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# Star-Observer

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## INSIDE

Former Pepper Fest princess Amanda Peterson will be the grand marshal of the festival. **Page A6**



The River Falls football team is back in the Big Rivers Conference this year. **Page B1**



The Pierce County Fair featured the longest tenured vendor. **Page A7**

## OBITUARIES PAGE B5

James Anderson  
Oake Gregory  
Marion Lee Smith  
Sherman Smith  
William "Bill" Smith Jr.  
Elizabeth "Bette" Stephens  
Donna Wilcoxson



## BUSINESS



HANNAH COYLE/STAR OBSERVER

Each table is designed with unique collages, most of which Brett and Tyrrell, or their families, had laying around.

# Alas, no splash pad

Nova keeps customers guessing with anticipation

BY HANNAH COYLE  
Staff Writer

The Nova Wine Bar and Restaurant hasn't been open since March 2020, but recently, Facebook has been in a frenzy about what renovations are coming to the location it once called home.

What used to be a carpeted, Tiffany lamp lit, cozy, vintage gathering place has been off the menu.

What would replace it left us curious and anticipatory.

Scroll Nova's Instagram and find little context to accompany its sneak peeks – photos of cocktails with countless community comments, but not much more.

Just a bio that reads "Coming soon..."

To add to the suspense, business partners Brett Splinter and Tyrrell Gaffer played a

### If you go...

**What:** Nova  
**Where:** 326 Coulee Road, Hudson  
**Stay tuned:** [novabarhudson.com/](http://novabarhudson.com/)  
**Instagram:** @novabarhudson

bit of a prank.

In good fun, Nova's patio railing has a sign that reads "Splash pad coming soon."

But no, there will not be a splash pad at 326 Coulee Road in Hudson, rather an immersive, modern bar experience for the adult crowd.

It was a joke well received by some, Splinter said.

Without an official announcement, the partners have been keeping the project

hush-hush until recently.

The space, nestled into the bluff side and rich with history, has been calling for people to raise their glasses ever since its doors closed. Now, Splinter and Gaffer have plans to bring it back to life.

Welcome 'Nova,' a new-to-Hudson take on classic bar service.

"It's a 180," Gaffer said about the new bar compared to its wine bar predecessor. "It's totally different."

Think a small, well-thought-out cocktail menu, with an atmosphere that also invites simple orders like Jack and diet.

Stop at the counter to grab your beverage before you take a seat in the newly renovated space complete with patio seating, old church pew

See Nova Page A11

## HUDSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

# 'It's survival mode'

Schools face extreme staff shortage

BY HANNAH COYLE  
Staff Writer

Support staff at the Hudson School District have been playing catch up all summer. With three months left in the 2021-22 school year, staff shortages began to require a level of team work it hadn't before.

District administration, human resources and teachers spent time in the school kitchens helping the nutritional staff serve students.

There were too few hands on deck for the remaining lunch ladies to do the work alone.

With just a few weeks left until the 2022-23 school year starts, the situation hasn't gotten any easier.

It is crunch time to find the more than 80 support staff needed to fill the current vacancies, including janitorial staff, paraprofessionals, crossing guards, a variety of nutrition services positions, school-age care providers and more.

"Each year it's gotten harder," Assistant Director of Student Services Jordan Wood said. "This year is by far the hardest."

Wood has spent hours each day interviewing candidates for positions in the student services department. These openings include a variety of support roles, like paraprofessionals and special education teachers. He explained that

See Staffing Page A10

## SOMERSET

# Evers promotes 'Doing the Right Thing' tour

Local Democratic candidates join event

BY SAM FRISTED  
Staff Writer

Gov. Tony Evers made a stop in Somerset to promote his "Doing the Right Thing" tour on Aug. 11. The tour stop was held on Assembly candidate Patty Schachtner's rural property.

The goal of the tour is to increase interest in the November elections, campaign members said.

"I'm happy to be here," Evers said with a smile.

Evers spoke about accomplish-

ments during his administration. He touted his tax cuts, surplus of the state budget, education improvements and road infrastructure.

Evers talked about work outside Madison including the state of agriculture.

"We've invested in farms and broadband. Our agriculture department has worked hard and people are seeing results," he said.

Evers stated Wisconsin is "farm friendly" and will continue to have



SAM FRISTED/STAR-OBSERVER

Evers stopped in Somerset as part of his "Doing the Right Thing" tour on Aug. 11. The goal of the tour is to increase interest for the November election.

See Evers Page A11

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## DIVERSITY PAGE A9

her opinion that this work is not the core function of local government. "I don't believe it's our job as local government to undertake social change," she said. She sees a number of well

established, non-profit organizations doing that work in the community and supports their work on social change issues. It was noted again in this meeting as in previous ones, by Mayor Rich O'Connor and echoed by Morrisettee that maybe there just isn't a problem, despite the Com-

prehensive Plan's priorities, which include a principle of equitability and inclusivity. "Residents take pride in belonging to a welcoming community that facilitates interaction between residents, city staff, and visitors. Cultivating a diverse and inclusive environment is

indicative that Hudson is a place that's prepared for social and economic growth," the plan states. When the Diversity Committee was first discussed in 2021, the Star-Observer spoke with representatives in three other communities, Burlington, Wisconsin; Cedarburg, Wis-

consin; and Red Wing, Minnesota, with similar structures. This is something Alderperson Bill Alms hopes the city will take a closer look at now. He voiced an interest in seeing a more "tangible" example of the potential for a committee of this nature to be

effectively established, so as to provide guidance for Hudson to move forward. The ultimate fate of the Diversity Committee was left open-ended with no timeline for bringing it up again.

