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All 18 Aspirus Health hospitals earn 2024 Tree Campus recognition from Arbor Day Foundation

ASPIRUS HEALTH



The Arbor Day Foundation recently named all 18 Aspirus Health hospitals as 2024 Tree Campus institutions for their dedication to enhancing community well-being through tree investment, education, and community engagement.

Aspirus Health hospitals earned this recognition:

- Aspirus Divine Savior (Portage, Wis.)
- Aspirus Eagle River
- Aspirus Iron River
- Aspirus Ironwood
- Aspirus Keweenaw (Laurium, Mich.)
- Aspirus Lake View (Two Harbors, Minn.)
- Aspirus Langlade (Antigo, Wis.)
- Aspirus Medford
- Aspirus Merrill
- Aspirus Plover
- Aspirus Rhinelander
- Aspirus St. Luke's (Duluth, Minn.)
- Aspirus Stanley
- Aspirus Stevens Point
- Aspirus Tomahawk

• Aspirus Wausau

• Aspirus Wisconsin Rapids

• Howard Young Medical Center (Woodruff, Wis.)

Currently, only 59 hospitals in the nation are designated as Tree Campus institutions.

“As a health system,

we recognize the critical importance trees play in the health of individuals and communities,” said Andrew Miller, Director of System Facilities Management and Security for Aspirus

See ASPIRUS page 2

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New Statewide Operator's Permit Offers Alternative to Traditional Bartender's Licenses

WI DEPT OF REVENUE

A new Wisconsin law took effect on January 1, 2025, introducing a Statewide Operator's Permit. This provides a streamlined option for individuals serving alcoholic beverages across multiple municipalities. What is the Statewide Operator's Permit? The Statewide Operator's Permit offers a new alternative to traditional operators' licenses, often

referred to as "bartender's licenses." Unlike municipal operators' licenses, valid only within the issuing municipality, the Statewide Operator's Permit is valid at a licensed or permitted premises anywhere in Wisconsin.

It provides flexibility for businesses operating in multiple municipalities, eliminating the need to obtain separate operators' licenses for each location. "The implementation of the Statewide Operator's Permit marks a significant step forward in ensuring responsible alcohol service across Wisconsin," said Mark Meyer, Division Administrator for the Wisconsin Division of Alcohol Beverages (DAB). "This new law streamlines the process for servers and establishments alike, promoting consistency and enhancing public safety. We

are committed to working with licensees that choose this option to facilitate a smooth transition and uphold the highest standards of alcohol beverage control."

For more details and permit qualifications, visit the Wisconsin Division of Alcohol Beverages website at revenue.wi.gov.



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ASPIRUS from page 1

Health. "We believe planting and caring for trees is the right thing to do and aligns to our mission of healing people, promoting health and strengthening communities."

The Arbor Day Foundation is a global nonprofit with a mission to inspire people to



plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. Its network of more than a million supporters and partners has helped the organization plant more than 500 million trees in forests and communities across more than 60 countries since 1972. The Tree Campus program recognizes schools, universities, and healthcare facilities that utilize trees to improve their communities.

"Healthcare institutions like Aspirus Health's 18 hospitals are at the forefront of recognizing the profound impact nature can have on human health," said Michelle Saulnier, Vice President of Programs at the Arbor Day Foundation. "By integrating trees and green spaces into their campuses, facilities like Aspirus Health are not only creating healing environments today, but they are also building a foundation for healthier, more resilient communities in the future."

Trees and green spaces are proven to improve health outcomes and reduce stress for both patients

and caretakers. Trees also provide profound layers of good for the greater community, including combating extreme heat, improving air quality, and reducing flooding impacts.

"The landscape and grounds program of our Aspirus Health campuses sets the stage for the exceptional care we deliver to our patients," Miller said. "Our facilities teams take pride in ensuring we provide high-quality services and an excellent patient experience for everyone who visits our campuses. I commend our facilities team members for their hard work and dedication that earned Tree Campus designation for all 18 of our hospitals."

To earn Tree Campus recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation, a healthcare institution must uphold five core standards:

- Maintaining a tree advisory committee
- Having a facility tree care plan
- Completing a community forestry project
- Educating the community on the connection between trees and human health
- Investing in a campus tree program

To learn more about the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Campus program, visit arborday.org.

