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Just as important: Syble Hopp, a place of belonging

BY HEATHER GRAVES STAFF WRITER

DE PERE – For five decades, Syble Hopp has sought to be a place where students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities feel like they belong.

"I cannot say enough about Syble Hopp," Julie Taylor, mom of 19-year-old Preston, who has attended for the past 11 years, said. "The staff is absolutely amazing, and so full of compassion and understanding for every single student that enters the building. I've seen firsthand that every teacher in the building recognizes every student and helps them out with anything they need."

Administrator Kim Pahlow said Syble Hopp's mission is to "provide an educational setting and

program option for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities so that each student is able to reach their fullest potential becoming self-confident individuals who have grown and developed into productive members of the community."

Established in 1971, Syble Hopp – which is named after a founding teacher – is a public school funded through Brown County offering educational programming for students with disabilities from age 3 through turning 21.

"A superintendent, by the name of Joe Donovan, asked a teacher, Syble Hopp, if she would be willing to join him in starting a school that served only students with intellectual disabilities," Pahlow said. "She said 'yes' and literally went door-to-door to



Syble Hopp student Preston Taylor was excited to start the 2021-22 school year. Taylor's mom, Julie, said they chose Syble Hopp for him because of the opportunities it offers.

Submitted Photo

find intellectually-disabled students who were not receiving an education in school."

Syble Hopp parent Tina Grabig, said her son, Matt, who attended the Howard-Suamico School District

through sixth grade, has never been good with change.

"It would take him a



while to adjust, or get started in a new school year, or a new school," she said. "When he went to Syble Hopp, he adjusted so well. I don't know if it was because he felt more like he fit in, but he had no problems adjusting."

Grabig said Syble Hopp provides its students with everything students in public schools have.

"They have homecoming," she said. "They have proms. They do these dinners, they haven't had them since COVID, but they host a fall dinner where you pay \$1 to go to dinner and they invite

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Jeff Clements, president of American Promise, gives a presentation on dark money in politics Friday, Oct. 15, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Green Bay. Josh Staloch Photo

Group hopes to shrink reach of dark money in politics

BY JOSH STALOCH STAFF WRITER

GREEN BAY – Political dark money gained prevalence in 2010 following the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, which allowed donors to anonymously funnel cash into elections via attack ads and other political tools.

On Friday, Oct. 15, the Rotary Club of Green Bay hosted an event at the Hyatt Regency Hotel featuring American Promise, a national nonprofit advocating for campaign finance reform, and its president Jeff Clements, an attorney with more than three decades of experience and author of "Corporations Are Not People: Reclaiming Democracy from Big Money and Global Corporations."

Clements said a constitutional amendment is needed to give Congress the power to put sensible limits

on campaign spending.

"Both parties are now systemically using dark money in their campaigns," Clements said. "So when you ask, 'Well, why don't they fix it?' unfortunately, it's part of the broken system now."

According to nonpartisan Center For Responsive Politics, more than \$14 billion was spent on the 2020 elections, more than double the 2016 total.

Clements said the avalanche of money in elections has led to a growing, bipartisan number of Americans who believe dark money spending needs to be reigned in.

According to a 2018 study by Pew Research Center, two-thirds of Americans think there should be limits on the amount of money groups and individuals can spend on campaigns.

Judy Nagel, current Rotary Club of Green Bay

president, spoke at the event and urged Rotarians to get involved.

"Clearly, if voters do not know the truth of who is trying to influence them, we cannot have the free and open exchange of ideas on which a democracy depends," Nagel said. "But with the *Citizens United* rule changes, certain groups no longer have to disclose their donors. This created a way for funders to influence their campaigns without voters knowing who they are dealing with and what their interests are."

Nagel said the movement to eliminate unlimited spending in politics has gained bipartisan support, as is evident in polling numbers and on display at the Oct. 15 event.

Former president of the local Rotary chapter, Howard Hauser, spoke to

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Refinancing KI-2 bonds will save Green Bay \$8.7 million

BY HEATHER GRAVES
STAFF WRITER

GREEN BAY – The city Council voted unanimously Tuesday, Oct. 19, to approve the refinancing of the KI Convention Center Expansion project (KI-2) bonds to save the city nearly \$9 million over the life of the bonds.

