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Business

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6 GRADS SHARE THEIR STORIES



ACE student: Burlington grad to receive welding certificate

BURLINGTON — Peter Leedle could tell right away that Nathan Schmalfeldt knew what to do.

Schmalfeldt was a sophomore at the time but already proficient in the class taught by Leedle, a technical education teacher and ACE Academy coordinator at Burlington High School. It turned out Schmalfeldt, a quick learner who enjoyed hands-on work, was already taking welding courses for college credit.

"He was taking the knowledge, learning it, using it and actually going through and creating something immediately," Leedle said.

A driven, self-motivated student, Schmalfeldt commuted one semester



'Someone to be remembered': Park grad ready for next chapter

STURTEVANT — In her first two years at the REAL School, Suad Alfoqaha was a self-professed troublemaker.

"I would get into arguments with my teachers, fight with a couple students," she said.

Alfoqaha possessed potential but did not prioritize schooling, noted Curt Shircel, principal at the REAL School, 10116 Stellar Ave.

That all changed in eighth grade, when Alfoqaha flipped a switch and focused on education above all else.

"I turned everything around," Alfoqaha said. "I got serious."

Those efforts have paid off. Alfoqaha is the first student to graduate a year early from the REAL School, which stands



From home to Horlick, through a pandemic and back again

RACINE — It felt like a special occasion when Rodney Brushwood walked through the doors of Horlick High School.

It was January 2021, and Brushwood was overjoyed to return to in-person schooling after 10 months because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was so happy that we were back," Brushwood said. "I felt like I was missing out on building relationships and human interaction."

After returning to in-person education, Brushwood developed relationships with his instructors and became more interested in the profession. He switched from the health science pathway to education and plans to be a high school English teacher after attending UW-Parkside.

Brushwood's experiences



A dark freshman year, a bright future: Walden graduate took control after tough start

RACINE — During the toughest days, Theron Hilbert repeated a sentence to herself: "The universe gives its hardest battles to its strongest soldiers."

The phrase kept Hilbert afloat during a couple years that included moving homes, poor grades, a school suspension and mental health challenges.

"That's the only thing that got me through eighth grade and freshman year," Hilbert said.

After those difficult years, Hilbert turned things around thanks to familial support and a more diligent approach to school. She joined about 65 classmates at graduation this week at Walden III High School, 2340 Mohr Ave.

"I'm feeling pretty accomplished," Hilbert said. "I'm stronger than I think. I wanted to give up a lot."

After a turbulent freshman year, Hilbert said she



Finding his voice: Case grad to pursue business, working on local app

MOUNT PLEASANT — Robert Barkley started on an engineering pathway at Case High School, but that changed when he took part in a state business competition as a sophomore.

Barkley liked "that thrill of starting your own business and marketing it ... and just the thrill of working with a team to create that business," he said.

He switched to a business pathway shortly after and has not looked back.

"I really like how powerful it can be," Barkley said about business, noting that it "is in every aspect of everything."

Barkley was one of about 400 graduates this week from Case, 7345 Washington Ave. He plans to attend Gateway Technical College for two years and then UW-Parkside. Barkley is interested in tax accounting and tax law, interests that grew after he shadowed an accountant through a youth apprenticeship program this year.



'This wheelchair doesn't define who I am': REAL School student first to graduate one year early

RACINE — Zyrianna Carey was stuck and needed help.

It was the end of a school day during Carey's freshman year at Park High School, and her wheelchair was caught in an elevator.

Instructor Melissa Schmidt saw Carey, moved her out of the elevator and helped Carey calm down before getting the assistance she required.

That was the start of a relationship that flourished over the years.

"Ever since that day, (Schmidt) has been checking up on me," Carey said.

Carey's perseverance and Schmidt's guidance contributed to Carey being one of about 300 graduates from Park, 1901 12th St.

Carey has spina bifida, a disease that impacts one's spine and can cause physical disabilities.

