

The Journal Times

Pop goes 2021

Your guide to New Year's Eve GET OUT & ABOUT, INSIDE



High schools

Case boys edge St. Catherine's SPORTS, PAGE C1



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PART 1 OF A SERIES

When private ambulances can't help

Amid shortages of EMTs, expenses — to health and pocketbooks — are rising

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When someone calls North Central EMS & Rescue Squad to ask for a ride to a health care facility, the answer is no.

That's been the answer for all calls since May, said Christopher

Siebeneich, chief of the private ambulance company, 3204 Washington Ave.

"Other than planned events, I don't have anybody," Siebeneich said. "We're going to have to turn (the call) down. I don't have the staff interested in filling the vacancies."

Siebeneich started his first full-time job as an emergency medical technician in 2008. At that time, "everybody and their brother wanted to be an EMT," he said, referring to emergency medical technicians.

And now? The county and state have been experiencing EMT shortages for the past decade.

Add to that the COVID-19 pandemic, under which health care workers across the country are facing vaccine mandates, not wanting to interact with COVID-19-positive patients, experiencing burnout and leaving the field, and where people are seeking higher wages, you get even more of a shortage.

"Unless fire and EMS (emergency medical services) financial and staffing challenges are ap-

propriately addressed, they may soon have a real impact on public safety," a September report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum stated. That finding, the WPF stated, is "one that state and local policymakers cannot afford to overlook."

Siebeneich said he's never had more than five employees at a time. But now, the company only has one or two part-time employees, he said, and two ambulances that just sit in the garage.

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Ambulance series

Part 1, today: Racine County has long been facing shortages of EMTs. Costs are rising as a result.

Parts 2: When payment for emergency medical services far undercuts actual costs.

Part 3: How an aging population is severely driving up demand for taxpayer-funded emergency services.

'IT'S NOT ABOUT THE WINS'



DIANA PANUNCIAL, DIANA.PANUNCIAL@JOURNALTIMES.COM

Coach Rudy Collum, speaking at center, gives a final pep talk in a huddle with the kids of the Winter Break Basketball Camp on Tuesday before the session ended. Collum co-led the camp with Andrew McNairy, shown at top-left, with help from others like Marshawn Venzant, at top-right and lower-right, and Damen Collum and Tyler Davis, lower-left.

Getting back on the court

Beloved coach gets together with generations of other coaches to teach fundamentals of basketball

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RACINE — On the first day of Winter Break Youth Basketball Camp, one kid came in with anxiety levels "through the roof?"

"I broke it down to him, and showed him, 'This kid has never played before. This kid's never played before,'" said Andrew McNairy, aka "Coach Duke," who co-led the camp.

He asked the child, "Why don't I add you to the team, so you don't got to worry about

it?" And the kid was confident enough to participate in the camp.

That encouragement was seen throughout the camp, which was held Monday to Wednesday at the Cesar Chavez Community Center, 2221 Douglas Ave. It was open to kids of all skill levels from grades 1-8 and led by McNairy, an assistant coach for the Milwaukee Area Technical College, and Rudy Collum, a well-known area coach who was honored with the Deep Roots Award

during the Racine County Sports Hall of Fame in October.

A chance to get out

What was one unique thing Collum recognized about the kids this year in his more than 33 years of hosting basketball camps?

"The kids were hungry to get out there," he said. "It was another Christmas present in a sense. They were looking for instruction, direction."

It was the first time the coaches held a basketball camp right after the holiday — and the first time the coaches held a camp since the COVID-19 pandemic began

— so they weren't sure what the turnout was going to be. They were surprised to learn almost 60 kids signed up.

The kids were from all over the county and surrounding areas, like Oak Creek and Zion, Illinois.

"It was non-stop, they were bouncing off the wall," Collum said.

The hardwood floors of the court vibrated with every dribble of each ball, and it was the only thing that could be heard in the center as they made passes and shot layups.

The focus of the camp was to

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TOP 10 OF 2021



Counting down the top Racine County stories of the year, as selected by the newsroom staff.

Rittenhouse acquitted on all charges

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The Kyle Rittenhouse trial was one of the biggest trials of the 2020s to date, perhaps behind only the trial of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, convicted of killing George Floyd. Rittenhouse's trial happened right here in southeastern Wisconsin, less than 6 miles south of the Racine County border.

Pretty much every second of the trial was watched and listened to across the nation. Racine County residents played critical roles, both in the courtroom and outside of it.

It also marked the end of the trail of anxiety and unrest that started when Jacob Blake was shot seven times by a Kenosha police officer on Aug. 23, 2020, two days before the Rittenhouse shootings.

