



***Goodbye to 2020
and best wishes for a
better, brighter 2021***

From everyone at NEW Media Inc.

Ag students explore job paths

Matt Christian takes a broader view of agriculture, including horticulture and aquaculture.

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Top 10 2020 stories reviewed

Revisit the area's top 10 stories with photos.

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Witt-Birn sports thrive despite COVID-19

Wrestling, volleyball, swimming highlight 2020 despite pandemic.

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PACKERS FOCUS ON BEARS NECESSITIES

**PACKERS KNOW WHAT THEY NEED
TO DO TO HOLD THE TOP SPOT
INTO THE PLAYOFFS**

**GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS
PAGES 19-30**

WITTENBERG
ENTERPRISE
& BIRNAMWOOD NEWS

(USPS868-800)

Published Wednesdays

by **NEW Media Inc**

d/b/a The Wittenberg Enterprise
& Birnamwood News

Periodicals postage paid at

Wittenberg WI 54499

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

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Shawano WI 54166

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Subscriptions

Subscription, delivery or payment question?

Call 715-526-2121

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Friday

circulation@newmedia-wi.com

RATES

Print

Print single issue: \$1

Prepaid nonrefundable 12 months:

\$41 Mail - WI

\$52 Mail - outside WI

www.newmedia-wi.com

1-day. \$0.99

3-mo (90-day introductory offer) \$12

Month-to-month \$10

Prepaid 12 month, nonrefundable, \$99

Member, Wisconsin Newspaper Association



Students explore jobs at new WBHS ag center

Students, teacher find more to farming than plants, animals

By **DAVID WILHELMS**

Reporter

Although students can follow traditional pathways in plant science and animal science, Matt Christian takes a broader view of agriculture, including horticulture and aquaculture, as he and his students near the end of the first full semester in the new Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School ag center.

Christian, also the FFA adviser, said he and the students feel like they're still moving in, but the new facility has been a great addition.

"For me, as an ag teacher, I know that not everyone is going to go into agriculture. I want to give them experiences so they're more educated consumers," said Christian, adding that his proposed slate of 10 classes for next year follows that philosophy. "They'll know where their food comes from. They'll know what their neighbors are doing on their farms."

An interest in aquaculture includes raising trout from fertilized eggs supplied by the Antigo Trout Unlimited chapter. "So now we have little trout," Christian said, noting this is the kind of exposure that might spark a student to start a new business in the area.

Field trips, once a staple of his classes, have been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Christian hopes to eventually visit a trout farm in a re-purposed silo.

He'll probably expand animal science to include dogs, especially after he gets his own, Christian said.

Another aspect of the program is wildlife and conservation. The woods behind the high school is a great laboratory, Christian said. They used the ON-X phone app to plot the locations of deer and then put out two trail cameras. The students combined the information to create a detailed map. "We actually had some really nice bucks back there. The kids ate that up," Christian added.

Some students do develop an



Abby Giddings leans over one of the pig pens to check in with Matt Christian, WBHS ag teacher, as students work through the daily chores of raising three steers, three goats and six pigs at the new ag center.

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interest in a farm-related profession. After a student discovered agronomy as a career path, and Christian will be looking for a summer internship in "crop scouting" for the student.

Another student, Hunter

Matsche, is raising and caring for a steer, kept at the ag center, with the goal of showing at the 2021 Shawano County Fair, Christian said.

The new ag center can't hurt the rising popularity of FFA, Christian said. The membership is now about



Abby Giddings, far left, guides a pig toward the chute to be weighed in front of Matt Christian, ag teacher. Other students involved in the daily chores of the large animal course at Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School are, left to right, Shay Whitewing, Abi Fraaza, Paige Kurth, Larken Betry, Payton Praslowicz, Dayne Suess and Chase Kitsemble.

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160, up from the roughly 100 when the Wausau native took over the program three years ago. The goal is to have 175 to 200 members, Christian said.

Leland Heinrich, who supplied Matsche with his steer, owns the other two steers and four of the six pigs under the care of the students in the large animal course. Along with raising steers and pigs for the show ring, Heinrich's family has a dairy herd.

Heinrich said he didn't need to develop an interest in agriculture as the WBHS junior was already a farmer through and through. He does like reinforcing what he does at home with working with the animals at school.

Abby Giddings said her three Boer goats are a new interest in the past year for the sophomore and her brother, Tyler. The breed was developed in South Africa for its meat production, she said.

Her current plan is to keep a small herd, with a goal of showing them at the county fair next year and showcasing the breed.

The goats have helped Giddings to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. "It's just so easy to be with them," she added.

They also have benefited from being exposed to people at the ag center, she said, because they were very shy at first.

Her family had no problems with bringing in goats as the two siblings



Matt Christian, Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School agriculture teacher and FFA adviser, makes a point in the classroom section of the new WBHS ag center. The students and Christian are completing their first full semester in the building.

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do most of the farm work anyway, Giddings continued. They'll continue to raise beef animals as well.

She's really not sure of her future and wants to do as much as she can in high school to figure out her career path. Giddings might go to school at Christian's alma mater, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, or attend Northcentral Technical College. If Giddings chooses a post-secondary path at NTC, she can get a head start with a dual-credit course in large animal science. Christian plans to add a dual-credit course in agronomy next year and then perhaps a course

in veterinary terminology.

Having students bring in their own animals is a good deal for the high school's program and increases their investment in the courses, Christian said. More experienced students can also teach other students, he added.

"It hit me yesterday: The kids are learning so much just being with the animals," Christian said of his students' interactions with the steers, pigs and goats. "Like a gilt went into heat yesterday, and they noticed something was different."

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Leland Heinrich assesses one of his pigs while doing chores at the new Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School ag center. A self-confessed farmer through and through, the junior likes working with the animals best. He owns four of the pigs and two of the steers currently under the care of the students at the center. Heinrich appreciates how the new ag center helps to reinforce what he does at his home farm.

