

Central Heights, PPA celebrate new building renovations

By **Jeromey Hodsdon**
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Central Heights Middle School and Prairie Phoenix Academy opened their doors Sunday, Aug. 28, with a pair of ribbon cutting ceremonies for both schools located at 220 Krohnke Dr. in Sun Prairie. Following each ribbon cutting, the public was able to take self-guided tours of the new renovations at each school.

Central Heights opens as third middle school

Formerly known as Cardinal Heights Upper Middle School, Central Heights Middle School held a ribbon cutting to celebrate their first school year as a middle school serving grades 6-8.

"Today is a historic day for the entire community," School Board President Steve Schroeder said leading off the celebration. "This is a community that supports public education and without all of you we wouldn't be here."

He recognized a long list of people that came together to help renovate and open all the new schools this year.

Sun Prairie Area School District Superintendent Brad Saron said it is important for the



Sun Prairie Area School District Superintendent Brad Saron (left) and School Board President Steve Schroeder (right) spoke at the Central Heights Middle School ribbon cutting ceremony on Sunday, Aug. 28.

community to understand its accomplishments over the last few years.

"It's important for the entire community of Sun Prairie to recognize that when we rally

around a common vision and we come together to support kids and families, things that might

be considered impossible happen here in Sun Prairie," Saron said. "We should all be so proud of what we are able to do for kids and families."

Principal of Central Heights, Sarah PrankeKlang, spoke about the renovations made to Central Heights to aid the improvement of teaching and learning.

"We are beginning our year with just under 500 students and around 75 total employees in our building," PrankeKlang said.

Existing classrooms were renovated in the center of the building to create a new Library Media Center (LMC) with quiet study rooms and an audio/video lab. The gym received new flooring and fresh paint. A new fitness space was created for cardio and weights.

"The heart of this work was to make this building really feel like a middle school and I think we accomplished that," PrankeKlang said. "I would like to thank all of our staff in this building who have been hustling all week to get their rooms ready."

In addition, PrankeKlang said a new tech ed space was added with new shop

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Star creates platform for incarcerated people, stars in movie

By **Jeromey Hodsdon**
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Demancea (Dee) Star started his podcast "OuttaDeeBox" in January, giving a platform and resources to incarcerated people returning to the community.

"My podcast gives incarcerated people and formerly incarcerated people a platform to share their music, inspirational stories and poetry," Star said. "It's educational and it hopefully inspires young people to not get in trouble."

The podcasts are meant to "inform listeners about community resources that can assist them in securing employment opportunities, housing, mental health and substance abuse support," while also working towards "reducing recidivism in Wisconsin."

Star's podcast has garnered much interest over the last few months. He's done recent interviews on Wisconsin Public Radio and Sirius XM Radio. He also appeared in the Capital Times and Umoja Magazine.

"It's gaining attraction because of the message and advocacy it brings," Star said. "There's a lot of things that I don't know, but I'm trying to share what I do know and partner with who I can."

Some of his recent

podcasts have included Anthony Cooper, who went from being incarcerated to a community leader in Madison, and Cheryl Knox, former probation and parole officer for 33 years.

Star's podcast can be listened to on Saturday's at 1:00 p.m. on 103.5 The Sun. Recordings of his podcasts are on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Overcast and many more.

Star was inspired to start this podcast because of his personal experiences.

"My brother was incarcerated," Star said. "I wanted to do something to help the situation. It's very common to have someone on probation or parole that's been affected by the justice system in my community. I want to provide a platform to help their transition."

"It's important because the vast majority of these people in jail, in prison, will be coming home one day," Star said. "When these people come home, they are going to be your neighbors. Let's support them now so when they come home they can come back to something positive."

His goal is to provide an uplifting and positive platform to give hope and opportunity to many who need it.

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Contributed/Dee Star



SUN PRAIRIE SCHOOLS

WalletHub ranks Sun Prairie ranks 218th most equitable school district in state

By **Jeromey Hodsdon**
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Sun Prairie was ranked 218th most equitable out of 421 Wisconsin School Districts by a recent study released by WalletHub.