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Wisconsin Department of Revenue Special Agent's Interstate Investigation Nets Arrest in Unclaimed Property Fraud Scheme

WI DEPT OF REVENUE

A resourceful and determined Special Agent with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) helped apprehend a suspect in an out-of-state unclaimed property fraud scheme. His investigation prevented over \$800,000 in fraudulent checks from being paid to the suspect, money that was eventually turned over to its rightful owner.

Tennessee Bank, Georgia Department of Revenue Assist in Apprehending Suspect

Michael Austin, Special Agent with DOR's Office of Criminal Investigation, was tipped off by employees at a bank in Tennessee. They had grown suspicious

when a customer deposited \$894,555 in unclaimed property checks issued by DOR. After placing a hold on the funds and contacting DOR, Special Agent Austin coordinated with the bank to convince the suspect he would need to claim the money in person, where local law enforcement would make an arrest.

When that plan fell through at the last minute, Special Agent Austin pivoted, informing the suspect that he could pick up the money at the Georgia Department of Revenue instead. Upon arrival, the suspect was met by law enforcement officers from the Georgia Department of

See **FRAUD** page 4

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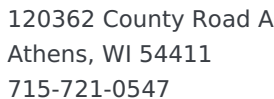


The history of the BABA begins in Clintonville in April of 1946. The league was the creation of A.N. Brunner of Leopold, combining the Wolf River League, the Shawano County League and the Little Wolf League. Wittenberg, Eldernamwood, Eland, Biron and Hatley are all teams part



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Youth Philanthropy Leadership Program

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One of Sue Nelson's dreams before she retired



from the Community Foundation was to start a program for youth in our community to learn about philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. That dream came true through the Youth Philanthropy Leadership Program, which began in 2023. But could Sue have envisioned that one of the original students would go on to pursue a degree in philanthropic studies?

Meet Mosinee High School senior Jena Bartnik. "I've always been passionate about a lot of different social issues and politics—unlike your typical teenager," she said.

"I've excelled in school and all my extracurriculars, but I've never really fallen in love with a specific subject. The Youth Philanthropy Program opened my eyes to what can be done for the community."

Bartnik will begin studying philanthropic leadership this fall at Indiana University Indianapolis, at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, the only school of its kind in the country that offers a philanthropy major. She competed at the university's Pitch Your Passion competition in March and was one of three students awarded a full-ride Thomasson scholarship. "Sue Nelson likes to call me her and Kelly's 'success story,'" Bartnik said with a laugh.

'Kelly' is Kelly Price, Director of Programs and Donor Relations at the Community Foundation. She talked about leveraging local talent. "We have these amazing students, like Jena, in the area who are willing to learn about philanthropy and capable of making big decisions as part of our Distributions Committee," Price stated. "We couldn't turn away all of this talent."

Price said that junior-year students experience what is called the "Year of Giving," where they learn about the basics of philanthropy and how businesses, nonprofits, foundations, and government entities work together to support the nonprofit field. Senior-year students then go through a "Year of Receiving," learning how that money is given in a relationship-

building setting. "The students talk with our local funders, local businesses, and independent donors," Price continued. "Then they work on the four pillars of fundraising, like an annual appeal, a fundraising event, grant writing, and personal asks."

Bartnik said her senior year fundraiser was a great experience. "We learned how to host a successful fundraising campaign and everything that goes into that. We hosted a pickleball tournament at the Wausau Tennis Club," she said. "We had about 30 community members come out and participate in the tournament, and we raised a little over \$2,000 from doing personal asks. It ran smoothly, and the participants were happy to know that there are youth in their community who care about our local nonprofits."

This hands-on experience solidified Bartnik's college plans. "When I completed the program's first year, I realized that I wanted to study philanthropy and take it with me," she stated. "I saw everything come together, and it was really an 'aha' moment for me that this is what I want to do in my future. As

students, we now see that we can make a difference within our communities. If we put the work in, we can see the results. Being able to talk face-to-face with different nonprofit directors and businesses greatly influenced me."

Price said the impact on students is incredible. "We have some really great stories," she said. "One said he may not be going into the philanthropic field, but he wants to eventually become an attorney and come back to Wausau, join a board, and help nonprofits. Another student said that after visiting one of our local mental health facilities, she wants to go into that field, while another student will be interning with the Community Partners Campus."

