

COMMUNITY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2021 | lakegenevanews.net | SECTION D

One gift you must get family

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD

Supply chain snarls and higher prices could slow the holiday shopping season.

But the best gift — the one your family needs most — is widely available and free.

It's not a PlayStation, AirPods or fruit basket (though those would be nice). It isn't a gift card to a local store or restaurant (though merchants and eateries deserve your support).

What you really need for a happy and healthy Thanksgiving through Christmas and New Year's is a COVID-19 vaccine.

Don't "Bah humbug!" just yet. Whether you've had a shot or not, hear us out because health protocols are changing and cases are back on the rise in Wisconsin.

If you've already had two shots of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, thank you. You are helping to defeat a terrible and deadly disease. More than 3.2 million people in Wisconsin are fully vaccinated, which is 55% of the population (and 58% have had at least one dose).

Unfortunately, the more contagious delta variant of the virus has complicated and extended this pandemic. Health officials now suggest a third shot for all adults to extend their immunity.

Call your doctor, health clinic or pharmacy to schedule a booster now.

Adults who received a single-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine can get a booster, too. You can even mix the brands of shots you receive.

Another change is that younger children 5 to 11 years old can now get their first shot. Though children are far less likely than adults to get sick or require hospitalization, they can spread the disease to older relatives at family functions. So they should be vaccinated, too. A lot of kids want to participate in protecting grandma and grandpa. Ask them.

The shots aren't perfect, of course. No vaccine is — not for the flu, measles, hepatitis or other disease. Yet we've relied on vaccines for generations because of their life-saving results.

The same is true of the COVID shot. The vaccines for the novel coronavirus have proven remarkably effective at preventing serious illness and death. Only in rare cases has a shot caused severe reactions.

If you haven't received a COVID vaccine yet, please consider getting one now. Unvaccinated people in Wisconsin were nearly five times more likely to become infected, 11 times more likely to be hospitalized and 15 times more likely to die from COVID-19, according to the state Department of Health Services.

As of Dec. 2, the novel coronavirus has infected 889,078 people in Wisconsin, hospitalized more than 45,000 (as of mid November) and killed more than 9,000 (as of Dec. 3). Even if you don't think you need a shot, your older relatives need you vaccinated so you don't spread it to them.

So many leaders in health, religion and politics are urging inoculation.

"Humanity has a history of friendship with vaccines," Pope Francis said this fall. He called vaccination "an act of love" that promotes the "common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable."

"The virus will not go away by itself, or because we wish it away," President Joe Biden said last month. "We have to act."

"I recommend: Take the vaccines," former President Donald Trump told his supporters. "I did it. It's good. Take the vaccines."

Please do your part by getting a job if you are eligible. It's the best way to protect your family and elders while enjoying a traditional celebration, food and fun.

EDITORIAL

A needlessly sad ending

Kenosha should have let Fellow Mortals help Carl the turkey

LAKE GENEVA REGIONAL NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

Over the last week, people all around Kenosha and beyond have been saddened by the death of Carl the Turkey, who was fatally hit by a car on Dec. 7.

While the story of Carl may sound like a funny tale, it's no laughing matter.

And the story didn't have to end on Dec. 7. There could have been a lot more life left for the turkey and it should be a lesson

for others going forward. While it may be a Kenosha story, it could happen anywhere.

For months, the turkey had been roaming around a neighborhood in Kenosha. People in the area had gotten to know the turkey and even named him Carl, looking out for him and trying to protect him from the traffic in the road. It's no question that Kenosha has had a tough year and a half after the riots there in late summer 2020. It's no wonder that residents there grasped onto something positive to give them a smile — Carl. If Carl had stayed a few days or even a few weeks, it



SEAN KRAJACIC, KENOSHA NEWS

A turkey, who has been lovingly dubbed "Carl," stands on Pershing Boulevard on Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021.

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POINT AND COUNTERPOINT

Finland's model may help U.S. solve homelessness

Matthew Desmond, in his book "Evicted," states "America is supposed to be a place where you can better yourself, your family, and your community." But this American Dream is "only possible if you have a stable home."

He further states that "home is the center of life; it is the wellspring of personhood; it is a refuge from the grind of everyday work; it is necessary to develop a civic life."

But millions of people are evicted from their homes each year and enter a world of shelter insecurity. We all have seen people sleeping in doorways, on park benches and under bridges. Tent cities are popping up everywhere and homelessness is a major problem across the world.

So how serious is homelessness in Wisconsin? The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that there are 4,907 homeless people in Wisconsin. Based on 2014-2018 data from HUD, 2,740 would be individual adults, 2,167 would be people in families, 246 would be individual youth, 332 would be veterans, and 527 would be chronically homeless. In 2018, 92% of the homeless found shelter, while 8% are unsheltered.