According to WalletHub Financial Writer Adam McCann, WalletHub scored 12,876 school districts throughout the U.S. based on two metrics: average household income and expenditures for public



Brad Saron

elementary and secondary schools per pupil.

The data used in the survey was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics.

"For expenditures, for each 1% above the state's

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Two high schools create new outlook for Sun Prairie bowling

By **Jeromey Hodsdon**
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Due to the new Sun Prairie West High School opening, the national powerhouse Sun Prairie High School Bowling program will now be split into two teams for the first time in its history.

Both Sun Prairie East and West will field their own varsity teams on the boys side, however the girls will remain united as one team as they don't have enough bowlers to fill two separate teams this year.

"I'm excited about the

split because it gives more kids the opportunity to bowl," Coach and Program Leader John Breunig said. "It will be a challenge because we are splitting the talent, but I don't see why we can't get both teams to state."

Breunig has been the head coach of the Sun Prairie boys team for the past two decades. However, with the two-team split, he isn't going to be a head coach for either team, but rather oversee both teams.

The new head coach for Sun Prairie West is Mike Krachey and for Sun

Prairie East is Eric Myhre. Breunig's wife, Cher Breunig, will continue to coach the girls team.

"We are running one program with two teams," Breunig said. "The teams will practice together."

I think it's going to bring friendly competition. We will do team challenges at the end of practices. They are all good friends."

High school tryouts are on Sept. 27 and Oct. 4 at 4:15 p.m. No competitive bowling experience is needed to try out.

"We don't cut anybody," Breunig said. "Everybody

plays. The more kids we have the more teams we put together."

The regular season consists of 10-11 matches, one per week, depending on how many teams there are. It starts in November and ends in February with the state competition in March.

Senior Daniel Wendt is the only returning varsity bowler on Sun Prairie East this year.

"It's unfortunate that we had to separate our team, but it had to happen," Wendt said. "I plan on becoming a leader and a captain on this team

to motivate us to exceed expectations this year."

Both high schools are expected to have enough bowlers to field their own varsity and junior varsity teams.

On the other hand, the girls team needs more bowlers to field a complete Sun Prairie team without having to co-op with another school.

Breunig noted that the most recent successes have come from the girls program. They won the state championship in 2020 and were runner-ups at the 2021 and 2022 national championships.

Breunig said the first day of tryouts consists of bowling three regular games and acts as a gauge to see how many bowlers the program has for the season.

The second day will be more in depth, consisting of some skill drills. According to Breunig, these include fundamental drills like foul line drills to work on the finish and release, and they will prioritize spare shooting.

"National Championships are won and lost on spares," Breunig said.

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Rank

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average we removed one point from a base score of 50 for each district," McCann said. "For household income, for each 1% above the state's average we added one point to a base score of 50 points for each district."

Each district's score was calculated by taking the absolute difference between the score for expenditures and the score for household income, with the lowest value being the best.

Sun Prairie scored a 17.3. The study lists the school district's income as \$81,145 and the expenditure for public schools per pupil as \$12,841. The Augusta School District was named most equitable in the state, with a score of 0.02. Their school district's income is \$61,379 and expenditures per pupil is \$14,455.

However, Sun Prairie Area School District Superintendent Brad Saron said that these studies don't capture the whole picture.

"They use narrow and old data for a limited study," Saron said. "It doesn't take into account all of our professional equity development or that we have the most robust community schools program in the state that is centered

around equity."

In addition, school districts in Wisconsin are limited to the amount of expenditures they can spend on public schools that the state set limits on in 1993.

In many states, more affluent school districts receive a greater amount of funding per student than poorer districts, McCann said.

McCann cited an estimate found by the Century Foundation that claimed low-income districts are underfunded by approximately \$6,700 per pupil across the U.S. That gap has widened due to COVID-19 as low-income students have suffered the greatest learning loss, as not everyone has access to the technological resources they need for remote learning, according to McCann.

The Sun Prairie Area School District prioritized equity through the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent an increase in inequity.