The refinancing provided the city a lower interest rate on the bonds from more than 6% to 2.8% saving the city more than \$300,000 each year, with an end payment due June 1, 2043.

It also rolls the December debt service payment into the bond refinancing.

“We did include, in the size of the issue, the funds necessary to make the Dec. 1 interest payment this year,” Todd Taves, with Ehlers & Associates, the city’s financial advisor, said. “The current projections indicates there will be no room tax revenue available, which is the same situation as in June, but unlike June, the city will not have to appropriate funds from



District 4 Alderperson Bill Galvin discusses the KI Convention Center expansion project bond refinancing at the Tuesday, Oct. 19 City Council meeting. Heather Graves Photo

any other source to make that payment. The first actual debt service payment that the city will have to make on the new bonds will be in June of next year.”

When the room tax fund took a hit in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Green Bay found itself in need of nearly \$750,000 for its June 2021 debt service payment for KI-2.

District 4 Alderperson Bill Galvin said the bond refinancing will save the city a lot of the same “angst” it went through in June.

“This December we’ll be able to make our payment without having to rob Peter to pay Paul at all,” Galvin said. “This deal is going to benefit the entire Brown County taxpaying system of almost \$9 million over the life of this loan, and I think that is huge. I can’t say enough how much that is going to affect us and everyone else going forward.”

The county and the six other area municipalities part of the room tax stabilization agreement had to pass a resolution to allow

Green Bay to refinance the KI-2 bonds before the city was allowed to follow through with the process.

47 wards

The City Council unanimously adopted a resolution which divides the city into 47 wards, beginning in 2022.

The resolution is based on the plan approved by the Brown County Board Sept. 22, which has 11 Brown County supervisory districts in the City of Green Bay.

Alderpersons will vote on the ordinance adopting the selected aldermanic re-districting map at its Nov. 2 meeting.

City sustainability update

Resiliency Coordinator Melissa Schmitz, along with members of the Sustainability Commission, gave the City Council an update of the city’s progress toward its goal of 100% clean energy by 2050, a resolution alderpersons adopted in May 2021.

Sustainability Commission Member John Arendt showed the council comparisons between Green Bay and cities of similar population, such as Everett, Washington, Somerville, Massachusetts and Naperville, Illinois.

“If you look at their metric tons it almost seems like we are in line, but we are slightly higher,” Arendt said. “If we look at this as metric tons per city resident, it’s about .30 metric tons per resident here in Green Bay, compared to the other cities you can see it is .25, .15 and .25. What it tells me, knowing we still have additional data, we are definitely higher than comparison cities, but there are a lot of other factors that weigh into that. And also, if you look at the dates of their reports, we’re kind of a little behind them at getting started in this. These are cities that have already had opportunities to start reducing their carbon footprint.”

Schmitz said the next steps include obtaining ad-

ditional data needed to effectively detail the city’s overall carbon footprint.

She said other next steps include:

- Seek funding to develop a community climate action plan.
- Communicate and engage with stakeholders.
- Develop mitigation strategies and policies.
- Track progress toward meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- Partner with other local governments on regional solutions to reduce carbon emissions.

“What cities do, what businesses do that have similar goals as this, is they create an annual report tracking your energy efficiency projects,” Schmitz said, “and we are not the only city in Brown County that is looking at this. The county is starting to look at this as well. I think together with the local governments and the tribal community we can do a lot. We can apply for grants together to make this a more efficient strategy.”

SYBLE HOPP

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alumni back. They are always included.”

Taylor said they chose Syble Hopp for Preston, because of the opportunities they had to offer to him.

“Syble Hopp looks at every child and supports them to their fullest needs,” she said. “Everyone is accepted and included in every program offered. Preston has a great group of friends, and they do many outside activities together beyond Syble Hopp activities.”

Syble Hopp is open to students from seven county districts – De Pere, West De Pere, Wrightstown, Denmark, Ashwaubenon, Howard-Suamico and Pulaski.

“We believe every student deserves an educational path that is uniquely right for them,” Pahlow said. “We are able to provide the districts with another option to accomplish this.”

Financing is provided by state aid through the County Children with Disabilities Education Board, special education categorical aid and property tax levies from participating districts.