The Alliance also reported some good news: Homelessness has dropped in all categories except the chronically homeless since 2014. The

chronically homeless category was up by 1%. The drop in homelessness was largely due to Homeless Assistance Grants from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

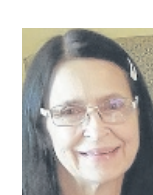
So how did homelessness become such a problem here in Wisconsin and across the United States? Prior to 1980s, homelessness was not major problem. But things changed after Reagan was elected president. Under President Reagan, Medicaid was slashed by 18% and HUD's budget was cut by 25%. Because of these cuts, more than 250 community health centers were closed. Between 1980 and 1991, 309 rural hospitals and 294 urban hospitals were shuttered. Nearly one million Native Americans lost access to Indian Health-care Services. Because of these and many other cuts to social programs, the overall poverty rate increased by two percent.

During the Reagan years, the gap between the rich and poor widened. The poor lost 9% of their wealth, while the wealthiest gained 9%. Housing insecurity grew as Reagan shredded the social safety net. Treatment for mental illness was more difficult to find as health centers closed. Veterans of America's endless wars suffered from PTSD and lacked treatment.

The homelessness problem is made worse by a series of other unregulated economic activities. Foreigners are buying up residential properties as

Treatment should come before housing to really help

Over the past five years the problem of homelessness has increased. Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) show roughly 580,000 people were homeless in 2020. 61% of the unsheltered homeless are in the Progressive west coast states.



PAMELA WOLFE

The federal government has spent billions over the past decade on "Housing First" programs as have states and cities. Housing First is a theory that giving people permanent housing with no strings attached is the best solution to homelessness.

Advocates of this approach present it as a tremendous success. If this were true there would not be a current homelessness crisis. Policy makers must realize that the homeless are usually suffering from more than a lack of housing.

According to a 2019 report from UCLA 75% of the unsheltered homeless have addictive disorders, 78% have mental health disorders and 84% have physical health problems.

A lack of housing is not the cause of addiction and mental health disorders and providing housing alone is not the solution. If it were the cause, none of us in stable housing would be at risk.

Advocates point to Finland's Housing First programs. Their homeless population has decreased, however, between 2015 and 2020 the number

of refugees also markedly decreased. The percent of foreign-born individuals in Finland is half of that in the U.S. Finnish drug policy rests on total prohibition and drug possession remains a crime.

In the U.S. the Housing First model has definitely provided permanent housing. But being provided housing is not the same as living in it. One HUD report (Carol Pearson, et al) found that while they had permanent, 42 percent of Housing First program residents disappeared for from two weeks to three months at a time.

A recent peer reviewed scientific study in Canada (Journal of Dual Diagnosis, 4/17/17) compared outcomes for 172 substance abusing clients, half in Housing First and half in a control group of standard community care. After 24 months the Housing First clients had poorer mental health and worse rates of substance abuse, family relations, and general quality of life.

That's not surprising since the worst aspects of life on the streets for drug addicts is concentrated into physical buildings. It is easy to buy drugs from your neighbors and hide them away in your cupboard. I believe a year of sobriety is worth more than a year of assigned housing.

Housing First requires nothing of its clients. Considered victims of addictions, psychiatric disorders, or even Capitalism, they needn't participate in services, take medication, reduce substance use,

Please see DOELDER, Page D2

Please see WOLFE, Page D2

Wheatland teacher arrested in Burlington

Faces child porn, sexual assault charges

SCOTT WILLIAMS
LEE NEWSPAPERS

BURLINGTON — An elementary school band teacher from Wheatland in Kenosha County has been charged with sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl and possession of child pornography in his hometown of Burlington.

Zachary Wendt, 38, who was arrested by Burlington police, is being held in the Racine County Jail on \$500,000 bond, following an initial court appearance Thursday on six felonies and two misdemeanors.

Wendt is charged with two felony counts of sexual assault of a child by a person who works or volunteers with children; three felony counts of possession of child pornography; one felony count of exposing genitals or other intimate parts; and two misdemeanor counts of sexual intercourse with a child aged 16 or older.

If convicted on all charges, he could face up to 75 years in prison.

A criminal complaint issued by the Racine County district attorney describes the alleged victim as a 16-year-old girl who knew Wendt through Musicology, a retail store in Burlington where Wendt was offering music lessons.

The store, located at 452 N. Pine St., lists Wendt on its website among four music teachers



Wendt

associated with the business. Officials at Musicology have since said the store has cut ties with Wendt. According to the criminal complaint, the 16-year-old girl told police that Wendt asked her out on a date, thinking she was 20 years old. After she told him that she was only 16, the complaint states, he continued pursuing her and they ended up having sex.

Wendt is accused of taking the girl to his home in the 600 block of Meadow Lane, getting her drunk and then having sex with her. After the first assault in February, the complaints alleges, Wendt had sex with the girl again in May or June.