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COURT NEWS

Recent proceedings in Shawano-Menominee County District Court include:

Jose M. Ramos, 44, Phlox, was charged Dec. 21 with operating while intoxicated, fourth offense, and two counts of resisting/obstructing an officer. A cash bond of \$2,500 was set and an initial appearance will resume Jan. 4, 2021.

Lee E. Lindner, 33, address listed as the Shawano County Jail, was charged Dec. 21 with two counts of maintaining a drug trafficking place, both with a second and subsequent offense modifier; possession of methamphetamine; two counts of possession of drug paraphernalia; possession of narcotic drugs, possession/ illegally obtained prescription; and seven counts of felony bail jumping. The offenses date to June 2020. A \$15,000 cash bond was set and a preliminary hearing was set for Dec. 28.

Tyreese A. Wychesit, 18, Keshena, was charged Dec. 22 with disorderly conduct, resisting/obstructing an officer and battery or threat to a judge, prosecutor or law enforcement officer. A cash bond of \$2,500 was set and an initial appearance will resume Jan. 6, 2021.

Aaron L. Jacobs, 31, address listed as the Shawano County Jail, was charged Dec. 22 for an April 2020 incident with resisting/obstructing an officer with a repeater modifier; two counts of felony bail jumping, both with repeater modifiers and two counts of misdemeanor bail jumping, both with repeater modifiers.

On this set of charges, a cash bond of \$10,000 was set and an initial appearance will resume Dec. 28. Jacobs was also charged Dec. 22 for a November incident with lewd/lascivious behavior — exposure with a repeater modifier; disorderly conduct with a repeater modifier; six counts of felony bail jumping, all with repeater modifiers and two

counts of misdemeanor bail jumping, both with repeater modifiers. On the second set of charges, a cash bond of \$10,000 was set and an initial appearance will resume Dec. 28. In a third set of charges filed Dec. 22 for a Dec. 18 incident, Jacobs will face two counts of battery or threat to a judge, prosecutor or law enforcement officer, both repeater modifiers; resisting/obstructing an officer with a repeater modifier; eight counts of felony bail jumping, all with repeater modifiers and four counts of misdemeanor bail jumping, all with repeater modifiers. A cash bond of \$10,000 was set and an initial appearance will resume Dec. 28.

An arrest warrant for Wendell J. Boivin, 35, Neopit, was authorized Dec. 23 on a charge of a sex registry violation with a repeater modifier.

Deion J. Komanekin, 21, Shawano, was sentenced Dec. 8 to three months in jail with credit for time served on a charge of domestic abuse with a domestic abuse repeat modifier with a amended judgment of conviction entered Dec. 16. He was also ordered to spend three years on probation for the domestic abuse charge and a possession of controlled substance count and to pay \$1,127.50 in court assessments. He will undergo alcohol counseling and a domestic abuse assessment with a requirement to follow through on any recommendation. Also on Dec. 8 in a separate action, Komanekin was given three years of probation for two counts of retail theft, including an order for restitution and payment of \$1,232 in court assessments. Also on Dec. 8 in a separate action, Komanekin was put on probation for three years for receiving or concealing stolen property and felony bail jumping. He was also ordered to pay \$1,043 in court assessments.

Jeremy M. Peters, 33, Black River Falls, was sentenced Dec. 2 to 120

days in jail for three counts of retail theft. He was ordered to pay \$1,422 in court assessments. In a separate action on Dec. 2, Peters was sentenced to 150 days in jail concurrently with a sentence now being served at the Jackson Correctional Institution for a conviction on two counts of felony bail jumping. He was ordered pay costs on a retail theft conviction.

Joseph A. Andrus, 24, Oconto Falls, was sentenced Dec. 1 to 120 days in jail with credit for 84 days served and with Huber Law privileges on a conviction for misappropriating identification to avoid a penalty. A notice of completion was filed in court Dec. 18.

He will also be on probation for 30 months. Andrus was also ordered to pay \$1,053 in court assessments by Jan. 4, 2021. Also on Dec. 1, Andrus was sentenced to probation for 24 months for convictions on disorderly conduct and criminal damage to property as a party to a crime. He was ordered to pay \$2,948.31, also due Jan. 4, 2021. Andrus was ordered to undergo alcohol and other drug assessment and anger management and follow through with counseling.

Bryce A. Hedrington, 25, Chippewa Falls, was ordered Dec. 16 to pay a forfeiture/fine of \$1,589 for operating while revoked due by Jan. 15, 2021, and sentenced to 18 months of probation on two counts of misdemeanor bail jumping with conditions of not operating a motor vehicle without a valid license and compliance with counseling. Credit of \$250 from a cash bond was ordered.

Brennan H. Anaya, 19, Shiocton, was ordered Dec. 11 to pay \$883 in a fine and court costs and \$200 for a DNA sample on a conviction of disorderly conduct.

Calvin K. Ossman, 33, Shawano, was sentenced Dec. 1 to four years of probation on a conviction of bur-

glary of a building. Ossman was ordered to undergo alcohol and other drug assessment and follow through with counseling. In a separate action Dec. 1, Ossman was ordered to spend one year of probation for a possession of THC charge and three years of probation on a felony bail jumping charge.

He has until Jan. 4, 2021, to pay \$1,127.50 in court assessments.

Alyssa A.M. Chapek, 24, Clintonville, had a charge of misappropriating identification information to avoid a penalty and resisting/obstructing an officer dismissed Dec. 17 as she died in a November vehicle accident.

Ryan C. Stevens, 43, Waupun, was sentenced Dec. 9 on a count of felony bail jumping and to 90 days in jail with credit for 85 days until he was transferred to the Dodge Correctional Institution. He also was ordered to pay \$654 in court assessments.

