation (inflammation is part of the process of plaque formation, which can lead to blockages, heart attack, and stroke), antioxidant protection (the oxidation of LDL, the "bad" cholesterol, may be part of the process of plaque formation), and promoting vasodilation (opening of the vessels, which can improve blood flow).

- Polyphenols are a family of phytonutrients with many heart-healthy benefits. Subgroups of polyphenols include:
- Flavonoids that benefit heart health through their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits. Other phytonutrients in this category may also help reduce blood pressure.
- Anthocyanins are found in many of the blue and purple fruits and vegetables, such as berries, and may aid in reducing blood pressure and inflammation.

Foods: berries, grapes, cherries, red wine, red cabbage

- Isoflavones offer many of the benefits listed above but also are found in foods that provide plant-based protein, a nice swap for some of the animal-based proteins that contribute more saturated fat.

Foods: soybeans, whole soy foods, legumes

- Lignan-rich foods are often high in fiber, and foods that contain these phytonutrients provide antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits. Fiber-rich foods aid in the reduction of cholesterol and promote a healthy gut, which impacts heart and overall health. Flaxseeds, a strong source of lignans, also contain omega 3 fatty acids that are anti-inflammatory.

Foods: flaxseed, sesame seeds, whole grains, beans



- Carotenoids have antioxidant properties, which protect lipoproteins like LDL from damage. They may also help to reduce inflammation, arterial stiffness, and blood pressure.

Foods: red, orange, and yellow fruits and vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes

- Organosulfur compounds improve vasodilation, reduce blood pressure, and provide antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits like the phytonutrients above.

Foods: allium family foods including garlic, onion, leeks, and shallots but also cruciferous vegetables as well

- Nitrates from plant foods like leafy greens may improve vasodilation or the opening of the vessels, which improves blood flow.

Foods: greens (arugula, spinach, romaine), beets, and beet root juice

Bottom line: Eat the rainbow, and not the Skittles variety! Aim to include plant-based foods from all colors and varieties to boost your heart health in many ways. One way to start is including a fruit or vegetable with every meal or snack.

Plant-Based Proteins can be a great option to help maintain protein intake for active individuals but help to reduce cholesterol through the addition of more fiber, while also reducing saturated fat intake. Most will also contain other beneficial phytonutrients.

- Beans are a great way to add protein into meals. Consider adding beans to salads and soups, stir fries, and more!

Recipe ideas include black bean burgers, chili, cowboy caviar, hummus, minestrone or lentil soups, and so much more!

- Soy foods (whole): soy foods provide the phytonutrient group isoflavones, touched on above. Isoflavone-rich foods are also typically high in fiber, and by swapping these plant-based protein options for animal proteins, you may reduce the total intake of saturated fat in the diet.

Food examples include tofu, edamame, tempeh, miso

- Nuts and Seeds are a nice blend of both plant-based protein and healthy fats, which we will touch on more below. Consider almonds, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, ground flax, pumpkin seeds, and more!

Healthy fats like omega 3 fatty acids can improve heart health by reducing inflammation and may also improve overall and LDL cholesterol when swapping in monounsaturated fats for saturated fat sources.

- Omega 3 sources: fish, ground flax/chia seeds, walnuts, fortified foods
- Monounsaturated fat sources: nuts and seeds and nut butters, olive oil, olives, avocado

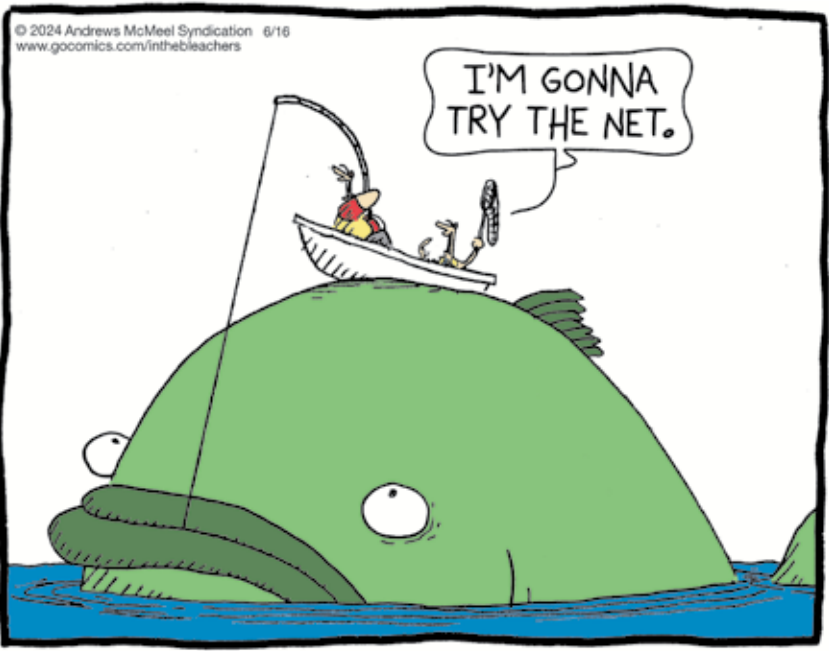
Benefits of whole foods vs. processed are not only about what we add to the diet, but also what will likely go down in the diet, including sodium, added sugars, and inflammatory fats. The primary source of sodium in the diet is processed foods as is the same for added sugars. Both excess sodium and excess added sugars in the diet may negatively affect heart health, such as by increasing blood pressure as well as inflammation. Processed foods also may contain more pro-inflammatory fats due to the oils and other fats included in processed foods.