"We distributed Chromebooks and hotspots to every student in the school district," Saron said. "We converted to a standard set of software programs across the district."

While the study ranks school districts based on financial equity, there are other aspects of equity other than finance to truly understand the gaps in equity.

that come together that don't know anything about volleyball," Star said. "They enter a tournament to win prize money to save their church."

According to Star, the movie is going to be released on Amazon, the director's platform called Virtual Vision and other faith-based platforms. The movie has no current timetable for a release date.

Star

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Additionally, Star announced that he will be acting in an upcoming faith-based movie that will be shot in Dane County. The movie, titled "Slam," is being directed by Rafale Ragland and shooting begins next month.

"It's a faith-based movie about four girls

Celebrate

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equipment and the main office was updated with new carpet, paint and light fixtures to make it feel more welcoming.

An employee wellness clinic and professional learning center are still being developed, but will be finished to open in September.

PPA celebrates new building

Prairie Phoenix Academy (PPA) also opened their doors to their new building Sunday after recently shutting down their old school building.

"I'm just so proud that PPA finally has their own space that I believe we can be proud of," Schroeder said. "It's what our students deserve."

PPA serves grades 10-12 as an alternative high



Jeromey Hodsdon

Students of Prairie Phoenix Academy and school board and administration joined principal Nikole Sconiers in cutting the ribbon, officially opening the doors to the new PPA building on Sunday, Aug. 28.

school is connected to Central Heights.

"Our commitment to our students was to not only build amazing places for our students to learn and grow into the best version of their future

selves, but that they were involved in the process along the way," Saron said.

He added that the school board put in countless hours over the last seven years leading up to get to where they are today with the new schools and renovations.

"We serve as a model for the rest of the state and the nation, for what communities can do for kids and families when they come together around a shared vision."

New building features include a new cafeteria with a serving area, teaching kitchen and breakout spaces. They also added a resource center that provides a shared collaborative space for students.

"I would like to uplift the community," Principal

Nikole Sconiers said. "We are looking to do our best work with the community and bring the community into these wonderful spaces."

Existing tech ed spaces were repurposed to provide additional collaborative space. Other additions are an English language arts workshop and a small group/individual learning area for independent study.

"We will continue to rise up like phoenixes and show that this is an academy where students, scholars and families all deserve nothing but the best," Sconiers said. "We want you to come in and support our learning. We have this space, let's use this space."



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Principal of Prairie Phoenix Academy Nikole Sconiers welcomes the public into the new PPA building on Sunday, Aug. 28.

Bowling

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If anyone knows how to win championships in bowling, it's Breunig. In his coaching tenure, he coached three individual state championships, three team state championships, two individual national champions and two team national

championships.

"I think the success comes from the junior program," Breunig said. The junior program gives out \$24,000 in scholarships annually to any youth as young as three years old."

It also acts as an extra practice session for high school bowlers, as the coaches are around helping the youth bowlers of all skill levels during

youth leagues.

Sept. 8 and 10 are the next sign-up times to join the youth bowling program. Breunig also said anyone can come to the Coachz' Pro Shop at Prairie Lanes any night of the week to sign up for youth bowling. He expects to have about 180 youth bowlers between the Thursday after school and Saturday morning leagues. The junior bowling

leagues run for 25 weeks and each bowler gets to participate in the city and state tournament to win additional scholarship money.

"I think it's a great sport that shows how individual ability relates to the team's success," Breunig said. "It's special because they work for team success and individual success at the same time."

PUZZLE FUN

Weekly SUDOKU

Sudoku grid with numbers 2, 9, 7, 1, 6, 3, 5, 8, 7, 9, 2, 6, 3, 3, 9, 7, 4, 3, 1, 7, 5, 1, 8, 6, 9, 3, 4, 6.

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆◆◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging ◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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Super Crossword Answers

Grid of crossword puzzle answers including words like 'SUDOKU', 'PUZZLE', 'FUN', 'CROSSWORD', etc.