Michael J. Anthony, 34, Shawano, was ordered to pay a fine and forfeitures after being found guilty of a charge of possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia Dec. 4. He has until Jan. 4, 2021, to pay \$1,383.25.

Matthew C. Malone, 37, Bowler, had two disorderly conduct counts with domestic and domestic abuse repeater, two counts of battery with a repeater and domestic abuse repeater and two counts of strangulation/suffocation with a repeater and domestic abuse repeater dismissed on prosecutor's motion Dec. 3.

Rogelio Cuenca, 40, Shawano, was ordered to pay \$475.05 in a fine and forfeitures on a Dec. 17 conviction of possession of a controlled substance.

Joseph J. Hauke, 43, Birnamwood, had a charge of felony bail jumping dismissed on his motion Dec. 2.

Two die in house fire on Dec. 26

A passing motorist reported flames from the town of Riverview home

Two people died Dec. 26 when their house burned down in the town of Riverview.

Oconto County authorities got a call from a passing motorist around 8:23 a.m. that a house was on fire in

the 16000 block of North Maiden Lake Road, Sheriff Todd Skarban said.

Deputies and the Riverview Fire Department responded and found the home was "largely consumed by fire down to the foundation," Skarban said.

During the fire suppression effort, first responders found two bodies inside.

Skarban said the Oconto County Sheriff's Office, the Riverview Fire Department, the Brown County Medical

Examiner's Office and the Wisconsin Department of Criminal Investigation-Arson Bureau were conducting an ongoing investigation.

The identities of the victims were not immediately released.

2020

With so much social and cultural attention diverted to responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's almost easy to forget the many other things that happened in the western end of Shawano County in 2020.

From longtime school board members retiring to ambulance donations to innovative building trades programs at the high school, residents accomplished much during the past 12 months.

Birnamwood receives free ambulance from Burlington

In January, several EMS volunteers and community members were on hand to receive the generous donation of an ambulance from the recently disbanded Burlington EMS.

Brian Zwiebel is a retired EMT chief for Burlington, and his father-in-law, Richard Young, lives in Birnamwood. They had been discussing the situation, and Young mentioned Birnamwood could really benefit from the donation. Birnamwood EMS was one of four organizations who asked for the ambulance.

According to Zwiebel, the donated vehicle is a 2009 Medtech with fewer than 40,000 miles on it. Included in the donation were monitors, splints and a powerlift cot. The total donation was estimated to be about \$300,000, said Zwiebel.

Ronald Bauch, Birnamwood EMS director since 2013, noted in his letter to Burlington that they could no longer get parts for the 1995 vehicle, and Birnamwood is a small community with limited finances.

Birnamwood has about 32 EMS volunteers on the roster, but only about eight to 10 are active, said Bauch. He also noted that many of the people work out of town, making it hard to provide daytime coverage. The crew is dedicated, and Bauch said they train for an hour each month before their regular business meetings.

Dennis Rew honored for 30 years of service on the Wittenberg-Birnamwood school board

In his monthly column, Garrett Rogowski, district superintendent, wrote:

"Longevity nowadays in any position is hard to come by. The Millennials, the workforce coming straight out of college, the workforce coming straight out of high school, statistically does not stay in any one position



Village of Birnamwood President Mike Sprague and Trustee Jody Dombrowski check out the ambulance donated by the disbanded Burlington EMS to the Birnamwood Fire Department in February.

MIRIAM NELSON | NEW MEDIA

for longer than a few years at most.

"We live in a mobile society, one where finding better employment and more happiness is just around the corner. I'm not saying it's wrong or right. I'm saying it's the world we live in. When we have and find those rare individuals that stay with something for the long haul, that commit their time, energy and heart fully into what it is they believe in, great things can be accomplished.

"Dennis Rew, representative of the village of Birnamwood area, has been on the Wittenberg-Birnamwood School Board for the past 30 years. This April will mark the end of his term in what has been a very accomplished and respected journey serving our students and taxpayers throughout the district.

"From my perspective, Dennis has fought for what is right, what is necessary and what is most important for every student in Wittenberg-Birnamwood. He has always come to the table with a common sense approach, is never reluctant to ask tough questions and always respects others' viewpoints. Dennis is a true advocate for our district and sets an example of the importance and lasting impact longevity and commit-

ment can have on people and organizations. His advocacy and leadership will carry on through the rest of our board, a true sign of a great leader. Thank you Dennis Rew, for your service, leadership and commitment to the Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District."

Familiar face comes back to Homme Home

The new executive director for Homme Inc. of Wisconsin is a familiar face to the community.

Former Homme administrator Justin Cieslewicz was hired Jan. 13 to take over for longtime executive director Steve Seybold, who retired Feb. 25.

In 2009, Cieslewicz started an eight-and-a-half year tenure as Homme's administrator. He holds a Bachelor of Science in health care administration from University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The program had an emphasis on aging services. When he began a one-year practicum in a long-term care facility, he knew that area would be his passion. He went on to receive a Master of Business Administration from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee.

He worked at a Green Bay nursing

home for more than 1½ years before deciding to move back to central Wisconsin.

In fall 2017, he was offered a position with Aspirus Clinics in which he was granted the opportunity to work for a large health system and learn how to lead in a different realm of health care. He directed multiple clinic locations over a large geographic area.

While working at Aspirus, he kept in contact with Seybold. When he learned of Seybold's pending retirement, Cieslewicz said he applied for the job and feels lucky to be named the new executive director. At the helm of the Homme Inc. of Wisconsin parent corporation, he oversees Homme Home for the Aging in Wittenberg as well as the Homme Foundation and the Homme Heights campus, Wausau.

