

# The Journal Times®

## Back on the field

Packers tackle David Bakhtiari finally cleared to return to practice **SPORTS, PAGE C1**



## Caledonia woes

Citing higher costs, Village scaling back on new public safety building **LOCAL, PAGE B1**



**SUNNY, PLEASANT 76 • 60** FORECAST, B4 | **MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2022** | journaltimes.com | \$2.00



# Mr. Duncan's Opus

ALEX RODRIGUEZ PHOTOS, ALEX.RODRIGUEZ@JOURNALTIMES.COM

Andrew Duncan gets his choir from Wendell Phillips High School into formation to sing at the 30th reunion.

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**RACINE** — In 1992, 21 former choir students of Andrew Duncan, who had been the choir teacher at Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, gathered at the home Duncan shares with his wife, Carol, to surprise him with a reunion.

The next year, they did it again. And again. And again.

This reunion has happened every year, usually at the home of a student all-grown-up with one being held virtually over Zoom.

Now, 30 years later, as Duncan approaches his 90th birthday, the reunion returned to where it began: Haven Avenue.

### Mr. Duncan

Born the youngest of four children in 1932 in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, Duncan learned to play music at a young age. In junior high, Duncan started playing the drums. Then his music teacher at the time moved him to the trombone.

After finishing high school, Duncan was drafted into the Army and was assigned to an Army Band. Upon leaving the Army, Duncan had to figure out what he was going to do with his life.

"When I got out, I wasn't sure what I was going to do then, but I knew it was going to be in music," Duncan said.

Duncan then moved to Chicago and stayed with his sisters. He started subbing to teach music in various schools around the city.

"That was a scene," Duncan said. "Most of the time I got sent to schools that had bad kids in them. They were so bad they had guards sitting outside the door of the classroom."

In 1958, Duncan was chosen to become the full-time music teacher for Wendell Phillips High School. That's where his journey really began.



Andrew Duncan, left, and his former student Michael Hill look over some sheet music.

### Wendell Phillips

Duncan initially had trouble when he first began teaching full-time. Mainly because he couldn't play the piano. But Duncan always compensated by finding a student to play the piano for him.

Under Duncan's tutelage, the Wendell Phillips choir would travel all over the country — one time even going to Europe — and became the first choice for Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley when Daley needed a choir to perform for an event; there were times when Duncan had to turn down Daley because the choir was too busy.

Both Andrew and Carol Duncan described Wendell Phillips as being in the "Heart of the Ghetto." At the school, Mr. Duncan commanded respect.

"I always said to them (the students), 'I'm going to treat you alright, I'm going to treat you with respect, and I de-

mand that you treat me with respect, and they did," Duncan said. "I also told them, 'if I see you laying in a gutter, high or drunk, I'm gonna leave you there; I don't want anything like that,'" Duncan said.

Duncan recounted one of his stories of a trip to Fargo, North Dakota. A student in his choir became belligerent towards him and Duncan threatened to call his parents and have him on the next train back to Chicago. The student immediately turned his attitude around, Duncan recalled.

Please see **DUNCAN**, Page A6

**SEE:** For more photos and video from the reunion, scan the QR code with your smartphone camera.



# GOP wrestles with its own abortion opposition

**HANNAH FINGERHUT AND SCOTT BAUER**  
Associated Press

**MADISON** — When the U.S. Supreme Court repealed in June a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, Wisconsin's 1849 law that bans the procedure except when a mother's life is at risk became newly relevant.

Republicans in the Legislature blocked an attempt by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers to overturn the law. Yet there's disagreement inside the GOP over how to move forward when they return to the state Capitol in January.

The state's powerful Republican Assembly speaker, Robin Vos, supports reinforcing the exception for a mother's life and adding protections for instances involving rape and incest. Others, including GOP state Rep. Barbara Dittrich, say the law should stay as it is, without exceptions for rape and incest.

For decades, Republicans like Vos and Dittrich appealed to conservative voters — and donors — with broad condemnation of abortion. But the Supreme Court's decision is forcing Republicans from state legislatures to Congress to the campaign trail to articulate more specifically what that opposition means, sometimes creating division over where the party should stand.

Dittrich says consensus among her Republican colleagues on an alternative to the 1849 law would be a "tremendous challenge."

"We once heard that the Democrats were the big-tent party," she said in an interview. "Now I would say the Republican Party is more the big-tent party on some of these issues."

Of course, supporters of abortion rights are now a distinct minority in Republican politics. Just two GOP members of Congress — Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine — publicly support passing legislation to reinstate the protections of a woman's right to choose that the Supreme Court struck down in overruling *Roe v. Wade*. In Colorado, U.S. Senate candidate Joe O'Dea is the rare Republican running this year who backs codifying *Roe*.

But the debate over even a limited set of circumstances in which abortion could be legal spurred some division within the GOP in Wisconsin and elsewhere.

In Indiana, after a decade of stalled



Evers



Vos



Dittrich

Please see **ABORTION**, Page A3

# Special ed difficulties

Teachers, parents struggle with less money for schools, rising costs

**ELIZABETH BEYER**  
Lee Newspapers

In the span of five years, 12-year-old Max Glass-Hui has changed schools five times.

Diagnosed with Down syndrome and autism, Max doesn't have biological speech and communicates using an electronic augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device. He also has developmental feeding issues and requires assistance to get the nutrition he needs during the day at school.