According to the complaint, Wendt urged the girl not to say anything to anyone because he “would lose his children.”

The complaint indicates that police executed a search warrant at Wendt’s home and seized cell-phones and a laptop computer.

Burlington police Sgt. Robert Jones said in a statement that the police received a tip via the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children about a male school teacher having a possibly “sexual relationship” with a 16-year-old girl.

After interviewing the alleged victim, her mother and others,



SCOTT WILLIAMS,, SCOTT.WILLIAMS@JOURNALTIMES.COM

In an image taken from a computer screen, schoolteacher Zachary Wendt, right, is shown in court Thursday with attorney Gregory Holdahl during an initial court appearance on charges including sexual assault of a minor and possession of child pornography.

Jones said, police took Wendt into custody.

“As this is an ongoing investigation,” the sergeant continued, “the Burlington Police Department is asking potential victims related to this case to reach out.”

Wendt serves as a band teacher on the faculty at Wheatland Center School, located in the Town of Wheatland in Kenosha County.

During an initial appearance Thursday in Racine County Circuit Court, defense attorney Gregory Holdahl argued for a low pre-trial bond by noting that Wendt has no previous criminal

history and that he has a job.

However, Holdahl added, “He’s obviously not going to be able to go back to that employer.”

Court Commissioner John Bjelajac set bond at \$500,000 — twice what the district attorney had suggested.

Wendt is due back in court Dec. 16 for a preliminary hearing.

Wheatland School District Administrator Marty McGinley sent a note home to parents announcing that an unidentified employee had been arrested for “an alleged situation.” McGinley wrote that the allegations stem from cir-

cumstances outside the Wheatland district and not involving any Wheatland student.

McGinley also announced that a school band concert was being postponed “due to the circumstances surrounding this investigation.” McGinley told parents that the unidentified employee has been suspended without pay.

Contacted at his office Thursday, Dec. 9, McGinley declined to comment.

The school’s website identifies Wendt as a band teacher and as band director. A Milwaukee TV station last year featured Wendt for recording a video of himself playing several musical instruments in a unique rendition of the Queen rock classic, “Bohemian Rhapsody.”

Wheatland Center School, located at 6606 368th Ave., has about 580 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. It is not affiliated with the Burlington Area School District, although its mailing address is in Burlington.

McGinley assured parents that counselors and other officials would be available to answer any student questions about the situation.

“As a school district, our first and most important responsibility is to ensure the safety of our students,” he wrote. “We will continue to do everything we can to make that happen.”

Jill Tatge-Rozell of the Kenosha News contributed to this report.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consume & complain: Is that all there is?

What were you meant to be? What does today’s consumer society ask of us besides buy and accumulate.

We don’t have room for all the stuff so we rent storage units; you see them everywhere now.

Black Friday, Christmas sales, TV buying channels, buying websites, it’s endless.

Many complain about all the stuff but can’t seem to stop. Church membership has declined drastically so where do we gather to ponder our moral duties and obligations to our fellow man. Instead we go online anonymously posting words we’d never dare say in person. Of course we haven’t all lost our civility and spew hate but the piercing words are ever present at the forefront on TV, social media, email, etc. It’s easy to bash and bluster compared to finding our humanitarian calling.

You could go Christmas caroling or ring the Salvation Army bell this holiday season or be drawn to blogs or other media and rant about cancel culture. What is supposedly being canceled that isn’t already gone I wonder. This holiday season let’s reflect and ask ourselves what we were meant to be in our short time on this planet and attempt to leave it better than when we arrived.

George Wen,
Delavan

Why aren’t people on the left talking about Biden?

Well it has been just over 10 months since President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris took office in January. For weeks on end, for the entire Trump term, there were letters to the editor from our usual suspects screaming how bad Trump was, etc., and that he should resign. Since the two have taken office, we have not heard anything from anyone as to how they think their president and vice president are doing.

I see letters every now and

Send letters

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then from Mr. Jerry Hansen, but he has now switched course and has now gone after the un-vaxed. He still hasn’t said a word about how he thinks this country is doing or how he feels about the direction we are heading. We also haven’t heard from Mr. Paul Kristofferson, who did nothing but copy and paste the same thing each week asking for Trump to resign. The only positive thing I’ve seen posted about Biden was from Mr. Steve Doelder, who called him “a man of action.” Now that’s funny!

I for one am putting it in writing that I am not happy with the direction this country is headed. The president is Joe Biden, but does anyone really think he is actually calling the shots? I think it’s time to hear from our friends on the left and go on the record. I know a bunch of us would like to hear from you what a fine job your president is doing. Please don’t blame Trump as all of his actions were basically eliminated the day after Biden took office.

Here is a quote from Adrian Rogers:

“You cannot legislate the poor into prosperity by legislating the wealthy out of prosperity. What one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else. When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that my dear friend is the beginning of the end of any nation. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it.”