She uses a wheelchair and was often frustrated by that fact, but recently became more secure with

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ALL REPORTING BY RYAN PATTERSON, RYAN.PATTERSON@JOURNALTIMES.COM; PHOTOS BY PATTERSON, ALEX RODRIGUEZ OF THE JOURNAL TIMES AND COURTESY OF THE GRADUATES

WISCONSIN

Facing a 'tangled series' of abortion laws

PHOEBE PETROVI
Wisconsin Watch and WPR

About 50 abortion rights supporters stood on the bridge over the Wisconsin River into Sauk City on a sunny Saturday morning in mid-May.

They held signs reading "CHOICE" and "PROTECT ROE v. WADE" and cheered when passing cars honked in support.

Jennie Klecker brought three generations of her family out on the bridge for the demonstration: her mother and her daughter and niece, in the sixth and ninth grades.



Bewley



Vos



Kaul

"I'm here for them," she says, gesturing to the girls. "They shouldn't be forced to be mothers. These are human rights."

A local group, Indivisible Sauk Prairie, organized the bridge demonstration. Across the state

and country that Saturday, thousands gathered to protest in anticipation of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization that is expected to overturn the 49-year-old precedent guaranteeing a constitutional right to an abortion.

In Sauk City, a lone counter-protester wore a MAGA hat, yelled vulgarities and marched

through the crowd. A woman stood across the street holding a large sign declaring: "70 PERCENT: ROE V WADE."

Her sign reflected the sentiment from a recent Marquette University Law School poll, which found 69% of people nationwide oppose overturning the landmark decision. A Marquette poll from last year found 61% of Wisconsin residents support the right to an abortion "in all or most cases."

While the Supreme Court's final decision seems nearly certain to reverse federal protections for abortion rights, its impact on

Wisconsin is far from clear. Observers agree that the state will see a legal battle over whether Wisconsin reverts back to a law from 1849 — a near-total ban on abortion passed 71 years before women had the right to vote.

That law makes it a Class H felony for anyone other than the mother to "intentionally (destroy) the life of an unborn child." The maximum penalty is six years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The law provides an apparent exception for medically necessary abortions

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COMICS	C8 LOTTERY	A2 OPINION	A5
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LOCAL	B1 OBITUARIES	B2 SPORTS	C1



Barkley

From A1

After school, Barkley plans to stay in the area. He is developing a mobile app that lists a variety of local activities. Barkley started the app to increase awareness of area options like volunteering and scholarships.

"I believe that Racine County has tons of great opportunities," Barkley said. "I believe that a lot of people leave Racine believing it has no opportunities, but I believe that's not the case. I believe that those opportunities are there, it's just people don't know about them."

For example, Barkley wished more students knew about the state business competition he took part in as a sophomore.

"I got irritated, because I'm like, 'Why didn't they market this opportunity to



ADALBERTO ALMEIDA, FOR THE JOURNAL TIMES

John Michael Fisher, left, Ryan Gapinski and Robert Barkley, all from the Case High School Patriots Club, stand as a representation of the Vietnam veterans during the Racine appearance of the Moving Wall, a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The Moving Wall was at Pritchard Park May 17-20, 2019.

all the other students?" Barkley said. "I could think of about 20 other students that would've loved to do it."

Barkley has always possessed that initiative. He has worked as a school ambassador for four years and often gave building

tours.

Barkley didn't know what being an ambassador would entail but figured it was a good way to meet

people. That was the case, and Barkley said he had a relatively smooth transition from middle school to high school.

"I'm quite good at making friends and meeting new people," Barkley said.

Barkley tried many new activities over the past four years, including wrestling for a year. He had never participated in the sport and quickly learned that skill and technique are crucial for success.

"It was extremely hard," Barkley said. "I thought wrestling was a sport you could win just by having raw strength."

Barkley also gave theater a shot. He had a few lines in a student-run play but dropped out because he had a part-time job. He regretted doing so and hopes to participate in theater again.

