

Performing arts at school showing life

COVID-19 left ugly footprints everywhere it went, even threatening to stomp out performing arts in our local schools. But, with the determination of faculty, staff and volunteers, the music and theatre programs are finding their footing again.

Many things went online when pandemic protocols kept people away from one another, including classes at Valders, but some things could not be done remotely and were quietly pushed aside.

One of those casualties was the theater program at Valders High School, which had struggled hard to be revived a decade or more ago after a long absence. The 2020 fall musical was scrapped as most events and activities at the school were curtailed or canceled while the pandemic played out.

The middle school's tradition of a summer school musical also was paused for a couple years, drying up a key feeder program for the high school shows. Add in a few adviser and director departures and the struggles of the music department during COVID, and the stage went dark.

These programs are creative outlets for many students who may or may not have other passions and school activities they enjoy. They also provide valuable learning experiences and life skills, while entertaining audiences.

The music department took a hit when classes went online and performances were cut back or canceled, driving enrollment down and interrupting continuity. The programs are showing healthy signs of coming back after a year of normal school operation.

The theater program at VHS was brought back last year when Tom Berger of Sheboygan stepped forward as director, and the school put on a musical in the fall and a spring play. Crowds and participation may have been down, but it was a good start to a comeback.

And this summer, the middle school theatrical efforts are back, with Berger and Brittany Seifert directing a group of students, which will present "Little Mermaid Jr.," next Wednesday.

The level of talent is evident even in early rehearsals and Berger is optimistic that the school district's theater program is headed back to its glory. With the help of faculty, staff, community volunteers and students and support of the administrators, he said he sees a bright future for "theater kids."

That's worth a standing ovation, and we are all on board for this revival.

In Our Opinion



State officials celebrate boost in startups

The head of Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. says the state's "entrepreneurial spirit" is reflected in the 42% boost in new businesses formed during the pandemic.

"It's actually really exciting, because you could imagine that in the face of a pandemic, folks would retract, right?" WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes said in a recent interview.

"They would say, 'I'm not going to do anything new, I'm going to stay safe in my job, I'm going to stay safe where I am.' But instead, what we're seeing is a real entrepreneurial spirit."

The number of new business formations in Wisconsin leaped 42% between 2019 and 2021, from 50,277 to 71,151, according to figures provided by the Department of Financial Institutions.

Within that two-year timeframe, the larger jump was seen between 2020 and 2021, with an increase of 24.3%. Between 2019 and 2020, the increase was 13.8%.

By comparison, the year-over-year increases going back to 2011-12 ranged from 3.2% to 8.4%, the DFI figures show.

Federal figures provided by the National Federation of Independent Business show both employer establishment "births" and "deaths" in the state have largely been increasing over the same period. While the number of new employers rose over the first three quarters of 2021, the number of those shutting down saw an increase in mid-2020—briefly exceeding the number of new companies—before falling below 2019 levels later in the year.

Meanwhile, DFI figures show the total number of registered business establishments—or "active entities"—in the state has risen from just over 530,000 in 2012 to just over 530,000 in 2021. Between 2019 and 2021, when the spike in new business formations occurred, that number increased from about 471,000 to about 530,000.

Wisconsin Technology Council President Tom Still says the increase in business activity is "consistent with some other trends" the group had been tracking during the pandemic.

"As people lost or left previous jobs because of COVID's

effect on the economy or their families, they often looked to other means of paying the bills," Still said in a statement. "For many, that meant starting their own business, using skills

Capitol Report

By WisPolitics.com

and talents they already had but had not previously put to work for themselves."

Matt Cordio, the co-founder of the Wisconsin Startup Coalition, notes the state has "long struggled" with forming new businesses. But he says the economic uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic "in addition to record levels of available venture capital and private equity" helped drive this sharp increase.

"This is exciting news for Wisconsin as startup companies create net new jobs in the economy," he said in a statement. "Policymakers should work to foster a supportive environment for these new companies by investing

in talent attraction, workforce development, and creating a more attractive tax and regulatory climate in the state."

Hughes agreed greater availability of venture capital in Wisconsin is playing a role, as well as the pressures of the pandemic putting more people into "problem-solving mode."

"This is what we want to see, right? We want to see this trend upwards of businesses being created, because it shows activity in the economy and shows folks taking the initiative to start something new and to see if it works out," she said.