Mike Lindsey,
Town of Geneva

Wolfe

From D1

submit to drug testing, or face any consequences for their choices.

The Canadian study is quite an indictment of the Housing First concept, but would currently be irrelevant for HUD funding. The only metric they consider is how many people have been assigned permanent housing. Whether those people continue drugging and drinking, become psychotic or even die is not considered.

There is a successful alternative, “Treatment First”. Treatment First relies on a linear model with emergency shelters and detox, residential treatment, longer transitional housing and only then, if needed, permanent supportive housing. Since treatment first housing has requirements such as so-

briety the housing retention rates are lower but, achieving increased well-being is greater and some clients will graduate to work and private housing.

Treatment First providers include rescue missions, short term shelters, longer term Transitional Housing, rehabilitation centers, and Faith Based programs such as the Salvation Army. They are only receiving 3% of the HUD funds.

People with persistent and severe mental illness (the population I work with for years) are helped to obtain the SSD income they clearly require, this with housing vouchers can pay for the group homes they often need.

People with temporary homelessness, such as the unemployed, domestic abuse victims, and immigrants do not need permanent supportive housing and benefit from transitional housing, which

can sometimes last months at a time.

The federal government is devoting record high resources to homelessness programs and the Build Back Better bill currently in the Senate plans \$170 billion more. The Secretary of HUD has pledged to also house undocumented immigrants.

What we urgently need is to change the formula for allocation of HUD funding. Currently 97% of funding goes to Housing First programs. I believe this needs to be drastically reduced and funding for other housing programs increased. It is especially important this be done now as the Build Back Better bill currently in the Senate plans to devote \$170 billion more for homeless programing.

Pamela Wolfe M.D., of the Town of Geneva, is a member of the Republican Party of Walworth County.

Doelder

From D1

investments; they have unlimited cash and make it difficult for individuals home buyers to purchase homes. To solve this problem, some countries prohibit foreigners from buying residential property.

Another major problem causing housing insecurity is the practice of corporations purchasing blocks of houses in neighborhoods, standardizing them to reduce costs, and then renting them out at higher rates than normal. These corporations have unlimited cash and can overbid any local individual buyer. The practice inflates the cost of housing and makes it impossible for an individual to purchase a home or even pay rent. Regulation is needed to prevent this practice and make housing affordable

again.

The good news is we can solve the homelessness problem. Finland has reduced chronic homelessness by using the “housing first” model. They have reduced the number of homeless from 18,000 to 7,000 using this model. The program was first used in the United States and was pioneered by Dr. Sam Tsemberis in the 1990s to help former psychiatric patients. What was different about the Finnish Housing First model? It was it is used on a nationwide basis.

The scheme is built on the principle that having a permanent home can make solving health and social problems much easier. The homeless are given permanent housing with a normal lease. It can range from a self-contained apartment to a housing block with round-the-clock support. Tenants pay rent and are

entitled to receive housing benefits.

In Finland, increasing the supply of affordable rental housing was a critical part of the approach. Finland used its existing social housing, but also bought flats from the private market and built new housing blocks in order to provide homes. All the homeless shelters were turned into supported housing. Even though the program costs money, it saves more in the long run.

We know what works to solve homelessness. Jesus defines loving our neighbor in his Good Samaritan parable. We need compassion and the willingness to pay the denarii (money) to cover the cost of helping our neighbor. Let’s do it!

Steven Doelder is a member of the Democratic Party of Walworth County and lives in the Village of Bloomfield.

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Editorial

From D1

would have been a fun novelty.

But once Carl began to domesticate and started to get in the way of daily traffic, then an unfortunate demise seemed inevitable.

Like in the children’s choose your own adventure story book

series, the story of Carl could have ended differently, had those involved made different decisions.

After getting numerous calls about Carl, Walworth County’s Fellow Mortals, a wildlife rehabilitation center, decided to step in and try to help the turkey.

Volunteers with the organization brought nets to try to

catch Carl and bring him safely to another place away from the traffic.

But when those volunteers showed up, they were harassed. They feared for their safety and left.

Two weeks later, Carl was hit by a car and didn’t survive.

The story of Carl the Turkey could happen anywhere. It could happen in Williams Bay,

Fontana, or even Lake Geneva.

The moral of this story should be that when an organization that specializes in the care of wildlife steps in and tries to help, they should be assisted and thanked, not chased away.

We are grateful for all the work that Fellow Mortals does throughout southeastern Wisconsin. Currently they are helping an injured snowy owl

that was likely hit by a car and a sandhill crane that was located by Geneva National that was unable to fly after supposedly being shot at some point. Those are just two of the roughly 2,000 animals Fellow Mortals has helped this year.

In Carl’s memory, it’s worth considering a donation to Fellow Mortals to help other wildlife get a second chance at life.