Barkley was only briefly in theater, but he is a performer. Emily Grow, Case

English teacher, remembered Barkley dressing up as the Easter bunny and handing out candy before spring break this year.

Grow taught Barkley in classes when he was a sophomore and senior. She said he is a friendly, curious student who actively participates in discussions.

"He is always attentive and ready with his questions to keep the conversation flowing," Grow wrote in an email.

As a sophomore, Grow said Barkley was outspoken but sometimes immature.

Barkley "continues to be outspoken, but now he is very mature in his responses to others," Grow wrote. "His voice is very commanding, and he uses it well."

After starting in engineering, Barkley plans to use his voice in the local business world.

Carey

From A1

it.

"I used to beat myself up about it, like, 'Dang, I'm stuck in this wheelchair and I can't do certain things that people can do,'" Carey said. "That's when I had to realize I can do what anybody else can do ... I can't let this wheelchair rule me. I got to rule the wheelchair."

Carey isn't sure what post-high school life will entail, but she may attend Gateway Technical College. Carey is also interested in traveling and photography. Her favorite course was child development, so she may eventually work with kids.

Schmidt, an early child-

hood and education pathway teacher, taught the child development class and has had Carey as a student for three years.

Schmidt said Carey took to the course quickly and is an excellent verbal communicator.

"She's very intelligent in her knowledge of children," Schmidt said. "She's a natural at it."

Schmidt said Carey often engages in class discussion, is driven and has a positive disposition.

"She really wants to be successful, and we're trying to find the tools to make her successful," Schmidt said. "She's always got a smile on her face."

Carey often asks Schmidt for advice with a school or life issue and they figure out what to do.

The teacher and student developed trust over the years, and Schmidt will miss seeing Carey's confidence and happiness.

"Having (Carey) for three years is really cool, because we develop a relationship and then we become really close," Schmidt said.

Carey agreed. "(Schmidt) just listens to me when I come in there and makes me feel like I'm important, that this wheelchair doesn't define who I am," Carey said. "She just sees me for me, and I thought that was so sweet."

Indeed, a challenge in high school was "letting people see it's more to me than just a wheelchair," Carey said.

That has occurred to some degree, plus Carey



ALEX RODRIGUEZ, ALEX.RODRIGUEZ@JOURNALTIMES.COM

Zyrianna Carey, right, arrives at Racine Founders Rotary Post Prom 2022 on May 21.

has grown more confident. After overcoming many obstacles, including an ele-

vator issue, she is ready for what the future holds. "I didn't ask to be this

way, but I am," Carey said. "I'm capable of doing whatever I want."

Hilbert

From A1

made an agreement with her parents. In order to stay at Walden, which she began attending in sixth grade, Hilbert had to significantly improve her grades and become involved in extracurriculars. Through hard work and encouragement from teachers, Hilbert upheld her end of the bargain.

Hilbert, who plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the fall, will miss the close-knit en-

vironment at Walden.

"All the teachers have known me since I was 11 years old, so saying goodbye to them is really emotional," Hilbert said. "Saying goodbye to all of my peers is really emotional."

Jennifer Bowe was one of those teachers. She taught Hilbert in Spanish for four years and home group for three years.

As a freshman, Hilbert appeared to have "the weight of the world on her shoulders," Bowe said. "But you always knew that she had a lot of substance,

that there was a lot of potential and that she was very bright ... I knew that she was going to be a completely different person her senior year if she made the choice to do that."

Indeed, Hilbert said senior year was her favorite time at school. In addition to gaining acceptance to college, she helped open a senior lounge and hosted an unofficial homecoming.

Heading off to her top college and being involved in activities are far different than the trajectory she was on after ninth grade.

"Freshman year, I didn't really care," Hilbert said. "I was just like, 'I'll graduate one day, it'll be fine.' Now as a senior it is a lot different than what younger me expected."

Hilbert said the main reason for her turnaround involved her taking an active role in her decisions.