Still also pointed to "rising investor interest" around startups in Wisconsin. He noted angel and venture capital deals totaling over \$852 million in 2021, eclipsing the \$483 million total seen in 2020.

A Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. spokesman said the DFI numbers also show the state "generally has done a better job" of investing pandemic stimulus money into small businesses. He pointed to a report from the Center for Budget and **See Business p. 10**

Today in History...

Here are some highlights in world history on this date, June 23:

1860—A congressional resolution authorizes creation of the United States Government Printing Office, which opens the following year.

1888—Abolitionist Frederick Douglass receives one vote from the Kentucky delegation at the Republican convention in Chicago, effectively making him the first Black candidate to have his name placed in nomination for U.S. president. (The nomination will go to Benjamin Harrison.)

1931—Aviators Wiley Post and Harold Gatty take off from New York on a round-

the-world flight that lasts eight days and 15 hours.

1947—The Senate joins the House in overriding President Harry S. Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act, designed to limit the power of organized labor.

1994—The movie "Forrest Gump," starring Tom Hanks as a simple yet kindhearted soul and his serendipitous brushes with greatness, is released by Paramount Pictures.

2016—Britain votes to leave the European Union after a bitterly divisive referendum campaign, toppling Prime Minister David Cameron, who had led the campaign to keep Britain in the EU.

45 Years Ago—1977

—The Valders School Board has hired Aldene O'Connell of Manitowoc to fill the new position of assistant principal at Valders High School. She earned a bachelor's degree in education from Silver Lake College and a master's degree in curriculum from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She taught at VHS this past year and at Marinette and Kettle Moraine high schools before that.

—Lee Glaesser of the Valders FFA Chapter attended a national FFA leadership conference in Washington, D.C., recently. The weeklong conference was held at the National FFA Center near the U.S. Capitol. The event included sessions on leadership and national heritage, along with sightseeing trips to the area's historical monuments and places. The group also met with U.S. Rep. William Steiger

of the 6th Congressional District, the home district of Valders.

—The Manitowoc County Historical Society is planning

Looking Back

By Brian Thomsen

to dedicate several buildings this weekend at Pincrest Historical Village in rural Manitowoc. The event will include flag-raising ceremonies by area Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, historical music and demonstrations of crafts like spinning and soap making.

25 Years Ago—1997

—Philip A. Lindemann Jr., president and plant manager of Pine River Pre-Pack of Newton, recently won a gold medal in the United States Championship Cheese Contest

for his garlic and herb cold pack cheese. This is the company's first gold in the national contest.

—Loretta Groelle has retired as secretary of Faith Lutheran Church in Valders after 22 years of full-time employment there. She became full-time secretary in 1975 after 10 years as the church's part-time financial secretary. Christine Olson has been hired to succeed her and is currently being trained by Groelle.

—Curt Saueressig struck out 16 batters and allowed just two hits as the Valders I pony baseball team beat Branch, 14-2. He and teammates Jonathan Waack and Josh Lindemann each had two hits to lead the Valders offense, including an extra-base hit apiece.

10 Years Ago—2012

—A lightning strike is blamed for starting a fire that destroyed the William and Valerie Manlick home along

Moschel Road in the Town of Rockland on Monday. The two-story house was engulfed in flames by the time the Collins Fire Department arrived. Valerie said she was awakened by a strange noise and sensed something was wrong, so she and her dogs left the house to see the flames already having overtaken the chimney.

—Heavy rain Monday answered the prayers of farmers, ending a recent dry spell. Storms dropped close to 2 inches of rain, which local crop consultant Joe Kolbe termed "a million dollar rain."

—Casey Pivonka hit for the cycle and led Manitowoc Trophy to a 16-3 win against Spudz in five innings last week during Valders couples league softball action. He led off with a first inning home run and then hit a triple, single and double to end the night. The team won with just eight players on the field.



204 N. Liberty St., P.O. Box 400
Valders, WI 54245 • Phone 775-4431

Established in 1940 by Fred H. & Marion F. Brockman

Brian ThomsenPublisher
Mary ThomsenEditor
Todd BergmannReporter
Gregg NovachekTypesetter/Production
Dawn CoonceCirculation/Sales

Published every Thursday. Periodicals postage paid at Valders, WI.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Valders Journal, P. O. Box 400, Valders, WI 54245.

Subscriptions: \$32 per year in Manitowoc and Calumet Counties; \$42 per year elsewhere, paid in advance. Please notify us immediately of any change in your address.