Tammy Nicholson, director of pupil services for the Ashwaubenon School District said students who attend Syble Hopp, are still considered district students.

“Syble Hopp is not a stand-alone school district, but a placement option for us to consider based on student needs,” Nicholson said. “When the student ends school, they get a diploma from Syble Hopp and the district they reside in.”

She said she still oversees each student’s services in collaboration with Syble Hopp staff.

Nicholson said in addition to the tax levy, each participating district us-

ing Syble Hopp as a placement option also pays a yearly per-pupil fee.

“This fee covers part of the costs for the online data system used and for the administrative secretary, social worker and nurse salaries,” she said.

Syble Hopp also raises funds through its parent organization.

Nicholson said it is not an open enrollment situation.

She also said if an open-enrolled student would need to go to Syble Hopp, they would need to re-enroll in the home district and then that district could consider Syble Hopp as a placement option.

Though students enrolling at Syble Hopp from area districts vary each year, administrators say numbers have remained relatively steady.

During the 2018-19 school year, Ashwaubenon had 24 district students enrolled at Syble Hopp, West De Pere had 53, De Pere 47 and Howard-Suamico 30.

Green Bay does not send students to Syble Hopp.

“We do not send students there, because the other districts in Brown County pay tax levies to attend there,” Green Bay Executive Director of Student Services Claudia Henrickson said. “Since we are so large, we already have the resources to be able to meet the needs of a wider range of students with disabilities than any of the other much smaller districts do.”

Unique approach

Pahlow said Syble Hopp stands out because of its approach to education.

Students at Syble Hopp are educated in non-graded classes, which are divided into five areas: early childhood, primary, intermediate, middle school and high school.

Pahlow said the entire curriculum is community-

based and revolves around five components: functional academics, community living, independent living, recreational/leisure skills and vocational training.

“The younger the child, the more academics,” Pahlow said. “The older the child, more emphasis is placed on independent living, community living and vocational skills.”

The core curriculum is coupled with supporting services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, adaptive physical education, adaptive music and the use of a therapy pool, as needed.

“Syble Hopp curriculum has a strong focus on community experiences,”

Pahlow said.

Community settings are often the classrooms, and include independent skill development, such as accessing transportation, shopping, recreation and restaurant experiences.

“These are all planned with how our students can contribute to and become productive members of our community,” Pahlow said.

Moreover, she said, Syble Hopp’s vocational program allows students to volunteer and work in the community.

Pahlow said basic independence skills start at an early age.

“Responsibility for their actions and the self-confidence needed to engage in

different jobs is encouraged with every student,” she said. “Work programs are set up both in school and through community employment.”

Grabig said this approach helped prepare her son, who graduated in 2020, for the real world.

“Matt still got taught math,” she said. “But he got taught to the aspect of like if he were going to purchase something. They would teach you what this price is and another price, and add those two together. They teach you more at that school of how these kids could possibly live on their own, or still live at home, and do things,

and function as they get older.”

Grabig said students are taught skills such as cleaning, cooking, shopping and working.

“They take these kids out into the public and do different things with them, so they learn,” she said. “I mean, to me, that school teaches them the way these kids would live.”

Taylor said Syble Hopp helps students reach their potential.

“I love the fact that the students are a part of the school itself, not just a student,” she said. “Each student is able to reach

See SYBLE HOPP page 6

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Press Times ribbon cutting

Press Times Publisher Patrick Wood, center right, cuts the ribbon Thursday, Oct. 14, during the newspaper's open house at its new office on the fourth floor at 310 W. Walnut St. in Green Bay. Also shown holding the ribbon in front, from left, are Press Times Editor Ben Rodgers, Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich and On Broadway Executive Director Brian Johnson.

Kevin Boneske Photo

SYBLE HOPP
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their potential with no limits, and they receive the appropriate education and life skills training they need to become a valuable person in our community."

Taylor said Preston volunteers at the Grounded Cafe at the Aging & Disability Resource Center and in the gift shop at the Neville Public Museum.

Pahlow said Syble Hopp's curriculum is consistently evaluated to coincide with its student population.

"We continue to learn more about and focus our academics and interventions on serving the students," she said. "We are seeing more and more students that have autism or are on the autism spectrum."

Like many districts throughout the state, Pahlow said Syble Hopp feels the stresses of funding and staff struggles.