"Other people can support you, but you have to be the one to get up and do it and make yourself better," Hilbert said.

In addition to Hilbert's self-determination, Bowe credited her parents for

their guidance.

Hilbert's time in high school included more than a year of remote schooling as a sophomore and junior because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but she kept working hard.

"By the time she came back senior year, she was a leader," Bowe said.

As a student, Bowe said Hilbert often makes meaningful contributions in class.

"She processes the questions, gives a thoughtful and honest answer," Bowe said. "She does what she's

asked to do. She contributes, and she's a deep thinker."

Hilbert is also outgoing and humorous.

"She makes me laugh," Bowe said.

"Yeah, I'm hilarious," Hilbert wryly replied.

In addition, Bowe said Hilbert possesses kindness and genuineness.

"She's very direct," Bowe said. "What you see is what you get."

After receiving her diploma, what Hilbert saw was the result of years of work and maturation.

Alfoqaha

From A1

for Racine Engineering, Arts and Leadership. The 17-year-old is one of 52 graduates this year and co-salutatorian of the school that serves grades 6 through 12. She plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-Parkside for a year before transferring to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and studying architecture.

After an up and down two years, Alfoqaha honed in on school.

"As soon as she seemed to have that purpose, that goal of graduating early, when that was all articu-

lated, that was it," Shircel said. "She was dedicated."

That goal began in eighth grade, when Alfoqaha approached Shircel about graduating early. He said it was a difficult task that would require her to meet benchmarks as a freshman to make sure she could handle the workload.

"Initially, you don't know just how committed a student is," Shircel said. "You can't make any promises, because graduating early depends upon the student's approach."

Alfoqaha's focused approach worked. She regularly met with the principal and a guidance counselor to discuss her progress, and she was always on track.

"We were able to give her that first step opportunity, and she just started knocking it out of the park," Shircel said.

Her course load included individual virtual classes, summer schooling and remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing four years of schooling in three years required discipline, but Alfoqaha said it never became overwhelming.

Alfoqaha also tutored older students in math, her favorite subject. One of the students she tutored was her cousin, with whom she has a lifelong friendship.

Alfoqaha cited graduating with her cousin, who is nine months older and was

previously a grade ahead, as a key reason why she stayed motivated in high school.

"I never wanted us to take a step without each other," Alfoqaha said.

Her parents' encouragement helped as well. Alfoqaha said her father saw her potential before she did.

"I used to think that was bad, I felt like he was expecting too much from me, but then I figured out he ... wanted me to be better," Alfoqaha said.

Throughout high school, Alfoqaha kept her outgoing personality but stayed locked in on her goal of graduating early.

"I'm the tryhard in

class," Alfoqaha said.

She socializes outside of school, but education is her top priority.

"I do have time for life and friends," Alfoqaha said. "It's just when ... (there is) a big upcoming test or something, I have to put everything to the side and focus on that."

Going forward, in addition to progressing through college, Alfoqaha wants to progress on a personal level.

"I hope I grow to be a better person," Alfoqaha said.

According to Shircel, she is well on her way. He wasn't sure if Alfoqaha could meet the lofty standards required to graduate

early, but she has exceeded them.

"What always stands out in my mind is the transformation from middle school to high school," Shircel said. "It's exciting, it's neat to see, and it just reinforces that kids can make a change once they set their mind to something."

Indeed, Alfoqaha wants to set a good example for younger students, including her sister, and show them it is possible to reach their goals.

"I just want to be a landmark in this school," Alfoqaha said. "Someone to be remembered."

If Alfoqaha continues on the path she set in high school, she will be.

Leedle

From A1

to the Racine campus of Gateway Technical College for a welding class that went from 5 to 10 p.m.

"He took everything he could to earn as many credits as he could and to learn as many welding styles and techniques as he could," Leedle said.

His efforts have resulted in Schmalfeldt receiving dozens of college credits and earning a welding certificate at the same time he graduates from Burlington High School.