His first major task has been to deal with the coronavirus. In addition to Homme's health and safety protocols, the company decided to add another layer of protection to residents by restricting visitors. Guests are only permitted in certain situations essential to a resident's emotional well-being or end-of-life care. Signs at entrances indicate that



Families were placed in groups of six people, 6 feet apart, on the football field of Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School for a COVID-careful graduation ceremony.

CAROL RYCZEK | NEW MEDIA

visitors should not enter if they are ill, have been exposed to someone with the virus or have recently traveled to a country where COVID-19 is prevalent.

Cieslewicz and his wife, Jordan, live in Stevens Point with their two dogs.

Strike comes home to Tigerton Schools as administrator/principal

Tigerton School District Board offered the district administrator/principal position to Dr. Kelley Strike during a closed session meeting of the June 15 school board meeting.

Strike replaced Ben Rayome. Strike began her position July 1.

“Developing relationships and encouraging students to engage in the learning process is my mission in education,” said Strike. “As a leader, I intend to listen, learn, share, build and plan as I step into this new position.”

According to Lindsay Norder, the district’s business manager, 32 candidates applied for the position. The board narrowed the prospects to four and on June 8 interviewed the top two candidates in a special meeting open to the public.

For the past nine years, Strike has worked for the Shawano School District. For the first three years, she served as an associate principal and at-risk coordinator. During the past six years, she was the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Strike started her career teaching family and consumer education and health occupations with the Wisconsin Rapids School District in 2002.

She moved to the Southern Door School District in Brussels in 2006 initially as a family and consumer education teacher but moved into the role of alternative education teacher and associate principal.

She obtained her bachelor’s degree in family and consumer science education from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She holds a master’s in education with an emphasis in health education from UW-Stevens Point. From Concordia University, she received her principal and director of instruction license and has a doctorate from UW-Oshkosh in educational leadership and policy.

Strike grew up in Iola and has lived in Tigerton for the last five years. She is married to Eric Strike, a deputy with the Shawano County Sheriff’s Department. They have three children, a senior, sophomore and fifth grader who attend the Tigerton School District.

Sheriff’s deputy pledges more attention to villages

Deputy Eric Chernetski of the Shawano County Sheriff’s Department introduced himself at the Village of Wittenberg board meeting Sept. 15 and explained that in the future, he will be attending board meetings in Wittenberg, Birnamwood and Mattoon.

Chernetski recently moved to the Village of Birnamwood and was looking for a way to bring more attention what he sees as an under-served area by law enforcement. The western edge of the county — Mattoon to Marion — can almost seem like its

own county, Chernetski said.

The plan was to attend one meeting per month between the three villages. His goal was to be aware of plans and concerns of the villages and to serve as a resource for questions from the boards and residents attending the meetings.

Chernetski joined the Shawano County Sheriff’s Department on May 11. He had served at the Langlade County Sheriff’s Office and feels he gained valuable experience in dealing with a variety of situations — including drug trafficking and abuse.

Being a part of the community he serves is important to Chernetski as he has a 14-year-old stepson who attends Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School and a 10-year-old stepson attending the Birnamwood Elementary/Middle School.

Chernetski feels this area will now have more of a presence in the Shawano County Sheriff’s Department with this new addition of duties and with Deputy Matt Higgins and School Resource Officer Dan Weisensel living in the Wittenberg area.

60 miles for 600 students

Work began in October to lay more than 60 miles of fiber optic cable for reliable, high-speed broadband internet access to more than 600 addresses throughout the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Reservation, as well as the Red Springs and Bartelme communities under a partnership of Wittenberg Telephone Company/Cirrinity and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

The \$4.5 million project is part of the Stockbridge-Munsee ongoing commitment to growing the region economically and improving the quality of life of its membership. Despite some state and federal government funding, the cost of laying fiber optic cable in under-served locations has been prohibitive for many rural areas, with Native American households among those most disproportionately affected, according to the Public Service Commission.

Shannon Holsey, Stockbridge-Munsee Community tribal council president noted that the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed how rural communities are left behind without reliable internet service, and the tribal council decided to make a multi-million-dollar investment to address this issue. The project is expected to be complete by early summer 2021, but residents will be able to activate service as soon as construction proceeds through their neighborhood. For areas that cannot be reached by fiber optic cable, an advanced Wi-Fi solution will be available.

“We are thrilled to be working with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community to build Central Wisconsin’s fastest internet service,” said Scott Nyman, general manager and CEO of Wittenberg Telephone/Cirrinity. “Since 1998, we have been working to bring high-speed internet access to rural communities in the area because we know how important it is to our economy and quality of life.”

“We thank the Stockbridge-Munsee Community for their trust in us and our ongoing partnership,” said Nyman. Earlier this year, WTC expanded coverage between Gallop, Elderon, Eland, Shepley and Birnamwood. According to Nyman, the company has already laid 106 miles of cable as part of that ongoing project.

Wittenberg puts water, sewer unpaid bills on tax roll

Tax roll notices were sent out to delinquent water and sewer customers last week after the Village of Wittenberg board voted Oct. 6 to add the delinquent bills to the tax roll rather than send out disconnection notices.

The state Public Service Commission, which regulates water and sewer, extended the moratorium that municipalities are not allowed to shut off water until Nov. 1, so the board decided to add the unpaid bills to the tax roll.

According to the notice, all delinquent water and sewer bills that remained unpaid by Nov. 12 will be levied as special assessments. The



Caleb McPhail, building trades teacher at Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School, does a bit of tidying up inside the tiny house that is nearing completion outside of the school's shops. The project will soon join similar buildings from six Missouri high schools in Leadville, Colorado. The seven structures will be part of a rental complex in the mountain town.

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unpaid debt can then be also filed as a lien against the tenants' personal assets and will show up on Consolidated Court Automation Programs.

Any payments not received by Oct. 29 are subject to a 10% penalty fee.

