

# New London & Hortonville NEWS

## Student project transcends generations

### Famous reptile returned to student

BY JOHN FAUCHER  
STAFF REPORTER

NEW LONDON – Dave Sexton Jr. was in the seventh grade at New London's Washington Junior High School in 1995.

He was self described as a "goof-off kid" and admitted he was not always very serious about school.

Sexton was into reptiles, fishing, hunting, sports and the kinds of things boys get into outside the realm of ordinary textbooks.

Patty Grossman, on the other hand, was a young teacher beginning her career.

She was not particularly into snakes and reptiles.

When Grossman started her career as a long-term sub for New London's Gifted and Talented program at Washington Junior High, she had no idea she would soon develop a unique classroom aide that would literally stick with her for the rest of her career.

Sexton was identified as a "Gifted and Talented" student at the time.

Gifted and Talented programs in schools recognized a student's abilities outside of



Retired educator Patty Grossman returns Phyllis, a 27-year old ball python to Dave Sexton, who purchased the snake for the school as a seventh grader in 1995.

John Faucher Photo

standardized tests and other measurements. In GT programs like the one Sexton was in, a student's characteristics such as leadership, motivation and creative reasoning become more of a focus.

A GT instructor works with students to set up a long-term project in an area of interest of the student.

Much to the dismay of many school staff, Sexton's project involved snakes.

Twenty-seven years later, Patty Grossman and Sexton, her former student, reminisced about the early days of that project.

"First I had to draw up a business plan, a safety plan, and research different kinds

of snakes and present a proposal," said Sexton. "It was a lot more work than I anticipated."

### Classroom snake

He wanted to purchase a snake for the school for educational purposes.

"It had to be set up so it was property of the school so there were no ownership issues between kids," said Sexton. "The kids were all on board with it but the staff was definitely not," said Grossman.

Sexton coordinated a massive schoolwide effort to promote and raise funds for the project.

He had to keep records and

receipts and document the entire process as planned and outlined in his project.

In addition to raising funds to purchase the snake, Sexton had to ensure a proper place for it to live within the school.

They kept its home in the school library for the first year.

Sexton also organized a school-wide naming contest and students voted on the name Phyllis.

On Saturday, July 16, 2022, Sexton sat on his living room couch next to Phyllis the now 27-year old ball python as he paged through the file folder from 1995.

Sexton smiled and held out the receipt from the day he purchased Phyllis.

"That was a lot of money back then," he said. "I can't believe you kept this folder all these years," he said to Grossman.

"I don't think any of us thought Phyllis would be around this long either," said Grossman with a smile.

While ball pythons are known for having long life expectancies, 20 to 25 years is the average, according to vet-folio.com.

Ball pythons grow up to 4-5 feet in captivity and can sometimes live beyond 30 years.

The oldest ever recorded is 63 years.

"I've learned a lot about snakes," said Grossman, who ultimately became the snake's caregiver for the next 26 years.

After the first year, she said the school librarian Dianne Fossum was relieved they relocated Phyllis to the GT classroom.

"She crawled into the printer a few times," recalled Grossman.

Eventually, industrial arts teacher Dean Peterson made a fancy cover for Phyllis's 30-gallon tank, but there were a few other escape adventures in Phyllis's tenure at the New London Middle School.

After New London built a new high school and converted the old high school into a middle school in 1998, Phyllis moved with Grossman to the middle school.

### Phyllis as teaching tool

Although Grossman taught math in middle school, Phyllis was still very actively involved in other student learning and incentive opportunities.

Art students borrowed Phyllis and studied her unique sheds and skin patterns and shapes.

Science teachers incorporated the docile reptile into their curriculum as well.

"Phyllis was really a breakthrough for some kids that otherwise were hard to engage," explained Grossman.

Through the years, she has had many students come back to visit Phyllis.

"Now I've got parents who were former students that come in for their kid's parent teacher conferences and they can't believe she's still alive," said Grossman.

"They ask, 'Is that Phyllis?'"

"Phyllis has long surpassed my legacy at the school," said Sexton with a smile.

"Thousands of kids have known her over the years," said Grossman.

In addition to her math students, Grossman frequently introduced Phyllis to the entire fifth-grade student body during a special fifth-grade day at the school.

This spring she ran into Sexton at the school while he was attending his son Dixon's parent teacher conferences.

Grossman let him know she planned to retire in June and asked if he would accept Phyllis and become her caregiver again.

He and his son Dixon gladly accepted.

"It was just too good to be a coincidence," said Grossman. "Most of all I will miss what she does for kids."

## Outagamie County Fair



Allison Gagnow was busy working with her Hampshire pigs at the Outagamie County Fair Wednesday, July 20. Gagnow is from Ellington and part of the B-Square 4-H Club based in Greenville.

Joy Casper Photos



Marti Hager, 13, of Hortonville holds her three month-old Boer Meat Goat named Bonnet in the goat barn at the Outagamie County Fair Thursday, July 21. Hager is part of the Fast Trackers 4-H Club in Stephenville.

## New London seeks public input

NEW LONDON – The city of New London, in cooperation with Cedar Corporation consultants, is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan.

This long-range planning document that addresses a variety of subjects including land use, transportation, community facilities, economic development, housing, and more.

As part of this public process, a Citizen Opinion Survey was developed

to gather up-front information and perspective from residents.

The city seeks opinions on how New London should grow, develop and accommodate service demands and quality of life needs over the next 20 years based on current and foreseeable trends.

Survey results will be important for crafting a long-range plan for the city's economic future and its ability to retain and attract new residents and employers.

Completing the online survey takes about 10 minutes and will be available between July 22 and Sept. 2.