"I'm going to graduate with two diplomas out of high school, and I didn't have to pay anything for it, so that was the nice part," Schmalfeldt said.

Schmalfeldt is one of

about 280 graduates who will receive diplomas June 10. He plans to become a pipeline welder.

Juliebeth Favour, BHS technical education teacher, said the welding certificate will help Schmalfeldt find a job.

"He'll be swooped up very quickly and easily with the background that he has," Favour said.

That background includes Schmalfeldt growing up on a farm and building chicken pens at a young age. Heading into high school, Schmalfeldt had some nerves because he didn't know many students. He eventually discovered his passion in the ACE Academy, which stands for Architecture, Construction and Engineering, and has enthusiastically pursued those ever since.

Once Schmalfeldt found where he fit, he says he stopped concerning himself with outside perception.

"I just learned not to care anymore about how people see me," Schmalfeldt said. "There's no point in worrying about that ... I'm just going to go as I go."

Welding and other technical education courses entailed a bit of a learning curve, but Schmalfeldt quickly picked them up. He often completed a task halfway through class and then assisted other students.

Instructors touted Schmalfeldt's helpfulness. "He's not just there for himself," Leedle said. "It's so rare to have somebody that wants to be that helpful, and I'm going to miss that a lot."

Schmalfeldt often aided

instructors as well. Favour called him reliable and generous.

"He does a good job on everything, he's always respectful, he helps his classmates," Favour said. "He was absolutely one that the other students would look to when they had questions. He very much was the unofficial leader within the classroom."

Favour trusts Schmalfeldt to drive to Menards and pick up concrete, for example.

"The consistent dependability that we have with him (is) just so very refreshing," Favour said. "I know that if something needs to be done, I can ask him to do it, and he will ensure that it's done."

Virtual schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic

did not suit Schmalfeldt, so he was glad to return to in-person learning last year.

"He's most definitely a hands-on type of student," Needle said. "He needs the physical object in front of him. He needs to work on something. He needs to see it, touch it, feel it, work

with it."

Indeed, Schmalfeldt aims to eventually build his own home.

Regardless of what Schmalfeldt decides to pursue, Leedle has no doubt he will succeed.

"I think he's going to do very, very well," Leedle said.

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'Top Gun' stays aloft with \$86M in its 2nd weekend

JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The high-flying "Top Gun: Maverick" continued to soar in its second weekend, dropping just 32% from its opening with \$86 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The Paramount Pictures release, with Tom Cruise reprising his role from the 1986 original, is holding steadier than any film of its kind has before. Its modest drop — 50-65% is more typical for blockbusters — is the smallest decline for a movie that opened above \$100 million. "Top Gun: Maverick" debuted with \$124 million last weekend, scoring Cruise's biggest opening yet.

Overseas, director Joseph Kosinski's film is performing even better. In 64 overseas markets, "Top Gun: Maverick" dipped only 20% in its second weekend with \$81.7

million.

Riding stellar word of mouth, terrific reviews and a global promotional tour, "Top Gun: Maverick" has grossed \$548.6 million worldwide, making it easily one of the biggest hits of Cruise's career. In domestic ticket sales (\$291.6 million thus far), the "Top Gun" sequel already ranks as the 59-year-old's best performer.

While "Top Gun: Maverick" is unlikely to match the \$1.89 billion worldwide of Sony Pictures' "Spider-Man: No Way Home," the biggest box-office smash of the pandemic, Cruise and company have been hailed for leading the final push in the recovery of movie theaters. Paramount delayed its release two years.

But whereas "No Way Home" had little-to-no big-budget competition through January, "Top Gun:

Maverick" kicks off a string of more closely packed summer movies. Next weekend, Universal Pictures debuts "Jurassic World: Dominion," the culmination of the dinosaur franchise trilogy of sequels. The week after that, the Walt Disney Co. releases "Toy Story" spinoff "Lightyear," the first Pixar release to open in theaters in more than two years.

