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2 QUICK READS

A number to know

80% — More than 80% of University of Wisconsin System students who sought mental health counseling at their universities during the last academic year reported improvements in their well-being. Four of five who considered dropping out over the last eight years said counseling helped them stay enrolled according to a UW System release.

Good to know

Stillwater Area Kiwanis Club will host a Diaper Drive to support Valley Outreach Oct. 4-9. The public is invited to send a donation by cash, check or gift card to Stillwater Area Kiwanis at P.O. Box 101, Stillwater, MN 55082.

Drop off diapers at the collection truck in the Kowalski's Market parking lot 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Oct. 9.

Diapers are also being collected by the Kiwanis Builder's Club at Stillwater Area Middle School and by the Kiwanis Key Club at Stillwater Area High School.

OBITUARIES

Gene Aune
Barbar Darnill
Yvonne Jarmuz
Harvey R. Nelson
Audrey Pfremer
Sonjia I. Richardson
Verona Schroeder
Leo "Larry" Williams



ECOSYSTEM

The great BAT MYSTERY

Listening to bats may be the key

BY TOM LINDFORS
Contributor

NEW RICHMOND — Regardless of how you feel about our tiny, furry, practically blind, flying friends, bats are an important part of the ecosystem and they appear to be in trouble. At least that is what wildlife biologist Chris Trosen and Intern Heidi Reinhardt of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are trying to find out.

"My in-laws live in northern Wisconsin," said Trosen "I remember in the early years when we'd go out fishing and come back in the evenings, the bats would be just thick flying overhead going after mosquitos. Now on those same lakes, you hardly see any at all. I've noticed the same thing around here. It's alarming. I believe that we should have more bats in the area."

Why bats?

In 1997, President Bill Clinton signed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. It was intended to make the management of the then 95-million-acre refuge system more cohesive. As a way to build that cohesion, it mandated that every individual refuge create a Comprehensive Conservation Plan by uniformly applying the goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The St. Croix Wetlands Management District was established in 1992. Today it manages more than 8,800 acres of Waterfowl Production Areas consisting of wetland habitat surrounded by grassland and woodland communities with a focus on migratory birds.

The SCWMD began work on its CCP in 2006 and completed its initial plan in 2008 (stcroix/ccp). The plan was designed to "articulate the management



COURTESY OF NYSDEC

Northern long-eared bat.

direction for the St. Croix Wetland Management District for the next 15 years."

One of the foundational goals of the plan is to "Conserve, restore where appropriate, and enhance all species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are endangered or threatened with becoming endangered."

To realize the goals established in the CCP, the district

employed a set of step down plans starting with a Habitat Management Plan followed by an Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

Work on those plans was completed recently and it confirmed what the staff believed was the right direction for the district.

See Mystery Page A6

ECONOMY

St. Croix County part of state's financial vitality

WDR and others find growth and predict more

BY HANNAH COYLE
Staff Reporter

Despite experiencing large drops in employment and wage income in 2020, the St. Croix County area has had substantial economic vitality in 2021, along with the state and it's projected to continue in that direction.

Wisconsin came out with the financial outlook of its Metropolitan Statistical Areas just a few weeks ago. Though not part of one of the 12 MSAs that cover 22 Wisconsin counties, here are four St. Croix County economy highlights:

Unemployment

The Wisconsin unemployment rate is 3.9%, but anything between 3-4% is considered to be "full employment," as there will always be job transitions occurring. St. Croix County has a 3.3% unemployment rate.

"After falling sharply in April 2020, employment began to recover earlier and more quickly than expected in last year's MSA forecast," reports the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. "Employment declined 11.2% in Wisconsin and the MSAs by the second quarter of 2020, compared to the pre-pandemic levels of the fourth quarter of 2019."

See Economy Page A6

HUDSON

River Crest Elementary receives Blue Ribbon School honor

8 Wisconsin schools named among 325 nationwide

MADISON — State Superintendent Jill Underly commended eight Wisconsin public schools last week for receiving National Blue Rib-

bon School honors from the U.S. Department of Education. Among the eight is River Crest Elementary in the Hudson School District.

"These schools have gone above and beyond in their support for students," Dr. Underly said. "I applaud the hard work and commitment of both teachers and students at each of these schools, and I am excited to recognize them today as National Blue

Ribbon Schools."

Nominated by the state superintendent in February, the public schools completed an application and underwent a national review process.

Wisconsin's award-winning schools are among 325 to receive the honor nationwide and were recognized in one of two performance categories, based on Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction data from the 2018-2019

school year.

Exemplary High Performance Schools are among each state's highest performing schools, as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools are among each state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a schools' subgroups and all students.



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