Bartnik had more praise for the Youth Philanthropy Leadership Program. "The program teaches you communication, leadership, speaking up for your beliefs, and finding your voice. Learning how to communicate with the other students in the program and with people in the community was empowering. And now I know I can actually do this as a career and make a difference in the world."



FRAUD

from page 2

Revenue, but because the

only contact with him up to that point had been through an untraceable "burner" phone, nobody could

be certain this was the individual perpetrating the fraud. Thinking quickly, Special Agent Austin dialed the phone number he had been communicating with the suspect from; when it rang in his pocket, they knew they had the right person and took him into custody.

The suspect, a former law school student on parole for committing a series of large-scale financial crimes, was prosecuted by the US Attorney's Office in Georgia and sentenced to 15 months in prison. Special Agent Austin's investigation identified additional out-of-state unclaimed property claims that likely would have been filed. His hard work and perseverance prevented other Wisconsin taxpayers from becoming fraud victims.

"I commend Special Agent Austin, who showed unbelievable determination in solving this crime," said DOR Secretary Designee David Casey. "We are also grateful for the keen eye of those who reported the deposit as suspicious, and we appreciate all the law enforcement support we received to prevent this fraud. Fraud is everywhere, and this case is a reminder that we all have to be vigilant."

See **FRAUD**
page 10

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Wausau Transit Commission Tackles Fleet Needs, Summer School Transit, and Staffing Hurdles

NATASHA WINKLER



The Wausau Transit Commission convened on April 17th, addressing crucial issues impacting the city’s public transportation system. Among the primary agenda items were decisions regarding the replacement of aging vehicles, ensuring transportation access for summer school students, and acknowledging the ongoing challenges in managing grants and maintaining consistent staffing.

A significant discussion centered on fleet modernization, specifically the purchase of supervisor vehicles using available CARES Act funds. Commissioners approved the acquisition of two new 2025 Ford Explorers

to replace supervisor vehicles from 2006 and 2008. These older vehicles were described as heavily rusted and in poor condition. Each Explorer costs \$39,658.40, bringing the total to just under \$80,000. These vehicles are essential for supervisors and for transporting drivers between shifts at the transit center, requiring a vehicle large enough to accommodate multiple individuals.

The Explorers were selected from state contract options due to their size compared to smaller models. Crucially, this purchase is 100% funded by federal CARES money, which had received an extension from the FTA just before it was set to expire. The ability to use this specific grant money for vehicles was a recent discovery. While the funding source alleviates the burden on city taxpayers, some concerns were raised about the public perception of spending nearly \$80,000

on supervisor vehicles amidst broader transit operational issues. The delay in utilizing this and other grants, was attributed to significant turnover in management and a lack of institutional knowledge regarding grant administration within the department. Fortunately, assistance from a federal representative helped secure the necessary extensions to retain the funds. The purchase received unanimous approval.

Addressing another critical area, the commission also approved updating the paratransit fleet, which provides essential transportation for individuals with disabilities. The current paratransit vehicles are 2012 GMCs, which are considered well past their federally recommended useful life. Again, CARES Act funding was identified as a source to address this long-standing need. The approved plan includes purchasing

two new 2025 T 350 high roof vans and one new 2025 E 450 cutaway van. Two of the vehicles were intentionally downsized to a ‘transit van size,’ better suited for frequent single passengers, while adding a second cutaway complements a larger van acquired by the county the previous year. The new vans will feature four-wheel drive for improved safety in winter conditions.

The commission believes capacity will be sufficient, with smaller vans seating up to seven people or one wheelchair, and the larger van accommodating two wheelchairs. Discussion also touched on the possibility that the current paratransit service may be underutilized, potentially due to a lack of public awareness or understanding of how to access the program. The older fleet vehicles will be sold, with the proceeds applied against the grant funding. This paratransit vehicle purchase was also

unanimously approved.

Finally, the commission tackled the issue of transportation for students

attending summer school

See **TRANSIT** page 6

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PUBLISHER’S LETTER

The Human Condition And Its Many Variations

Dear Reader,

Remember the song “Just Dropped In (to see what condition my condition was in)” by Kenny Rogers and the First Edition? In today’s world, rare indeed is the person who enjoys what we might call perfect health. It seems that nearly everyone is managing some condition, whether it’s asthma, high blood pressure, cholesterol issues, diabetes, heart disease or one of countless other ailments. The human condition itself appears fraught with conditions, ranging from the mild to the severe.