**"It's really difficult to keep up with inflation and meet what are extremely reasonable requests when this is what we're dealing with."**

**Melinda Heinritz**, president of the Madison Public Schools Foundation

Tiffany Glass, Max's mother, said they have never found a classroom that provided the resources her son needs.

"In the past, we've often had experiences where he'll be in a school, we'll request a reasonable accommodation and the

school and/or the district will say no and that triggers a crisis, it forces him to leave the school," she said.

Max has been in and out of the Madison School District since he was 4 years old. He left the district to attend a private school, which was able to provide the services Max needed, but returned to Madison after the private school closed. In Madison, Glass would find a school that offered only some of the services Max needed, requiring her to look for other supports on her own while she worked full-time.

"It's been extremely difficult for our family, just the daily logistics of trying to access school are very difficult for him, difficult

Please see **TEACHING**, Page A3



JOHN HART, LEE NEWSPAPERS

Martha Siravo, co-founder of Madtown Mommas and Disability Advocates, with her daughter, 10-year-old Jaz. The fourth-grader, who has cerebral palsy and epilepsy, needs support as she goes back to full-time, in-person learning for the first time since 2020. That support is hard to find as the Madison School District deals with staffing shortages and funding for special education that advocates say is inadequate.



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A+	D1	LEGALS	D3-4	OBITUARIES/RECORDS	B2	RACINE COUNTY	B1
COMICS	C5	LOTTERY	B2	OPINION	A5	SERVICE DIRECTORY	D4
ENTERTAINMENT	A2	NATION/WORLD	B4	PUZZLE CORNER	D3	SPORTS	C1



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# Duncan

From A1

## In Racine

Racine Unified School District scouted Duncan to become the music director for all the schools in 1974. He left his job at Wendell Phillips, as well as a position teaching music at Roosevelt University in Chicago he had for two years.

For 20 years, from 1974 to 1994, Duncan oversaw more than 50 music teachers from all elementary, middle and high schools in RUSD; he was the only person to ever have the role. He also helped run various music festivals during his time at RUSD.

Carol recalled one of the festivals Duncan put together in the 1980s being a surprise hit. "He was so nervous when he decided to start the festival over again," she said. "He was so nervous about this and he said 'I don't know how many people are going to come' and I'll tell you how many people came. They had to get the police to do the traffic on Washington Avenue. It was backed for miles with people coming to the festival. It was standing room only in the gymnasium."

Duncan was relieved from duty at RUSD two years before he originally planned, his position being phased out in 1994.



PAUL ROBERTS, JOURNAL TIMES FILE PHOTO

Andrew Duncan is shown here in 1994 as he was retiring as music director for Racine Unified after 20 years with the school district.

## The third Saturday in August

"The choir always told

me 'Mrs. Duncan, your husband didn't teach only music, he also taught us life,' and I thought that was so unique to say. They just

love him," Carol said.

The reunions began 30 years ago with a phone call between Carol and a couple of Duncan's old choir students. While they had always kept in touch with him, the 21 of his students wanted to surprise him, assuring Carol that they would bring all the food and anything that would be needed to bring. Since the original date of Aug. 22, 1992, the reunion has always fallen on the third Saturday of August, even when the pandemic caused the meetings to be over Zoom.

The Duncans had always maintained a good relationship with Duncan's former students, who they

still affectionately call "kids" despite their median age now being over 60. Duncan recalled a time when he found out one of his former lead soloists was turning 70, and how shocked he was at the revelation.

"Am I that old?" Duncan said through laughs. "Yes, you are," Carol added.

"It's just been an awesome thing between a director and a choir, and Andrew considers them family," Carol told a reporter during Saturday's 30th reunion. "He told me that if he dies on a Saturday or Sunday, I have to hold his body over until the next Saturday so all the kids can come to his funeral."

They are all special special people."

It's also customary that every student that attends the reunion to sing at the end, with Andrew of course in the conducting position.

"When he would take us places (concerts and festivals), it would keep us off the streets," said Angelo LaGronge, a member of the choir from 1972 to 1973. "We were off the streets and doing something constructive."

"Mr. Duncan," said Michael Hill, a student of Duncan's from 1971 to 1972, during a speech at the reunion, "you are the glue that keeps us all together." Hill was met with many cheer and words of agreement after his words.

"I really joined the choir on a humbug, but I ended up really enjoying it," said Trudy Hill, a student of Duncan's from 1964 to 1965; one of Hill's other teachers had promised extra credit if he participated in the music program.

"I was extremely shy growing up," said Dr. Regina Conway-Phillips. "Even though I was really quiet and very very shy, he saw something in me. He saw a leadership ability in me, and that pushed me to be where I'm at today." Conway-Phillips is now a professor in the nursing program at Loyola University in Chicago. But when she was in Duncan's choir from 1967 to 1969, she was the manager for the choir.

"He's quite the man, quite the music man," Carol said, reflecting on the life and career of her husband. "Music has been his whole life."

Andrew Duncan will turn 90 years old on Oct. 1. A big party at his church is being planned.

**READ:** The Journal Times' coverage of the original 1992 reunion honoring Andrew Duncan [NEWSVU](#)



ALEX RODRIGUEZ PHOTOS, ALEX.RODRIGUEZ@JOURNALTIMES.COM

Above: Alumni of the Wendell Phillips Choir present Director Andrew Duncan, center, with a light in the shape of a treble clef Saturday during the 30th official reunion of the Wendell Phillips Choir at Duncan's home on Haven Avenue.

Below: Carol and Andrew Duncan hold hands.



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