Super Crossword

APT CITY SIGHTS

- ACROSS: 1 Inexpensive, 8 Nazareth's ancient locale, 15 Carbo-loading food, 20 Conditionally free prisoner, 21 Ram into from behind, 22 Voices below mezzos, 23 Pooch in a Texas city?, 25 Vegas machines, 26 Certain snake, 27 Employ, 28 Margarine, 30 Eight in front?, 31 "That's — -brainer", 33 Lock opener in an Oklahoma city?, 38 Display stand for curios, 42 Marked, as on a ballot, 43 Toothy tool, 44 See, 45 Young lady in a California city?, 50 Song satirist Tom, 52 Stroll along, 53 Aegean, e.g., 54 "Shrek!" writer William, 56 With "In all probability ...", 57 Cake alternative, 58 Cake levels in a Duke Ellington title, 63 West of film, 64 Long seat in a Kansas city?, 70 Year-by-year records, 72 AFL —, 73 Pooch's mopey pal, 74 Band gig in an Arkansas city?, 81 Playfully shy, 82 Hispanic woman, 83 Lines on street maps, 84 Plato's "T", 85 "M*A*S*H" co-star, 88 Microbe-filled, 91 Municipal law: Abbr., 92 — Carlo, 94 "The Far Side" cartoonist Gary, 97 Opening for light in a Wisconsin city?, 100 Alias letters, 101 "— So Fine" (1963 #1 hit), 103 Singer Yoko, 104 Anybody, 105 Boxy vehicle in a Virginia city?, 111 Scarlet, e.g., 112 Casino game with 80 balls, 113 Ruinous end, 114 Banks do it, 116 Cooked in the style of, 119 Maya, 121 Sluggard in a Florida city?, 127 Dr. Watson player Bruce, 128 As a help to, 129 Sign off on, 130 Disney Hall architect of "Scream" films, 131 Try, 132 Arrange in a different way, 4 Cheat, 5 Aged, 6 Chain of cosmetics stores, 7 Actress Garr, 8 Rosey of the 1960s Rams, 9 — Lingus (Irish carrier), 10 China's Chou En —, 11 Angry feeling, 12 Strung along, 13 — Gay (warplane), 14 Yard tools, 15 Fathers, 16 Sign off on, 17 Actress Channing, 18 Walked unsteadily, 19 Ore analysts, 24 Wall St. opportunist, 29 Of speech, 31 Light-footed, 32 Campbell of "Scream" films, 34 Acne care brand, 35 Ale barrels, 36 Emend, 37 Pile up debt, 38 That, to Lucia, 39 Orchestral drums, 40 Surrounding, as sound, 41 Cow on milk cartons, 46 Lustful look, 47 Noble Brit, 48 Get, as profit, 49 — fire under (rousted), 51 Sweetums, 55 Fido's threat, 58 Boob tube, 59 Large bag, 61 "Nine" Tony nominee, 62 Cynical reply, 63 — de mer, 64 Earthen pot, 65 Actor Cage, to pals, 66 Entryway, 67 "Not possible", 68 Toasted bread cube, 69 "Yo!", 71 Map source, 75 Highway semi, 76 Blood type, for short, 77 Vocalist Vikki, 78 Net tyro, 79 "Fame" singer Irene, 80 Singers Arnold and Grant, 84 Moderately muscular, 85 "Great Jewish Joke Book" writer, 86 Body of water off Buffalo, 87 Get closer, quaintly, 89 Kitty's call, 90 Yearnings, 92 Act silently, 93 Fleecy female, 95 "Well well!", 96 Dweeby sort, 98 11th mo., 99 Vocabulary, 102 "Enough!", 106 Tough puzzle, 107 Opposite of 104-Across, to pals, 108 Actresses Stone and Watson, 109 Off the ground, 110 Omaha loc., 115 Get closer, 116 Between the sheets, say, 117 Mandolin kin for short, 118 Love god, 120 "Tarzan" star Ron, 122 Fruit stone, 123 Major fuss, 124 — -TURN (street sign), 125 — -Magnon man, 126 That woman

Grid for Super Crossword puzzle with numbers 1-132 indicating starting positions for clues.