We try our best—eating well, exercising, following doctors’ orders—but even with all our efforts, good health isn’t guaranteed. It can be elusive, slipping through our fingers no matter how tightly we try to hold on. And so, we adapt. We manage. We roll with the flow, accepting that our bodies, like our lives, are imperfect.

Perhaps it’s this imperfection that makes the human experience all the more poignant. Life is never entirely smooth, nor is health, but we endure and continue on, adjusting as we go. In a way, the conditions we face are just part of the larger condition we all share: being human.

PATRICK J. WOOD
Publisher

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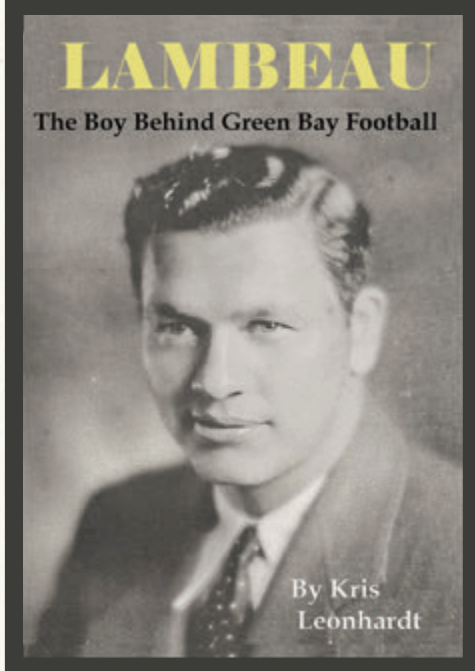
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From the streets of Green Bay, Lambeau developed a passion for football and grew that yearning into a football team that would exist long past his lifetime.

Like the Packers, Lambeau’s story is a tale of adversity and challenge, but also a story of triumph and perseverance. While his personal life and professional career were wrought with challenge, his legacy continues to resonate in the Green Bay community, including a massive structure along Lombardi Avenue that shines a light on his contribution to the professional team.

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*information sourced from the video of the 4/17/25 committee meeting



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27. Away from one another
28. Challenges
29. A harsh scraping sound
32. Attaches to a wall
33. Capital of Ethiopia: __
Ababa
34. German river
36. Disappointed
37. Star Wars character Solo
38. Supervises flying
40. Not mass-produced
41. Nonsense
43. Automobile
44. Hogshead (abbr.)
46. Soak in water
47. Flower cluster
49. Romanian city
50. A parent is often one
51. Fencing sword
52. Body part
53. Region
54. Farm building
57. Ali's surname at birth
58. Waxy bird beak covering
59. Stiff bristles
61. VCR button
62. Small amount

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	1				6	9		3
6				4				1

Level: Intermediate

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2	8	3	9	1	5	7	6	4	
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9	6	5	4	7	1	2	3	8	

1700

Student Homelessness at a New High

NATASHA WINKLER

New data reveals a concerning trend across Wisconsin public schools that warrants our attention right here in our community: the number of students identified as homeless has reached a new high. During the 2023-24 school year, 20,195 students in Wisconsin were identified as homeless. This represents a significant 9.1% increase from the previous year, even as overall student enrollment declined. This is the highest number recorded since the state began tracking this data in 2019.

While the word “homeless” might conjure specific images, the definition used by schools under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is broader than what you might hear from housing agencies. It includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Crucially, this definition includes students who are “doubled up” – living with friends or family due to losing their own housing or experiencing economic hardship. These “doubled up” situations account for the majority of homeless students reported in Wisconsin, specifically 77% from 2019 to 2024. Other living situations included in the definition are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds, emergency or transitional shelters, cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or substandard housing.

The recent rise in reported student homelessness is likely a result of a few factors. While there appears to be a genuine increase in family homelessness, school officials also credit improved methods of identifying students in need. Awareness of student homelessness has grown, and intentional efforts have been made by the state's Department of Public Instruction and local districts to improve identification and reporting procedures. However, a significant driver remains the insufficient supply of affordable housing throughout the state, especially family-appropriate options. School leaders expect this trend to continue partly due to this housing challenge.