The village needs to collect as much of the billing as possible to be able to pay for the cost of operating the Water and Sewer Department. Any amount that goes on the tax roll won't be paid to the village until the taxes are paid, said Traci Matsche, village clerk/treasurer. If the taxes don't get paid, the village also loses the water and sewer bill attached to it. Matsche noted that it can take three to four years of unpaid taxes before Shawano County gets involved.

WBHS 'tiny house' bound for Colorado after completion

A mobile "tiny house" from the shops of Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School will soon join similar buildings from six Missouri high schools in Leadville, Colorado.

The seven structures will be part of a rental complex in the mountain town, said Caleb McPhail, WBHS



Twins Harrison, left, and Grace Kielblock take turns reading to Daisy the therapy dog as owner Sheri Furhman watches. The "Read to a Dog" program meets 3:30-4:30 p.m. on the first Friday of each month at the Tigerton Public Library, 221 Birch St.

LEAH LEHMAN | NEW MEDIA

building trades instructor. Tiny houses are a recent architectural and social movement that advocates living simply in small spaces.

The building is parked outside the shops at the high school and will be done by the end of this school year. It was to have been completed last school year but the COVID-19 pandemic intervened, causing delays, McPhail said.

How the 26-foot structure became part of a western project is a story that starts in 2019. McPhail noticed a slide of a tiny house in a presentation on new technology and new teaching practices in Wittenberg.

A little investigation uncovered the buyer's name and residence in Pennsylvania. Further work solidified the contract for WBHS. Work began in November 2019 after getting school board approval.

McPhail called the board's support "fantastic" with the only guidelines being that the students learn something and the project doesn't lose money. The students are responsible for executing every part of the building, using the blueprint supplied by the buyer. This includes the expected tasks, such as putting up walls and installing windows, but also making and installing trim work and flooring.

Katchenago brings native culture to classroom

Sixth grade teacher Harold Katchenago makes his Menominee heritage a central part of teaching his students at Bowler Elementary School.

Moving between teaching subjects like math to application of Native customs and attitudes comes easily to Katchenago for Native and non-Native students.

He said he pulls a lot in his teaching style from growing up with his elders. Key lessons were tolerance and patience.

For his students in the here and now, he stays flexible in finding "whatever interests them; whatever grabs their enthusiasm. Maybe there's some question or some circumstance that's of interest, then I will switch gears," he said.

A comment about hunting can lead to a discussion that then leads back into the math lesson, Katchenago said.

When his students leave his classroom in May, through applying his native perspectives, Katchenago said his goal is: "They know more about their neighbors, and we'll see less of what we've seen this year. The more you know your neighbors, the harder

it is to act inappropriately."

Read to a dog — no, really

The "Read to a Dog" program at Tigerton Library was something that Sheri Fuhrman wanted to do with her dog, Daisy, after they were certified as a pet therapy team by the Alliance of Therapy Dogs in July.

Fuhrman was pleased that Tigerton librarian Caitlin Witter was interested in having them come monthly, and she worked with them to determine the best time to have the program.

Fuhrman is enjoying the small, close-knit community of Tigerton, and she is overjoyed to be part of a literacy program that supports all kids. Having them read to a dog helps kids relax, she explained, as Daisy won't make fun of them or care if they pronounce a word incorrectly.

"I've seen how many benefits it brings to the brain waves, and it's incredible. The interaction to me is incredible. I love seeing how humans and dogs interact. It's fun that I am able to see the interaction through this program," Fuhrman stressed.

"Pick out a book and read to her. She will love that, and she will not correct your reading ability or judge you," Fuhrman said.

COVID-19 vaccine distribution starts

The COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer-Biontech now going into the arms of Aspirus and other health care workers is a new kind of vaccine, known as mRNA.

A press release from Aspirus notes many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies to trigger an immune response. The immune response produces antibodies and protects a person from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies, the release said.

In contrast, mRNA vaccines “teach our cells how to make a protein — or even just a piece of a protein — that triggers an immune response inside our bodies,” the release added.

RIGHT: Dr. Steven Phillipson, head of the COVID-19 response at Aspirus’ Wausau hospital, receives the first COVID-19 vaccine at the facility last week.

CONTRIBUTED



This is the COVID-19 Journal version of NEW Media's Shawano Leader, Wittenberg Enterprise & Birnamwood News and Oconto County Times Herald. Find us online at www.newmedia-wi.com



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ATHLETE PROFILE: AMARA SCHOEPKE

Witt-Birn senior willing to do whatever it takes to help team win

The Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School girls basketball team is off to a strong start in its winter season. Senior Amara Schoepke is doing a little bit of everything to help the team out.

Through the team's first six games, Schoepke is averaging 5.5 points, 4.3 rebounds, 3.5 assists and 2.2 steals per game.

She scored a season high 11 points in a win over Shiocton on Dec. 4 and tallied nine points in a win over Weyauwega-Fremont on Dec. 14.

Schoepke grabbed a season high eight rebounds in a nonconference win over Rosholt on Nov. 30 and had six boards in the win over Weyauwega-Fremont. She's tallied at least two assists and a steal in each game.

Q: When did your interest in basketball begin?

A: My interest in basketball started in fifth grade when I joined the travel team. I attended camps when I was younger but I don't remember them very well.

Q: What is your favorite part about the basketball season?

A: My favorite part about the season are games.

Q: What has basketball taught you over the years?

A: Basketball has taught me that you have to work for what you want. All the goals we have as a team and as individuals will be met through hard work and our drive to achieve them.

Q: What's the biggest key to success for your team the rest of the season?

A: I think the biggest key to success for the team the rest of the season is maintaining a positive mindset.



Wittenberg-Birnamwood's Amara Schoepke looks for a teammate to pass to during a Central Wisconsin Conference-East Division matchup against Bonduel on Dec. 7 in Bonduel.