"Top Gun: Maverick," which actually added screens in its second week to extend its record total to 4,751, will soon find itself in more of a dog fight for audience attention.

"Jurassic World: Dominion" got a head start over the weekend in 15 international markets, where the Colin Trevorrow-directed film grossed \$55.5 million. Universal said that was in line with the previous franchise entries. "Jurassic World" made \$1.67 billion in 2015,



ALBERTO PEZZALI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tom Cruise poses for the media during the 'Top Gun: Maverick' UK premiere May 19 in London.

while its 2018 follow-up, "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," grossed \$1.31 billion.

In U.S. and Canadian theaters, no new wide release challenged "Top Gun:

Maverick." "Vikram," an Indian Tamil-language action thriller, opened with \$1.8 million in 460 theaters.

Fresh off its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, David Cronenberg's "Crimes

of the Future" opened with \$1.1 million in 773 theaters. The Neon release, starring Viggo Mortensen, Lea Seydoux and Kristen Stewart, is the Canadian auteur's first film in eight years.

Brushwood

From A1

as a senior solidified that education was the right pathway for him.

"I got so much information that's useful in such a short amount of time," Brushwood said.

Brushwood had a unique high school experience. It included homeschooling, working remotely during the pandemic and catching up on credits before he was one of about 325 graduates from Horlick, 2119 Rapids Dr.

Brushwood was homeschooled from kindergarten through his freshman year. Upon starting at Horlick as a sophomore, he said he was nervous and awkward.

"I felt like I was out of place," Brushwood said.

As he was getting used to in-person learning with more than 1,000 students, the pandemic hit. Brushwood returned to Horlick in spring of his junior year.

He made an effort to talk with people, including his



ALEX RODRIGUEZ, ALEX.RODRIGUEZ@JOURNALTIMES.COM

Horlick senior Rodney Brushwood had a unique high school experience. It included homeschooling, working remotely during the pandemic and catching up on credits before he was one of about 325 graduates from Horlick.

teachers, who showed him what their jobs entailed. Brushwood shadowed instructors at Wadewitz Elementary School and worked at the Gilman Fine Arts School library, which he said were valuable learn-

ing experiences.

Teachers also helped Brushwood graduate. He started high school well behind on credits, but a competency-based graduation program Brushwood completed as a senior en-

sured that he received his diploma.

Brushwood said that competency-based graduation class was his favorite course.

"The whole class just felt like one big family," Brush-

wood said. "We all worked together to help each other to graduate. It felt so special."

The students got along with one another, and the teacher often played music from a class playlist. Brushwood loves the 1980s, so his go-to songs were "Take On Me" by a-ha and "Take My Breath Away" by Berlin.

Because he was homeschooled as a freshman, senior year was also the only time that Brushwood attended class in-person at Horlick for the entire school year.

"This year felt like the first real, normal high school year," Brushwood said.

Speaking to The Journal Times before graduation, Brushwood said it would likely feel "bittersweet" to receive his diploma.

"I've really gotten attached to Horlick," Brush-

wood said. "This is my favorite place to be. I look forward to going to school in the morning ... It does feel like I'm losing a part of

my life and what I really like to do and where I like to be and who I'm with."

He looks forward to attending college but is sad to leave high school relationships behind, including those he formed with instructors.

"I'll miss a lot of my teachers," Brushwood said. "A lot of them I would consider to be friends."

One of those teachers was Theresa Heberling, education pathway instructor. Heberling taught Brushwood and said he often asked questions and spoke during discussions.

Heberling said Brushwood was exceedingly polite, hard-working, kind and willing to learn. She often saw instances of recognition for Brushwood, a rewarding experience.

"We always have 'a-ha' moments, and you can just read it in his face," Heberling said.

After learning so much from his high school educators, Brushwood plans to help future high-schoolers have their own epiphanies.

Journal Times' guide to area

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