



Dougherty: Gutekunst's drafts are better than you think

SPORTS, 1B

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'We're still struggling'



Inside ThedaCare's COVID unit, another virus wave feels like 'Groundhog Day'

Registered nurse Lauren Zanders offers her hand to help a patient sit up in the COVID unit at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Appleton on Tuesday. PHOTOS BY WM. GLASHEEN/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Madeline Heim Appleton Post-Crescent | USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

APPLETON – The halls of the COVID-19 unit at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Appleton were mostly quiet Tuesday morning except for a persistent bell-like “ding.” • Each bell tone means there’s a patient who needs help. That morning, they were nearly constant. They echo in Trevor Cordes’ head when he leaves a shift and goes home, along with the alarms that ring out when a patient’s oxygen levels are dropping dangerously. He calls them phantom sounds. • Fellow registered nurse Katie Harris hears them, too. • “I’d venture to guess 99% of us hear it all night,” she said.

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An EKG technician tightens a face shield before entering a patient's room in the COVID unit.

“Those are the dark days. You can’t look at somebody in their eyes and tell them, ‘We’ve got a magic cure for you.’ There is none.”

Dr. David Brooks Oversees treatment of infectious disease for the entire ThedaCare system

County chair accused of choosing politics over qualifications

Applicant says political leanings got in the way of new member pick

Jessica VanEgeren Appleton Post-Crescent USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

APPLETON – The chair of the Outagamie County Board was accused Tuesday of letting “political leanings rather than candidate qualifications” guide his pick to replace former board vice chair Travis Thyssen.

Only two applicants applied to serve out the remainder of Thyssen’s term representing District 21: Harry Dorman, of Grand Chute, and John Cuff, a local businessman who lost his bid to represent state Assembly District 56 in 2018.

Thyssen resigned from the board after accepting a position as Gibraltar’s first town administrator. His last meeting as a board member was Sept. 14.

Board Chair Jeff Nooyen said he interviewed and met with both candidates before nominating Cuff, a decision Dorman took issue with during a meeting Tuesday prior to the County Board meeting to confirm Cuff’s appointment.

“My concern is he (Nooyen) and Mr. Cuff have similar political leanings and political feelings,” Dorman said during the public comments portion of the County Legislative/Audit and Human Resources Committee meeting. “I don’t think that’s right.”

Nooyen, who is not a committee member but was present for the virtual meeting, said he didn’t know the political leanings of either candidate. He said he “had very nice conversations” with both.

“I have no idea what Mr. Cuff’s political leanings are. I don’t know what Mr. Dorman’s political leanings are, and Mr. Dorman certainly doesn’t know what mine are,” Nooyen said during Tuesday’s committee meeting. “I really take issue with him questioning my integrity.”

Dorman said Wednesday in an interview with The Post-Crescent that he thinks “it was disingenuous” for Nooyen to say he didn’t know Cuff’s

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Man thwarts scammers from clearing \$73,900 in forged checks

Duke Behnke Appleton Post-Crescent USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

FOX CROSSING – Lou Blasczyk has no idea how scammers got a copy of his check and his signature, but he knows what they attempted to do with the information.

Between Aug. 30 and Sept. 9, the scammers sought to clear 29 checks totaling \$73,900 from his account at Fox Communities Credit Union in Appleton. The individual checks in the scheme ranged from \$800 to \$4,000.

Fortunately, Blasczyk quickly caught the fraudulent activity, notified the credit union and closed the checking account. The swift action prevented any financial loss for Blasczyk and the credit union.

“It was all done by the technology where you deposit checks with your cellphone,” Blasczyk told The Post-

Crescent, referring to mobile banking apps. “If I wouldn’t have said anything, the checks would have cleared.”

Blasczyk said he monitors his account online every day “to be sure that nothing stupid is going on.”

On Aug. 31, he noticed three checks that were pending payment from his account — two for \$3,500 each and one for \$2,500. He didn’t recognize any of them.

“Somehow they got a copy of my checking account checks,” he said. “They took a photocopy of it and made checks payable to three different people totaling \$9,500.”

Blasczyk said one check was made payable to a person in Phoenix. Even after the account was closed, the fraudulent checks kept coming for another nine days.

The ordeal has caused Blasczyk to re-examine his banking practices.

“I’m starting to think about writing



Lou Blasczyk, shown at his home in Fox Crossing, monitors his financial accounts regularly, and it paid off to stop check fraud. WM. GLASHEEN/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

fewer checks,” he said. “The ability to reproduce things today with technology, I mean, it was exactly my signature. It’s scary.”

Heidi Kiecker, fraud officer at Fox Communities Credit Union, praised Blasczyk for his diligence in monitoring his account.

“We didn’t know that Lou did write these checks or didn’t write these checks,” she said. “It’s always helpful that the consumer checks and manages their accounts and notifies their financial (institution) right away if they identify a transaction they don’t recognize.”

The fraudulent checks looked like other checks written by Blasczyk. They included the credit union’s routing number and Blasczyk’s account number and check numbers and home address.

Only his name in the remitter line was replaced with various company names, perhaps to trick financial institutions into thinking they were depositing payroll checks.

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USA TODAY

Prices ignite: Petroleum supply chain disrupted by weather, pandemic spikes costs. 8A

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