MORGAN RODE | NEW MEDIA

Q: Do you have any individual goals you hope to achieve or team goals you want to help obtain by the end of this season?

A: Individually, I hope to con-

tribute more for my team, whether that's by scoring more or lifting morale. A team goal we all want to achieve is making it to state.

Q: Do you have any rituals

AT A GLANCE

ATHLETE: Amara Schoepke

SPORT: Girls basketball

POSITIONS: Forward

SCHOOL: Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School

YEAR: Senior

you go through before a game?

A: I listen to music before each game.

Q: What's your favorite memory of competing on the Wittenberg-Birnamwood girls basketball team?

A: My favorite middle school basketball memory is going to state in fifth grade. My favorite high school basketball memory is playing in the Dells.

Q: What are you going to miss most about high school basketball?

A: I'm definitely going to miss the thrill of competing and being out on the court with my friends the most.

Q: Favorite TV show, movie and musical artist?

A: TV show — "All American." Movie — "Rocky." Musical artist — Casting Crowns.

Q: Name one thing about yourself that not many people know.

A: I want to go out of state for college.

Q: What's the greatest piece of advice you have ever been told?

A: Strive for perfection and you'll achieve excellence.

Q: What are some things you hope to accomplish after graduating high school?

A: I plan to attend college and hopefully become a lawyer in the future.

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Witt-Birn athletics shine in year of pandemic



Wittenberg-Birnamwood's Chad Moegenburg wrestles during the WIAA Individual Wrestling Championship Tournament in February at the Kohl Center. Moegenburg placed fifth and helped cap a strong season for the wrestling team.

FILE | NEW MEDIA

Wrestling, volleyball and girls basketball teams win conference titles

By NEW MEDIA STAFF

Editor's note: The following is a list of the top sports stories for 2020.

Coronavirus shuts down spring sports season

The coronavirus pandemic has had a big impact on everyone's life at some point during the past several months. The pandemic took away the entire high school spring sports season.

After weeks of waiting, the decision to not play in the spring was finally made during a Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association Board of Control meeting April 21, ending any hope that sports teams

would play any games.

For spring athletes in the Class of 2020, it meant that their last spring competitions had already happened in their junior year. Freshmen athletes weren't able to get their first taste of spring sports, while sophomores and juniors couldn't build on their previous seasons.

"We want to extend our sincere empathy and regrets to all the student-athletes and coaches that have worked hard in anticipation of participating in sports this spring, particularly the seniors," WIAA Executive Director Dave Anderson said.

While WIAA sports returned in the fall and continue to be played

this winter, athletes have had to mask up. Crowds have been limited or eliminated, and many schools have had to pause their seasons or shut them down entirely.

Witt-Birn wrestling team wins CWC Tournament, sends 2 to state

Before the coronavirus hit, the Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School wrestling team turned in a strong season.

The Chargers won the Central Wisconsin Conference Tournament on Feb. 8 and had several individual wrestlers shine in postseason action before sending Chad Moegenburg and Wyatt Esker to state.

At the CWC Tournament, Damien Wudtke, Will Urquhart, Allen Uttecht, Moegenburg and Esker all took first, while Pierson Potrykus took second and Larken Betry and David Gauderman third. Witt-Birn coach Troy Ostrowski was named the conference's Coach of the Year after posting a perfect dual record in CWC matchups and winning the tournament title.

Despite dealing with an injury, Moegenburg placed fifth at state in the Division 2 126-pound weight class, capping a 44-7 season on the mat. Esker went 2-3 and took sixth in the 145 weight class at state, finishing the year with a 43-8 mark.

"It felt special to win the last



Wittenberg-Biramwood's Abi Fraaza, center, shoots the ball during a Central Wisconsin Conference-East Division game against Amherst on Jan. 7 in Wittenberg. Fraaza helped the girls basketball team to a conference title and was later named the conference's Player of the Year.

FILE | NEW MEDIA

match, especially under the circumstances," said Moegenburg. "I gave every last ounce I had to push through everything, and to be there with everyone that has been with me since the beginning was very special."

"(Placing sixth) means a lot," said Esker. "I came into state with a goal of placing and I knew if I wrestled well, I could get the job done. It was a great feeling winning in the quarters (quarterfinals) to guarantee my placement."

Metropulos represents Chargers at state again

Witt-Birn swimmer McKenna Metropulos turned in a strong senior season in the pool and finished by competing at state for a second straight season.

At state, Metropulos placed sixth in the 200-yard freestyle and seventh in the 100 freestyle.

"Finishing at state is always the

goal, but it is the little cherry on top to have placed so well and make the podium," Metropulos said of her top-six finish. "I couldn't be happier to be ending my season this way."

Earlier in the season, the senior won a pair of titles (50 and 100 freestyles) at the Bay Conference Championships. She also helped the 200 and 400 freestyle relay teams to top-five finishes.

Witt-Birn volleyball team wins CWC-East again

Despite losing senior Abi Fraaza to injury during the season, the Witt-Birn volleyball team claimed its second consecutive CWC-East title this fall.

The Chargers capped a perfect run through conference play with a 25-18, 25-23, 25-12 sweep of Shiocton on Oct. 15 in Wittenberg.

"I think it really proves how hard-working we are, especially since I think we had seven seniors

that we lost last year, and then we lost Abi who was first team all-conference, so obviously she's pretty good," said senior Emma Herb after the win over Shiocton. "So coming off of that, I think we worked pretty hard this season and I think it was well-deserved — the win tonight and conference."

After the season concluded, Witt-Birn racked up conference honors. McKenna Foster was named the Player of the Year, Becky Rew was tabbed the Coach of the Year and Foster, Herb, Fraaza, Reese Rogowski and London Metropulos all landed on all-conference teams.