Heart health is not always at the top of every athlete's mind, but it is important. Exercise demands a lot of the heart, so let's further support heart health on the nutrition side as well. ■

IN THE BLEACHERS



BY BEN ZAEHRINGER



WINTER OLYMPIC WORD SEARCH SOLUTION
Puzzle on page 6



Kate Harrell Jenkins is a registered dietitian, certified sports dietitian, personal trainer and group fitness instructor. She loves all things wellness, and is an avid runner with over 20 marathons and ultramarathons under her belt. She also has a passion for working with Parkinson's and is certified in Rock Steady Boxing, PWR! Moves and Pedaling for Parkinson's. Kate believes in bringing together nutrition and fitness and would love to talk with you! Feel free to email Kate at kharrell@ymcafoxcities.org or kateharrellrd@gmail.com. Photo by David Schuhart, DRS Photos

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Outdoors

WITH GREG SEUBERT

Quinney Fishing Club Makes a Difference on Lake Winnebago

There isn't much going on in Quinney, a small, unincorporated community on Lake Winnebago's east shore.

However, the fishing club named for the community has more than 200 members and has donated to several organizations and departments that help keep the Winnebago System's annual sturgeon spearing and ice fishing seasons safe.

Jon Groeschl is the club's treasurer.

"The Quinney Fishing Club was established back in 1954 to help mainly with ice fishing, with maintaining roads and getting fishermen out on the lake," he said. "It's a fishing club and not a sturgeon club. We look to help the fishing community as much as possible."

Anglers make up the majority of the club's membership, according to Groeschl.

"It's mostly guys who are pretty dedicated fishermen in our area that want to see the lake be used to its full extent," he said.

Quinney is located directly across Lake Winnebago from Oshkosh. That's about 10 miles by boat, but more than 50 miles by vehicle.

"The club maintains a landing at Quinney, a landing just north of that at Twilight Beach, and a landing just south of that at Eckers Lakeland Road," Groeschl said.

Other fishing clubs around Winnebago are based in Brothertown, Pipe, Stockbridge, Van Dyne, Fond du Lac, and other communities.



The Quinney Fishing Club recently donated \$2,000 to the Calumet County Dive Team. From left are club director Scott Mullard; club president Mike Ecker; dive team members Connie Loewe and Jeremy Gackenhimer; and club treasurer Jon Groeschl. Photo Courtesy of Quinney Fishing Club

One of the largest is the Otter Street Fishing Club, based in Oshkosh.

"We work a lot with Otter Street," Groeschl said. "In the winter, we run a road from Quinney to Otter Street's landing (in Oshkosh). It's about 9½ miles across the lake."

He said it's important for clubs such as Quinney to donate time, equipment, and money to help keep anglers and spearers safe.

"It's very important," he said. "We have all these trucks out and have insurance on these trucks. The bridges have to be maintained and there's fuel to plow these roads. It takes a lot to keep everything running. A lot of these clubs donate to local organizations like Walleyes For Tomorrow."

Some clubs, including Quinney, own, provide, and maintain bridges that help spearers and anglers avoid problem areas on the lake, including cracks in the ice.

"The most work you'll see from the Quinney Fishing Club with your own eyes is maintaining the roads and bridges (during the winter)," Groeschl said. "We have the most sets of bridges on the lake. We help other clubs. We take our bridges across the lake to Oshkosh to help them out for the Battle on Bago."

The club also donates money to various causes and handed out checks during a recent meeting.

"We were able to give \$1,000 apiece to the Town of Calumet Fire Department, Town of Calumet first responders, Stockbridge Fire Department, Stockbridge first responders, and Harrison Fire Department," Groeschl said. "Then, we gave \$2,000 to the Calumet County Dive Team. We do that because if there are issues on the lake, they're the ones to get out there and help get people off the lake. We just donated \$3,000 to the DNR for the tagging of white bass. They want to do a study on white bass, and we donated the \$3,000 to pretty much cover it. We donated a trailer to the Chilton High School Conservation Club that they use for their ice fishing team."

Groeschl said the club is most active during the winter while Winnebago is covered with ice.

"Our plow committee chairman, Mark Ecker, is out there almost every day checking the bridges," he said. "I'm sure people would figure it out, but it's more

of a safety thing. There's somebody out there checking the lake that knows what's going on. These guys have been out there for many years. Nobody knows for 100% certainty, but they know. If you don't have these clubs with these bridges out there, people aren't going to be able to get around. They're out there to promote safety on the lake."