The survey can be accessed from the home page of the city's website, [www.newlondonwi.org](http://www.newlondonwi.org).

For more information, contact City Administrator Chad Hoerth or Building Inspector Dave Vincent at 920-982-8500 or Eric Fowle from Cedar Corporation at 920-491-9081.

## Wega-Fremont NEWS

### New daycare center opens on Main Street

### Little Wega for little kids

BY JAMES CARD  
STAFF REPORTER

WEYAUWEGA – Little Wega Childcare can be found at 129 East Main St. or it can be located by walking down the street

and stopping where the sidewalk is covered with chalk artwork scribbled by toddlers.

Anna Ruelle is the owner and operator of Weyauwega's newest daycare facility. She opened her business the first week in June and now there is a waiting list.

Under her current certification, she can provide care for three children that are not her own. Once she finalizes her other licensing, she can provide for care for six to eight children depending on their age.

She is the mother of three boys and one daughter and she also looks after them at the daycare.



Anna Ruelle opened Little Wega Childcare in June. It is located on 129 E. Main St. Her hands are full with kids, kids and a waiting list. The center was just approved for a grant to build a play area in back.

James Card Photo

She aims to fill the need for caring for the infant and toddler-age children as the new Little Hawks

Child Care Center as the W-F Middle School serves children in the 2 through 5-year-old age range.

She charges \$40 per day for children under the age of 2.

Ruelle has been working with children since she graduated high school. She started out at My First Adventure in Waupaca. She's 27 years old now and she began there when she was 18, back when it was called the Learning Cottage.

She saw the building for rent on Facebook and her husband encouraged her to try it. Her husband is a pipefitter who works on sprinkler systems in buildings and is a volunteer firefighter.

The hours are 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. She has

toys, arts and crafts and lesson plans that focus on cognitive abilities and fine and gross motor skills.

"Eventually I hope to grow. Hopefully, in a 15-year plan, maybe move into a four-room daycare. You've got to start somewhere," she said.

She was just approved for a Main Street bounce-back grant and they will be putting up a fence and a 600-square-foot playground in back. It will be filled with rubber mulch and play slides will be added.

She can be contacted at 715-281-9651 and more information can be found at [www.facebook.com/littlewega](http://www.facebook.com/littlewega).

## Church DIRECTORY

### Manawa 2045

**Sacred Heart Catholic Church**  
614 S. Bridge St. Manawa  
Mass Sun. 8am, Wed 9am,  
Fri 9am. 920-596-3323  
[www.sacredheartmanawa.org](http://www.sacredheartmanawa.org)

### New London 2055

**Emanuel Lutheran Church**  
(WELS) 200 E. Quincy St., NL.  
Sat 5:15, Sun 8 & 10:30, Mon 6:30  
Pastors Bill Heiges, Marcus  
Schutz & Mark Tiefert. Youth &  
Family Counseling. Lutheran  
School: 3-Pre - 8th Grade. 920-  
982-5444 [www.EmanuelNL.org](http://www.EmanuelNL.org)  
[eman@EmanuelNL.org](mailto:eman@EmanuelNL.org)

### Waupaca Area 2090

**Camp Cleghorn Chapel on Chain O' Lakes** Non-Denominational Christian Services. Sundays through Labor Day at 9:15am 1/2 mi. S. of the Wheelhouse on Camp Rd. All are welcome!

### Waupaca Area 2090

**Emmaus Lutheran Church**  
Town of Lind, N180 Cty. Rd. A,  
Waupaca. Rev. Kurt Schilling.  
Sunday School 9 a.m. Worship 10  
a.m. A Missouri synod church.  
Visitors welcome.

**Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
WELS 1120 Evans, Waupaca.  
715-258-0204. Sunday Worship:  
8:00 am & 10:30 am, Thurs 7 pm  
Pastors Ron Siemens & Ben  
Kempfert. Sunday Radio Service  
8:00am (WDUX 92.7)  
[www.immanuelwaupaca.com](http://www.immanuelwaupaca.com)

**St. Mark's Episcopal Church**  
415 South Main Street,  
Waupaca, WI  
(715) 258-5125  
Holy Eucharist Sunday 9:30 AM  
[www.stmarkswaupaca.com](http://www.stmarkswaupaca.com)

**St. Mary Magdalene**  
N2845 Shadow Rd., Waupaca  
(715)258-2088  
Saturday Mass 4:30 pm  
Sunday Mass 8 am & 10 am  
[www.smm-waupaca.org](http://www.smm-waupaca.org)

### Weyauwega 2100

**First Presbyterian Church**  
200 S. Pine St., Weyauwega  
10 a.m. Sunday Service  
920-867-2880 [fpcweyauwega.org](http://fpcweyauwega.org)  
All-welcome! Open Communion.

**SS Peter & Paul Catholic Church**  
608 E. Main St.,  
Weyauwega Mass Sat. 4:30pm  
Sun. 10:30am Tues 9am, Thurs  
9am 920-867-2179  
[www.sspeterpaulchurch.org](http://www.sspeterpaulchurch.org)

**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
LCMC, N3882 Cty. Rd. KK,  
Weyauwega, 920-867-3793  
Worship at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday.  
Indoor/Outdoor Services  
[www.stjohns-baldwinmills.org](http://www.stjohns-baldwinmills.org)

**St. Peter Lutheran (WELS)**  
312 W. Main St., Weyauwega  
Services 4:00 pm Saturday,  
9:00 am Sundays. Radio broadcast  
at 10:30 am Sunday on  
92.7FM. (920)867-3169,  
[www.splwega.net](http://www.splwega.net)

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