This issue doesn't affect all students equally. While the statewide average rate of homelessness in 2024 was 2.5%, it was much higher

for English learners (5.6%), students with disabilities (3.9%), and students of color (5.5%). The reported rates also show interesting patterns by age, generally decreasing as students get older until a notable jump in the twelfth grade. This late high school increase may be linked to students turning 18 and leaving difficult living situations even without stable alternatives.

A particularly vulnerable group highlighted in the data is unaccompanied students, those without a parent or guardian. They made up 11.2% of homeless students in 2024. The proportion of unaccompanied students grows significantly in the later high school years, with a nearly 100% increase between eleventh and twelfth grade in the graduating class of 2024. These students face the added burden of not having an adult advocate or

support system.

While schools cannot solve homelessness itself, they play a critical role in mitigating its effects on education. Students experiencing housing instability historically face worse educational outcomes, including lower attendance rates, less academic success, lower graduation rates, and a higher likelihood of switching schools. Regular school attendance is particularly challenging for these students due to unstable housing and changing transportation needs.

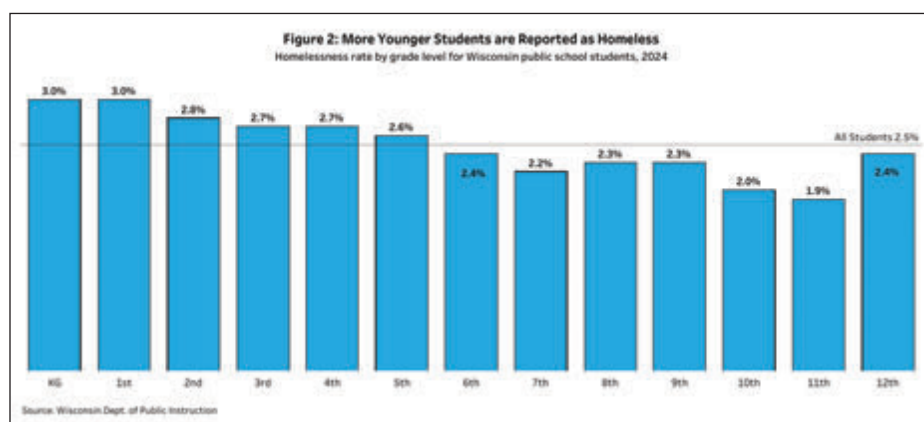
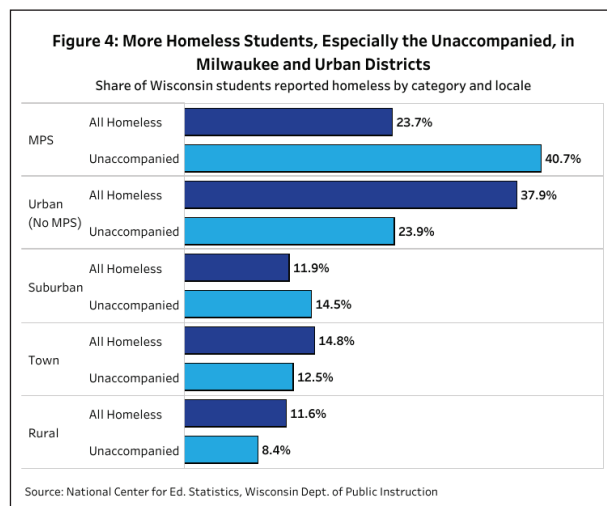
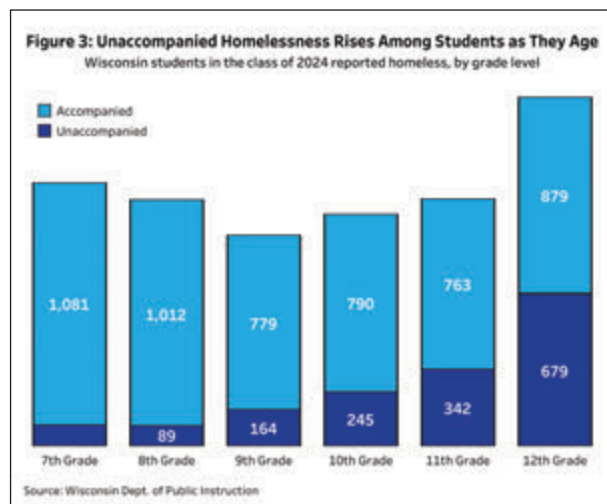
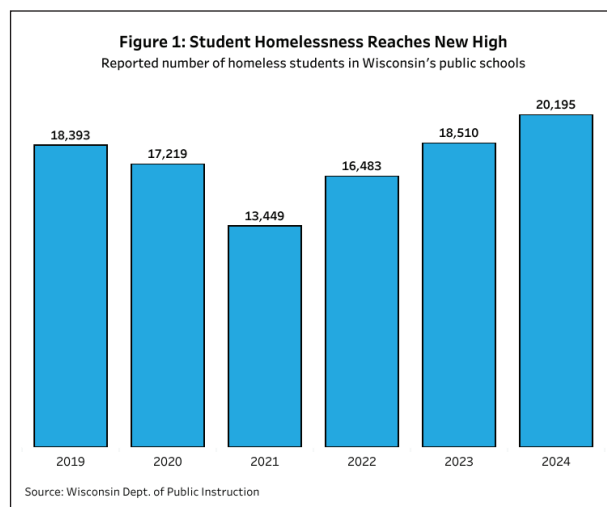
Despite the common barriers homeless students face, such as lack of internet or reliable transportation, effective support must be individualized. School staff are encouraged to build relationships to understand and meet these specific needs. Some districts have dedicated staff and offer preferential