"Our greatest staffing shortage is in the area of substitute teachers and instructional aides," she said. "Funding wise, a large portion of our students' community-based instruction, which is a key to our programming, and its transportation is paid for through the fundraising done by our parent organization."

Syble Hopp is currently sponsoring a capital campaign to add therapy space, sensory rooms and a vocational training area.

Contact Syble Hopp directly for more information.

A 50th Anniversary celebration originally planned for Oct. 2 has been postponed until spring 2022, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This story was produced by the NEW News Lab, a collaboration of newsrooms that focuses on issues important to Northeast Wisconsin.

THEME: HALLOWEEN

ACROSS

- 1. *Hitchcock's 1963 movie, with The
- 6. Bad-mouth
- 9. H or O in H₂O, e.g.
- 13. France's longest river
- 14. Bauxite, e.g.
- 15. Opposite of adore
- 16. Proprietor
- 17. Quaker Man's cereal
- 18. Oozes
- 19. *Corpse
- 21. *Bobbing for what?, pl.
- 23. One time around
- 24. Bébé's mother
- 25. General Post Office
- 28. Actuary's concern
- 30. Named, in bygone era
- 35. Not easy
- 37. Accepted behavior
- 39. Kitchen floor layer?
- 40. Northern European capital
- 41. *Overly consumed on Halloween?
- 43. Actress Spelling
- 44. Nature's rage
- 46. Bangladeshi currency
- 47. Colossal
- 48. Bowling prop
- 50. Famous Himalayan
- 52. Bugling ungulate
- 53. Valedictorian's spot
- 55. Possessive of "it"
- 57. *Pennywise and Joker, e.g.
- 60. *Traditional Halloween garb
- 64. Honolulu greeting
- 65. Costa del _____
- 67. Plant fungus
- 68. Mild and pleasant, weather-wise
- 69. E.T. transporter
- 70. Popular spring flower
- 71. Hole-making tools
- 72. Young newt
- 73. Country singer _____ Hill

DOWN

- 1. Coalition
- 2. Corn Belt state
- 3. Drink garnish
- 4. Cheerlessness
- 5. Offered on a platter
- 6. *Door-to-_____

CROSSWORD

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- 7. George Gershwin's brother
- 8. Plural of seta
- 9. Cain's biblical brother
- 10. You, in bygone era
- 11. Uh-oh
- 12. Wife's title
- 15. Facet
- 20. Actress Linda of "Dynasty" fame
- 22. Be nosy
- 24. South American wild cats
- 25. *Bedsheet with holes?
- 26. Command that follows "cut"
- 27. Acrylic fiber
- 29. Show off
- 31. Low-cal
- 32. Skip the wedding hoopla
- 33. State of danger
- 34. *As opposed to treat
- 36. Small town or hamlet
- 38. Manufacture
- 42. 2:3, e.g.
- 45. Carnie's domain
- 49. Grandmother, for short
- 51. Reflexive of "it"
- 54. Question in dispute
- 56. Parallel grooves
- 57. *Raven's grabber
- 58. Take it easy
- 59. Electrical resistance units
- 60. Blood-related problem
- 61. Tangerine grapefruit hybrid
- 62. Castle protector
- 63. Carve, as in stone
- 64. Lawyers' league
- 66. "_____ with their head!"

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DARK MONEY
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the importance of American Promise's goal.

Hauser said 76% of political spending in the U.S. comes from .1% of the population.

"So, contributions drive that seat at the table," he said. "Those contributions (dictate) who gets access and what perspectives are included in the discussion and then turned into legislation. There's a growing sense,

a growing belief, that government is not run for all of us, it's run for the very few."

Clements said he believes the time has come for sensible legislation to rid elections of the influence of unnamed, wealthy donors.

"I think we have the right to not only know, we have the right to say, 'Look, if you're a billionaire with \$100 million to spend, that does not give you the right to drown out everybody else's free

speech,'" he said. "We need to have limits on the amount of money that any one person or big global corporation, or powerful union can spend. You're stealing the voice of the voters who don't have \$100 million to spend. We, the people, should be able to say, you're not allowed to do that. Go spend your \$100 million on a trip to Mars. Do whatever you want, but what you can't do is buy what's not for sale, our political system."

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