The club raises money throughout the year with various fundraisers.

"A big chunk of that comes from our road donations," Groeschl said. "The community helps out there and the fishermen out there are very generous. That money also goes toward the maintenance of our trucks and bridges."

"We have our annual raffle every April," he said. "In August, we have a sheephead tournament and fish fry and that's a big hit. We run a big fish fry on Friday night and the following day is the sheephead tournament. We'll serve up to a thousand plates of fish. In November, we have a calendar raffle, and we run our icemaker raffle at the end of January. That's where the community really helps us out. We have an emcee, a meal, and a bunch of side raffles."

The club meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the clubhouse in Quinney, and Groeschl encouraged anyone interested in joining the organization to attend a meeting.

"We're just out there trying to help the community," he said. "The community helps us and we like to give back. I don't know if the club's really changed over the years. It's always been to help fishermen." ■



Greg Seubert is a freelance reporter, photographer and editor based out of his rural Weyauwega home. He spent 28 years covering high school sports for the Waupaca County Post, a Waupaca-based weekly newspaper, before stepping down in April 2024. Before that, he spent 10 years as a reporter and editor at four other newspaper in Wisconsin. He joined the Waupaca County Post prior to the start of the 1996-97 school year and eventually covered sports teams from Waupaca, Iola-Scandinavia, Weyauwega-Fremont, Little Wolf (Manawa), Amherst, Wild Rose, Almond-Bancroft, Stevens Point, New London, Clintonville and Hortonville high schools.

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Go Lime Green Mental Health Matters Event

BY MARIA GUTSMIEDL

NAMI Fox Valley and the Focus on Suicide event team are proud to announce their partnership to bring the first-ever **Go Lime Green** program to Wisconsin—hosted by Kaukauna High School. This powerful mental health awareness initiative will take place the week of **February 9-13, 2026**, culminating in a mental health awareness night at the Kaukauna boys' varsity basketball game against Neenah High School on Friday, February 13, 2026. Not only is this the first Go Lime Green event in the state, but Wisconsin is also just the fourth state nationwide to host the program.

Go Lime Green shines a spotlight on youth mental health, creating space for education, conversation, and connection. In the days leading up to the game, students will take part in activities focused on healthy coping strategies, breaking down mental health stigma, and showing their support by signing the Go Lime Green banner—symbolizing their commitment to mental health awareness. Community members attending the game will also be invited to sign the banner, reinforcing the message that mental health matters to everyone.

Starting these conversations is critical. Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among youth, making awareness, education, and open dialogue more important than ever. Checking in—on our kids, our loved ones, and ourselves—can make a



life-changing difference. Fans are encouraged to wear lime green and stand in solidarity with youth mental health by attending the Go Lime Green game on February 13 at Kaukauna High School. Together, we can remind our community that mental health doesn't discriminate—and hope is always within reach. ■

To learn more, visit: www.nami.org/kids-teens-and-young-adults/what-you-need-to-know-about-youth-suicide/

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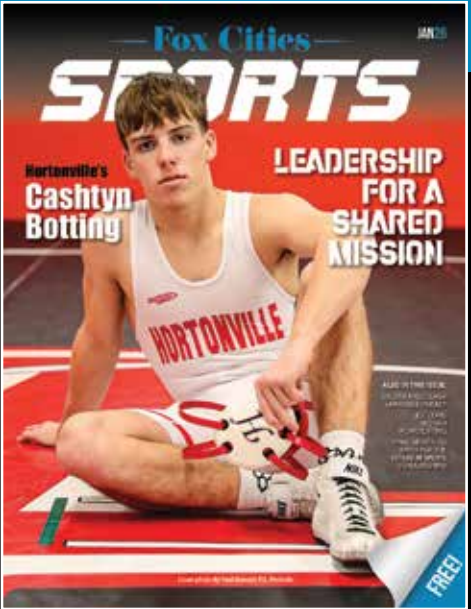
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Based in Menasha, Centerline Athletics exists to empower court sport athletes in their pursuit of health, happiness, and excellence through purpose-built performance apparel.

"Every dive is an adventure; we never know what we will uncover from the depths." ■

~ Christie and Ed



This photo was taken during a cleanup in Lake Minocqua, Wisconsin, right outside of The Boathouse Supper Club. We are actually scheduled to return there this Spring to clear out boats and a significant amount of debris following a large fire. You can see the video of the wreckage on our "Ed the Diver" Facebook page. Just search "Minocqua" on our page and everything will come up.

During that same weekend, the Minocqua Police Department sent us an honorary police badge after we successfully recovered a gun and two cash drawers from beneath the bridge.



Ed and Christie B. have dived with Manitowoc Minute's Charlie Berens three times now, with more to come.

PARTING SHOTS

Photos submitted