treatment for homeless students accessing support programs like academic remediation.

Identifying and supporting these students is not just about helping a

few individuals; addressing the needs of this high-risk group could benefit not only them but also Wisconsin's educational outcomes overall. As community members, understanding

these challenges and supporting local school efforts is vital to ensuring all students, regardless of their housing situation, have the opportunity to succeed.



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Fri., May 2nd • 8am-6pm
Sat., May 3rd • 9am-3pm

98 SALES!!!

Maps & address list at Stratford businesses & www.stratfordwi.com Starting April 28th

Join us on Facebook at the real "Rummaging Around Stratford Official Group"



Wittenberg: Fri. 5/9 - Sat. 5/10, 7am-4:30pm. City Wide Rummage-O-Rama. 14 sales including three churches. Something for everyone. City Wide

Rummage Sales This Week 7200

BIG RUMMAGE SALE

at Redeemer Lutheran Church
May 2&3 8-12pm.
50% off on Sat. May 3rd.
All proceeds go to The Neighbors Place Food Pantry. Will be held indoors at 6404 Old Costa Rd.

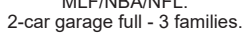


Rummage Sales This Week 7200

Wausau: 905 S. 19th Ave. TH 5/1 thru SAT 5/3, 8a-6p
Tools, yard tools, lawnmower, household & more.



Weston: 3605 SANDY LANE. Wednesday, 4/30, 4 p.m.- 7 p.m. Thursday & Friday May 1st -2nd 9am-5pm Saturday May 3rd 9am-12noon. HUGE multi-family sale. Everything from kids to adult. Kids clothes GALORE. Lots of households and knick knacks. Other sales in neighborhood.



Weston: 6602 Randylyn St. TH & FR 5/1 & 5/2 8a-6p; SAT 5/3 8a-3p. Womens & mens clothing; fall wedding decor; wedding items; household; women's shoes; antiques; crocks, and misc.



Rummage Sales Upcoming 7202

Rib Mtn. Neighborhood Garage Sales CASH ONLY. 4 garages. TH & FRI 5/8 & 5/9: 8a-5p. SAT 5/10 8a-3p. Albums & VHS tapes; vintage beer can collection; antiques; antique table w/5 chairs; drapery stretcher frames; quilting frames; glider-rocker; outdoor chaise lounge; child-size recliner; clothing (boys newborn-2T; girls 4T; boys 5T; mens & womens plus-size); Elvie hands-free breast pump & supplies; baby items (swing and bouncer; highchairs; toys & more); Color Street; craft supplies; home & Paris decor; maple syrup; plants; tools; trail camera; seasonal items; Simplicity zero-turn mower; Singer sewing machine & many misc. items. Hwy N to KK, left on KK 3-1/4 miles. Watch for signs.



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Rummage Sales Upcoming 7202

Weston: Thursday, 5/1-Saturday, 5/3, 8 a.m.- 6 p.m. Multi-family rummage sale. Large variety of items. Kids toys, books of all kinds, puzzles, furniture - table/chairs, hutch -, large variety of women clothes/shoes - mostly size XL, men's size 2XL. Kitchen items, holiday, décor, and much more. Come check it out! Sure you will find something! Thanks. 7305 Kmiecik St Weston - Follow The Signs!