The lawyers

The two men tasked with keeping Rittenhouse out of prison were locals: lead defense attorney Mark Richards has his office in Racine and is a Park High School graduate. The other lead defense attorney, Corey Chirafisi, is a Burlington native.

They proved their worth throughout the two-week trial.

In what is one of the most enduring images of the trial: When the five not-guilty verdicts were read out, Rittenhouse, overwhelmed with emotion and relief, fell, appearing to be seeking a hug from Chirafisi, who maintained his lawyerly composure while offering an arm to support the sobbing 18-year-old.

The Ziminskis

Throughout the trial, two names that continued to come up were Kelly and Joshua Ziminski. They are Racine County residents who had been seen with Joseph Rosenbaum, the first man



RITTENHOUSE

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Vacant RUSD board seat filled

Tonya Evans to be sworn in Jan. 10

LAUREN HENNING
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RACINE — After working in the public sector for years and being heavily involved in her church as a pastor's wife, Tonya Evans decided to enlarge her "proverbial fishbowl" by vying



EVANS

for the Racine Unified School District Board of Education's vacant District One seat.

At the last School Board meeting, members voted in Evans, who will occupy the board seat until the April 5 election,

in which she also plans to run. She is to be sworn in at the next School Board meeting on Jan. 10.

"And so, my husband and I joke, we are now moving from the fishbowl to the aquarium," Evans said.

Evans grew up in Flint, Michigan, where her mother, grandmother and aunt all worked for Flint's public school district. Her mother worked for the district

for 33 years as a teacher and administrator.

After graduating from the Flint schools, she attended Grambling State University, a historically black university in Louisiana, from which she graduated in 1988. Her career in the public sector began then and has yet to end.

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COMICS	B9 LOCAL	B1 OPINION	B5 SPORTS	C1
ENTERTAINMENT	A2 MONEY & BUSINESS	B4 PUZZLE CORNER	B8 WEATHER	A6
LEGALS	B7 NATION/WORLD	B2 SERVICE DIRECTORY	B7 WISCONSIN	B3



Rittenhouse

From A1

killed by Rittenhouse, throughout the night of Aug. 25, 2020.

Joshua Ziminski's actions may have unintentionally led to Rosenbaum being shot.

As Rosenbaum ran after Rittenhouse in a used car lot, Joshua Ziminski inexplicably fired a shot into the air; it's been described as a "warning shot." This may have put Rittenhouse on edge, not knowing who was shooting and if they were shooting at him. When he turned around, it appears in video that Rosenbaum lunged at the teenager. Rittenhouse opened fire, hitting Rosenbaum — who had been released from a mental health facility that day — four times.

This led to Rittenhouse fleeing north on Sheridan Road toward law enforcement. The Ziminskis are accused of egging on the crowd that aimed to run Rittenhouse down, allegedly yelling things like "cranium that boy" and "That (expletive) just shot that dude."

Anthony Huber was among those giving chase, believing Rittenhouse was an active shooter and not acting in self-defense, as a jury concluded he had been.

Huber also would end up fatally shot, and Gaige Grosskreutz — carrying a pistol in his hand — would be shot in the arm.

Change?

Legislators around the country responded to the shooting and the not-guilty verdicts.

Some, primarily Democrats, called for changes to gun laws, such as making it illegal for 16- and 17-year-olds to openly carry rifles down the street whenever they want — the by-product of a law allowing teens to hunt with firearms in Wisconsin.

But the Republican majority in the Wisconsin Legislature has shown no inclination to change laws.

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EMTs

From A1

The only services the company can offer are ambulance supervision at planned events and a mental health service provider who travels to patients via an SUV.

"It's hard. It's hitting everybody in the area," Siebeneich said.

When those in need can't receive help from private ambulance companies, they turn to their local

fire department for emergency response. Fire departments in the area have experienced increased call volumes, especially to senior living facilities. Unlike private companies, they can't say no to calls. That drives costs, and the strain, up.

Midwest Medical is a private ambulance transportation service with stations in Racine and Kenosha.

Sean Nelson, associate operations director at Midwest Medical, said due to hospital bed shortages,

some of the company's patients have been transported as far as Milwaukee, Madison, Oshkosh and Rochester, Minnesota — 300 miles away.

He did not speak to any challenges within Midwest Medical but spoke of challenges the healthcare industry in general is facing and the very large demand for ambulance services, especially to assisted living facilities.

"I don't think there's a silver bullet here that says this is the reason

why. It's a combination of challenges that we have to work collectively to solve and overcome," Nelson said. "It's not just our company. As our population ages, and with this new wave of COVID, there's a lot of those transports that are happening as well."

He said he never wants to discourage anybody from contacting 911.