"I am honored to be named the Player of the Year of my conference," said Foster. "I always set goals and try to achieve them, but receiving this award just helps me realize how much my hard work has paid off. I am thankful for all of my coaches and teammates that have helped me along the way."

Chargers girls basketball team wins conference title behind Fraaza

The Witt-Birn girls basketball team entered the 2019-20 season with aspirations of winning the CWC-East title. The team didn't disappoint, edging Bonduel for the crown.

The Chargers secured the title with a 43-42 win over Amherst behind a big game from then-junior Abi Fraaza, who was later named the conference's Player of the Year.

"It is such a big accomplishment for me to be named the conference Player of the Year, and I am so thankful for my teammates and coaches pushing me harder every day in practice," said Fraaza. "I am also thankful for my parents (Bill and Charity) and all the fans always believing in me through the season."

Emma Herb and Olivia Curley also earned all-conference nods for the Chargers.

Best of WITTENBERG ENTERPRISE & BIRNAMWOOD NEWS



2020 Readers Poll

Deadline: January 31, 2021

BALLOT #1

Best Goods:

- ☐ Flower Shop _____
- ☐ Grocery Store _____
- ☐ Hardware Store _____
- ☐ Tile/Flooring _____

Best Services:

- ☐ A/C & Heating _____
- ☐ Bank _____
- ☐ Child Care _____
- ☐ Chiropractor _____
- ☐ Credit Union _____
- ☐ Dentist _____
- ☐ Insurance Agency _____
- ☐ Optometrist _____
- ☐ Pharmacy _____
- ☐ Real Estate _____
- ☐ Tax Service _____
- ☐ Veterinarian _____

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Best of WITTENBERG ENTERPRISE & BIRNAMWOOD NEWS



2020 Readers Poll

Deadline: January 31, 2021

BALLOT #2

Best Thing To Do:

- ☐ Bowling Alley _____
- ☐ Casino _____
- ☐ Happy Hour _____
- ☐ Live Music _____
- ☐ Meat Market _____
- ☐ Night Spot _____

Best Outdoor Activities:

- ☐ Bait/Tackle Shop _____
- ☐ Golf Course _____
- ☐ Lawn/Garden _____

Best Vehicle Services:

- ☐ Auto Body Repair _____
- ☐ Auto Parts Supply Store _____
- ☐ Car Dealer _____
- ☐ Vehicle Service Center _____
- ☐ Tire Store _____

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Wittenberg, Birnamwood elementary playgrounds get update

By NEW MEDIA STAFF

Students at Birnamwood's and Wittenberg's elementary schools will see an extensive upgrade of their playground equipment this spring following a Wittenberg-Birnamwood school board action Dec. 21.

Garret Rogowski, district superintendent, reported the updates will cost \$68,405 for each school.

A feature of the upgraded play-

grounds will be accessibility for disabled students on the equipment and improved surfacing for wheelchairs, the superintendent added.

Rogowski said that payment for the playground will come from the interest earned on the district's referendum funds. The interest earned is about \$400,000, Rogowski said.

The board discussed, but did not change any of the district's responses to COVID-19, Rogowski said.

The board accepted the resigna-

tions of Wendy Landowski resigned as cheerleading coach and Bernard Holsey resigned as JVII coach basketball. Holsey will remain as head football coach.

Joe Ladika was named the first coach of the new middle school girls' softball coach. The board approved the addition last month.

The district received a clean bill of financial according to the audit conducted by CLA (CliftonLarson-Allen) accounting firm. Rogowski

said there were no recommendations or need for changes in district practices.

The board thanked Darlene Block on her retirement after being a food service worker at Wittenberg's elementary school for the past eight years.

The board also accepted the resignation of Jennifer Hedrick, a food service worker in Birnamwood.

wittenberg@newmedia-wi.com

BOOKS N STUFF

Grand Old Ladies Detectives solve a murder case

First in Seaview Cottages series

I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas. This week, I chose "A Body on Fitzgerald's Bluff" by Anna Celeste Burke. It is the first in her Seaview Cottages series. Miriam



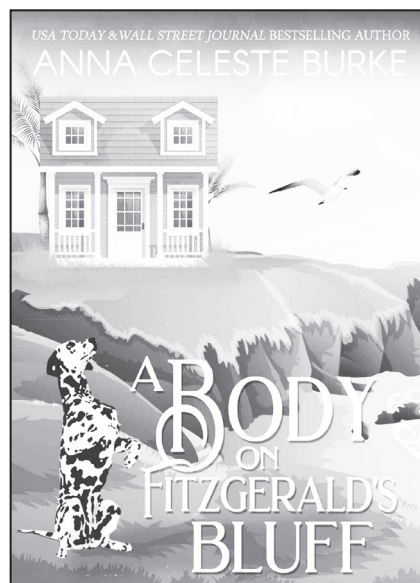
JAN JONES

Webster recently moved from Ohio to Seaview Cottages, a retirement community on the California coast.

Miriam's husband's sudden death left her to deal with his poor financial decisions. She

sold everything and moved into the Hemingway Cottage. Since it is an over-55 community, she had to lie about her age and hope no one notices, as she has no other place to go.

Miriam had been a bookkeeper, so she is quickly drafted into helping the with the H9meowners Association (HOA) books. With her own finances tight, she is worried about paying the additional assessments coming due soon. One morning, Miriam and her dalmatian Domino



discover the body of a young woman on the dunes. Within minutes, Miriam's friends and fellow residents of Seaview arrive.

They rush to call the police, but by the time they return, the body is gone. They fan out and soon discover an expensive tote dumped on the sand. The body is later found near Blue Haven Resort. Miriam realizes that the odd aftershave she smelled was probably the killer hiding nearby. Could she be in danger too?