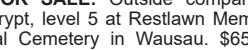
Miscellaneous Sales 7212

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WIAA Winter Team Tournament Sportsmanship Award Recipients Selected

TODD CLARK
DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS

The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association, in cooperation with Rural Mutual Insurance, has chosen the recipients of the team Sportsmanship Awards for the 2025 winter State Tournaments.

The winners of the prestigious Sportsmanship Award are Holmen in team wrestling, West Salem Co-op in gymnastics, Sun Prairie West Co-op in girls hockey, Amery Co-op in boys hockey, Owen-Withee in girls basketball and Wausau East in boys basketball.

Following its appearance in the State Team Wrestling Tournament, Holmen was named as the recipient for its sportsmanship efforts by coaches, competitors and fans. The Vikings advanced to the Division 1 semifinals with a 57-18 victory over Muskego in the quarterfinals before falling to eventual champion Kaukauna, 40-22, in their semifinal match. It's the second time the Vikings have won the award in team wrestling, having earned the honor in 2021. It's the Vikings' fourth award overall. They received the honor in softball in 1999 and gymnastics in 2007. Honorable mention for the award was extended to Oostburg and St. Croix Falls.

The sportsmanship evaluations and staff observations at the State Gymnastics Championships led to the selection of the West Salem/Aquinas/Bangor co-op as the Sportsmanship Award winner for 2025. The co-op displayed positive enthusiasm and finished eighth in Division 1 at the team championships. It's the first time the co-op has been bestowed the honor. Also receiving consideration for the award were West Bend East and Chippewa Fall/McDonell Catholic.

Wausau East returned to the tournament field in boys basketball for the first time since 2007, and the sportsmanship demonstrated by the players, coaches and school community earned the Lumberjacks the decoration. As the #3 seed in the Division 2 bracket, they fell in the semifinals to eventual champion Wauwatosa West, 75-63. It's the second time Wausau East has been selected as recipient of the award in boys basketball, which accounts for its overall total. They also received the recognition in 1971. The schools receiving honorable mention are Elk Mound, Marshfield, The Prairie School and Turtle Lake.

Owen-Withee is the Sportsmanship Award winner in girls basketball



following the Blackhawks' State Tournament run. The team and community were determined to have exhibited the best sportsmanship in the tournament. As the #4 seed, they fell 61-36 to eventual Division 5 champion Assumption in the semifinals. The Blackhawks won the award once previously with their girls basketball appearance in the 2005 State Tournament. The schools receiving honorable mention are Barneveld, Durand-Arkansaw, Elk Mound, Muskego and Rice Lake.

The Sun Prairie West Co-op, consisting of six schools, including Sun Prairie West, Sun Prairie East, DeForest, Madison East, Madison La Follette and Waunakee, won the award in girls hockey for

the second straight season, which accounts for the co-op's overall total. The Cap City Cougars, the #4 seed in the State Tournament, fell to top-seeded and eventual-champion De Pere Co-op 4-0 in the semifinals. The De Pere Co-op received honorable mention for the award.

The good sportsmanship modeled by the Amery/Clayton/Clear Lake/Unity Co-op both on the ice and in the stands during the State Boys Hockey Tournament led to its selection as the Sportsmanship Award recipient. The Warriors finished runner-up in the tournament, defeating Somerset/St. Croix Falls 4-2 in the semifinals and falling 5-3 to Tomahawk in the championship game. It's the first time the Amery Co-op has

been selected for the award. McFarland and Tomahawk received honorable mention.

The WIAA/Rural Mutual Insurance Sportsmanship Award is presented to one school and community in each of the State team tournaments that exhibits exemplary sportsmanship. The award recipients are determined by the sportsmanship displayed by athletes, coaches, cheer and support groups, mascots, bands and spectators. Additional consideration is given for the effort of school administrators and chaperones to ensure support for their teams are positive and that the highest ideals of sportsmanship are showcased. Award winners receive a trophy and banner in recognition of the honor. Schools receiving honorable mention are acknowledged with a certificate of recognition.

The selection process includes contributions and evaluations from contest officials, tournament management, police and security personnel, crowd control and ushers, WIAA staff members, area hotels and restaurants. Rural Mutual Insurance has been a sponsor of this award since 1965, and it partnership contributes to the promotion of sportsmanship in education-based athletics as a valued corporate partner of the WIAA.