"I want people to know whenever they call 911," Nelson said, "a fire department will respond."

Evans

From A1

Evans started out with Mott Children's Health Center, which works to provide physical, mental, dental and other wellness services for uninsured or underinsured children in Genesee County, Michigan. There, she coordinated her efforts with the Flint and Beecher school districts.

"So, that's where I got really involved with the community school system and really getting into the inner workings of working with the local governments, the school district, the teachers and the community to make sure that these programs were successful," Evans said.

Evans went back to school, where she completed her master's degree in science administration at Central Michigan University with an emphasis on public administration. In 2002, shortly after completing her

degree, her husband, the Rev. Keith T. Evans, was called to be pastor at the Greater Mount Eagle Baptist Church, 929 State St., where he remains the pastor today.

While they have two grown daughters, one a recent Case High School graduate, Evans said she doesn't have any grandchildren. But, that doesn't stop some of the kids in her church family from calling her "Nana."

Since the move to Racine nearly 20 years ago, Evans has worked with Nutrition Education Program through Cooperative Extension, Racine Community Health — where she helped the low-income early education agency to meet standards — before landing in her current role as the Bureau Director of Milwaukee Enrollment Services.

"The Bureau is responsible for determining eligibility for child care, FoodShare and Medicaid services for the residents of Milwaukee County,"

Evans said. "We are responsible for about 30% of the total state cases of those who have FoodShare, Medicaid, childcare or combination there of which represents about 210,000 cases, and about 375 residents of the county: that's children, adults and families."

Evans, while recognizing the challenges RUSD is facing, said she is hopeful that strict adherence to standards and supporting students can bring about the changes that would ultimately improve the district's performance.

She believes supporting students can be accomplished through community involvement and partnerships with local entities as well as diversifying not only the teaching staff, but all district staff. Drawing upon her status as a graduate of a historically black university, Evans said the district could seek partnerships with similar institutes through various programs to help diverse

candidates realize the potential of Racine.

But in order these changes to become a reality, Evans said, the community must "buy in."

"The only thing that I really want people that understand is that I believe that Racine Unified School District can be a premier school district, not only in the state, but also across the country," Evans said. "But we have to be willing to try some new things and that means everybody has to be willing, first of all, to put in the time to think about and want to work collaboratively, that's first, but then secondly, to be innovative in how we fund those efforts, and we need to have buy in from various sectors of the community."

"So that then we can fund these initiatives, and then be willing to be open, honest and accountable in our evaluation of the effectiveness of what we've been implemented, and then make those changes."

Basketball

From A1

teach young players "the fundamentals of basketball," McNairy said, like dribbling, shooting, passing and playing defense.

Players in grades 6-8 were a bit more advanced depending on their skills, getting players ready for next-level endeavors like playing in high school or participating in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU).

The fundamentals were what Collum "always taught," McNairy said. In fact, Collum coached McNairy in the past and paved the way for him to become a coach himself.

"A lot of people don't focus on (the fundamentals), so I was one of those kids that always focused on

that. It has always stuck with me, really throughout life," McNairy said.

Generations of playing ball

The camp was led by generations of Collum's family and players he has coached.

Rudy's son and grandson (Rocky and Damen, respectively) were helpers. He coached them all through basketball in their youth. Marshawn Venzant and Tyler Davis, current Case High School basketball players, were also Rudy's former players and helpers.

Two of Rudy's other grandkids were also in tow.

"We have as much of a great time as the kids," Rudy said. "I coached

(Venzant) and I hadn't seen him in 30 years."

"It's a blessing. It's full circle. Everybody (helping) here has been through (Rudy's) camp," McNairy said. "Everybody wants to be here because it's really for the kids. Another thing to, is the (helpers) are learning so much from it."

When kids weren't able to provide the \$50 camp fee, former basketball players chipped in and sponsored them.

In one instance, Rudy watched as Venzant remained side-by-side with kids teaching them how to pass the ball to their team line-up. "They're so passionate," Rudy said.

At another point, as kids practiced shooting and had a goal of their entire team being the first to make 10 baskets, the helpers remained

encouraging despite missed shots.

"That's okay," Venzant said. "Take your time."

Teaching sportsmanship

Beyond playing basketball, Rudy said he wants kids to learn the natural attitudes of good sportsmanship and teamwork that can be learned from the sport.

"It's one of the main reasons why I still do the camp," the former University of Wisconsin-Parkside coach from 1972-1982 and recent inductee into the Racine County Sports Hall of Fame said. "It's not about the wins and the losses, but growing up together as a team."

He tells students and players, "Basketball may not be the best thing you do. It can still help develop the skills you need."



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