Detective Hank Miller arrives and informs them that the dead woman is a 20-something, Diana

AT A GLANCE

BOOK: A Body on Fitzgerald's Bluff

AUTHOR: Anna Celeste Burke

PUBLISHER: self

PUBLISHED: 2018

PAGES: 248

Durand, but they don't know much more. Suddenly, they have formed Grand Old Lady Detectives (GOLD). Combining their skills, they launch an investigation of their own. They discover that Diana went through men in a hurry, 'trading up' whenever she saw a chance to get her hands on more money. Her recent marks include the elderly and wealthy Edger Humphrey, his nephew Howard, Dave Winick, a manager at Blue Haven and several young men. She was also seen with a harsh-looking man known only as Boo.

None of her former co-workers have anything good to say about her and even allude to her stealing from the boutique where she worked. These behaviors were bad, but none would be cause for murder. It appears that Diana was putting together a blackmail scheme but double-crossed the wrong person. They often share information with Detective Hank and each time he warns them to that further snooping could be dangerous, but they just

can't help themselves.

They investigate during the day then meet to discuss what they've found. Through a chance encounter they learn who Diana was with just before she was killed. After another warning from Hank, Miriam returns to her cottage. She is instantly aware of Domino's odd behavior. The dog has buried an envelope in a basket of laundry. It smells just like the scent Miriam noticed the day she found Diana's body. Hank opens the envelope and finds papers incriminating Dave Winick. He and two of the Seaview board members were planning to force its sale to Blue Haven so he could turn the cottages into high-end properties.

Later, the women are rehashing the events when Joe shows up. He has brought a young woman in need of their investigative skills. It looks like GOLD has another case to solve. To her chagrin, Miriam finds out that her Seaview friends have known her secret all along and are changing the rules so that Miriam is a fully legal resident. That will also open the door to possibilities involving Miriam and Hank Miller.

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Best of WITTENBERG ENTERPRISE & BIRNAMWOOD NEWS 2020 Readers Poll

Deadline: January 31, 2021

BALLOT #3

Food/Dining:

- ☐ Bar _____
- ☐ Breakfast _____
- ☐ Burger _____
- ☐ Coffee House _____
- ☐ Dessert _____
- ☐ Dinner _____
- ☐ Family Restaurant _____
- ☐ Fish Fry _____
- ☐ Lunch _____
- ☐ Pizza _____
- ☐ Sandwich _____

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Deadline: January 31, 2021

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Wittenberg-Biramwood School District Official Minutes of the Board of Education November 16, 2020

Meeting called to order by President Chuck Wendler, Pursuant to WISTATS.1984 (1). Superintendent Rogowski verified that this meeting was posted and published as required by law.

Roll Call of the Board: All nine Board Members present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approve the Minutes: (Schmidt - Olson) moved to approve the minutes of the October 26, 2020 regular meeting as circulated. Motion carried.

Delegations & Communications: In attendance along with Board members were: Garrett Rogowski, Joy Hartleben, Bill Haas, Randy Berndt, Megan Marcks, Vicky Haas and Jackie Berndt.

Public Comments: None.

Board Concerns or Reports: Pietz stated he had some questions on what was being done with items from the shop that were being replaced. Tigerton Tech Dept. did purchase some of the equipment, other items were discarded. C. Wendler wanted to recognize and thank all who are involved in keeping our schools open. The Board would like to congratulate Miriam Nelson on her retirement from the paper and want to thank her for all her support.

Financial Report: (Pestka - Schmidt) Motion to pay the following as of November 16, 2020: Budgetary checks numbering 102992-103164 in the amount of \$6213,186.59, payroll checks numbering 141996-142008 in the amount of \$5,986.50, direct deposit advices in the amount of \$449,896.56, ACH payments in the amount of \$338,660.69 and credit card payments in the amount of \$24,478.02. I make a motion to approve all journal entries made for the month of October. Roll call vote: 8 yes Motion carried. Superintendent Rogowski reported a cash on deposit as of October 31, 2020 of \$2,304,226.32 and LGIP

Account balance as of October 31, 2020 of \$905.43

Approve the Agenda: (Pestka - Schmidt) moved to approve the agenda with one closed session item to discuss contractual extra curricular contract. Motion carried.

Administrative Reports:

- Bill Haas, High School Principal, stated that they had a send off for M Metropolis heading to the state swim meet. They completed the annual Safety/ALICE Drill.
- Randy Berndt, Biramwood Elem/MS Principal, stated that the school will be participating in "Spirit Wednesdays" through to Christmas break. A Veteran's Day Program was held virtually. Safety/ALICE Drill was completed.
- Vicky Haas, Wittenberg Elem/MS Principal, stated that they had Gary Clark from the VFW address staff and students through the morning announcements for Veteran's Day and classes shared cards and posters to veterans. Safety/ALICE drill was completed.
- Megan Marcks, Pupil Services Director, stated that staff are doing a great job communicating and supporting each other. State testing will begin soon with training for specific staff.
- Garrett Rogowski, Superintendent stated that they will have Orange Frog Training for the Board on March 24th 5-9 p.m. Waiting to hear on news from Governor Evers on extension of the mask mandate.

New Business A: Tabled until December Board Meeting.

New Business B: (Stewart-Schmidt) moved to approve the 2020-2021 School Budget as presented. Roll call, 7-yes, 2-absent, motion carried. (Stewart - T. Wendler) moved to approve the resignation of Rebecca Onesti, Teacher assistant at Biramwood. Motion carried. The Board would like to thank Becky for her service to the district.

New Business C: (Pestka - Olson) moved to approve the hire of Schulyar Davids as Teacher Assistant, Biramwood, to replace Rebecca Onesti. Compensation starting at \$12.27/hr. Motion carried.

New Business D: Each principal gave a report on the School Safety Drills that were held this week. What worked well, what could be improved.

Adjournment: (Stewart-Pestka) moved to adjourn 6:45 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Joy A Hartleben
School Board Secretary

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