FRAUD from page 4

Perseverance Leads to the Rightful Owner

There was only one order of business left: tracking down the Wisconsin taxpayer who was the rightful owner of the unclaimed property. Complicating matters was the fact that the individual valued privacy, changing residences frequently without updating his driver's license address, didn't own a cellphone, and had no recent vehicle history. Through Special Agent Austin's perseverance, which involved contacting five law enforcement agencies, the USPS and the Social Security Administration, he eventually located the taxpayer, who was unaware he had an unclaimed inheritance awaiting him.

"I can't believe you found me," he remarked later.

The investigation identified additional out-of-state unclaimed property claims that could have been filed under this scheme. This discovery prevented over \$400,000 in fraudulent checks from being issued.

"Special Agent Austin really showed his investigative skills in this operation," Office of Criminal Investigation Director Justin Shemanski said. "In this case, he was able to use his negotiation skills, quick thinking, intelligence, communication skills, and charisma to locate the suspect and get the funds to the rightful owner. I believe only someone with these high-level skills could have achieved the same positive result."

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- ☐ **Merrill Foto News**
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- ☐ **Waupaca Buyers Guide**
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- ☐ **Wausau Times**
(Entry Deadline Fri. 3pm, Wednesday Public Day) **48,565**
- ☐ **Wisconsin Rapids City Times**
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AI Editorial Policy for Multi Media Channels

At Multi Media Channels (MMC), we are committed to delivering high-quality, accurate, and trustworthy content to our readers. As part of our ongoing efforts to innovate and improve our editorial processes, we have incorporated artificial intelligence (AI) tools into our

workflow. This policy outlines our approach to using AI in content creation and the safeguards we have in place to ensure journalistic integrity.

OUR AI USAGE PRINCIPLES

Our AI usage at MMC aligns with best practices in AI-assisted journalism and follows our core principles of using cutting-edge communications technology to deliver hyper local content to our readership, through our print publications and digital media. We have our roots in our communities, and while AI

is a tool—like computers or spell check—it cannot replace our journalists, with their experience, knowledge of and connections to their communities, and integrity.

- 1. Human-Centric Journalism:** AI is a tool to augment, not replace, human journalists. Our experienced editorial team remains at the core of all content creation and decision-making processes.
- 2. Transparency:** We are committed to being open about our use of AI tools in content creation. When AI tools are used to analyze data or generate insights, we clearly attribute this in our reporting. Use of AI generated images are clearly attributed as such.
- 3. Accuracy and Fact-Checking:** All AI-assisted content undergoes rigorous fact-checking and

verification by our human editors before publication. AI-generated content is always cross-referenced with reliable, human-verified sources. We do not rely solely on AI-generated information without corroboration.

- 4. Bias Detection and Mitigation:** Our editors are trained to identify and mitigate potential biases in AI-generated or assisted content, ensuring balanced and fair reporting.
- 5. Style and Voice Consistency:** While AI may assist in drafting, we ensure that all published content maintains MMC's distinctive style and voice and the authenticity of the writer.
- 6. Continuous Learning:** Our team stays informed about the latest developments in AI and journalism, regularly updating our practices

to reflect industry best standards.

- 7. Clear Attribution:** Ethical Content Generation: We do not use AI to create fictional quotes, sources, or events. All content is factual and derived from verifiable sources.

- 8. Quality Control:** AI-assisted content goes through the same rigorous editorial process as traditionally created content, including multiple rounds of editing, verification, and fact-checking.

- 9. Ethical AI Use:** We only employ AI tools that align with our ethical standards and journalistic values. We regularly review and update our AI usage to ensure it meets these criteria.

- 10. Data Privacy:** We respect data privacy laws and ethical guidelines when using AI tools,

ensuring that no personal or sensitive information is compromised.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND FEEDBACK

We value our readers' trust and welcome feedback on our AI usage and content. If you have questions or concerns about our AI editorial practices, please contact our editorial team at info@mmclocal.com.

By responsibly integrating AI into our editorial process, MMC aims to enhance the quality, efficiency, and depth of our journalism while maintaining the highest standards of integrity and accountability.

This policy is subject to regular review and updates as AI technology and industry best practices evolve.

Last updated: April 4, 2025



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