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## STAFFING PAGE B1

these are unique roles that change annually, depending on what students walk in the doors and what supports they need.

Right now, he is searching to fill over 20 positions. The various departments have had a number of applicants and interviews; however, unlike years prior, more candidates than not seem to drop off the map after their interviews. Or even before. "You're thinking, 'Yes, we're ready to hire you.' And then they disappear. They don't respond," Tracy Habisch-Ahlin said. Habisch-Ahlin serves as the assistant director of community relations and works directly with school-age care, another service facing severe staff shortages.

As of June, the unemployment rate in Wisconsin remained low, at 2.9%, according to the Department of Workforce Development.

People are working. Though no one can say for sure why this challenge has come on so immensely this year, there are a few aspects that the district leadership wonders about. "I think the pandemic just shook people a little," Assistant Director of Nutrition Services Nickole Siegman said.

shortages in nearly every industry appeared to be a trend.

Another is interest. Wood has called the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and the University of Wisconsin-Stout in search of potential applicants for positions available in his department.

"They don't have as many people in their programs as they used to," he said. Affordable housing was another aspect Habisch-Ahlin knows is a barrier for many. In Hudson, even a competitive salary, benefits and starting bonus can't erase the fact that to live here is not always a feasible option.

For commuters, many of the same jobs available in Hudson can be sought at other school districts where the cost of living is lower.

All positions have been updated to competitive wages with benefits and bonuses to try to attract candidates.

For nutrition services, both staff and their children in the district are offered free meals.

For school-age care staff, their children in the district are offered free child care.

Additionally, a \$250 hiring bonus and \$1,000 retention bonus have been added to the list of benefits for some of the open positions.

This is on top of the health care, dental and

other routine benefits offered for full-time employees.

The district is providing as much as they can, but they know they're competing with private industry jobs that can provide much more.

At a certain point, it all comes back to the work.

"Not just myself, but there are so many people in my department that want to do the best they can for students, and are we going to be able to do that? Are we going to be able to do the best we can?" Siegman asked.

Serving 2,500 meals a day, districtwide, there is only so much nutrition services can do when they're short staffed.

"I don't think people always realize how much prep it takes to get that food out," Siegman said.

She recounted an interaction she had with her mom when discussing the situation her staff is in.

"Worst case scenario, peanut butter and jelly," her mom said.

At face value, that may seem like a viable, temporary solution. Logistically, it's not as simple as it sounds.

"Think about making 900 peanut butter and jellies," she said. "Even something as simple as that takes an extreme amount of labor."

It takes training and a number of skills to work in any kitchen, but a unique set to work in a school one.

In nutrition services alone, there are 15 jobs open.

Siegman spends a significant amount of time planning menus, but that is heavily reliant on the number of staff she has to execute those meal choices. With fewer staff, lunches must be simplified, despite Siegman's ultimate goal of returning to scratch cooking.

In the meantime, there are only so many options available to maintain serving thousands of meals a day to students of all ages. When there isn't enough staff to serve lunch either, the number of meal options available to students that day, specifically at the high school, diminishes.

The challenges are immeasurable and cyclical. Often one attempt to relieve strain in one department can cause it in another.

There are only so many days disposable trays can be used in the cafeteria line when there isn't anyone to operate the dishwasher. When this happens, the limited janitorial staff has to attend to lunch room trash more often, setting aside other potential tasks at that moment.

When human resources staff take a few hours out of their work day to assist in serving lunches at Hudson High School, the workload in their office begins to pile up.

"Where are we will-

### Application information

Application information for support staff and certified staff can be found at [hudsonraiders.org/district/employment/](http://hudsonraiders.org/district/employment/).

### Positions available include

Athletic game workers	Office administrative assistants
Athletic coaches	Paraprofessionals, special education
Crossing guards	Raider Fitness Center assistants
Custodians	School age care providers
Door monitors	Substitute support staff
Noon duty supervisors	
Nutrition/food services	

ing to accept discomfort, because this hurts worse," Wood said about how staff have to figure out where to let go and where to put energy, collectively. "We're willing to struggle with this pain to get this taken care of."

Siegman, Wood and Habisch-Ahlin already feel they've been asking so much of their staff. It is hard to ask them to pick up more slack for the positions left unfilled. And despite the dedication and ongoing commitment from many, in support departments or otherwise, operating a school that is short of more than 80 staff, is not sustainable. "It's survival mode," Siegman said.

Wood and other leadership are ready to work with applicants, as much as they can, to find a place for them in the district.

Though things like workday hours can't be adjusted for paraprofessional applicants, as students are in the buildings during set hours, Wood can work with applicants on certifications and licensing required to do specific jobs.

Additionally, options to work a few part-time jobs in the district to create a full-time paycheck and benefits, like nutritional services in the morning and school-age care in the afternoon, can be arranged.

For support staff, the application process is an easy eight-question form, many of which are name, contact information and what positions you're interested in.

Readers can reach Hannah at [hcoyle@ourorkemedia-group.com](mailto:hcoyle@ourorkemedia-group.com)

## The City of Hudson is hiring a Full Time Public Works Employee

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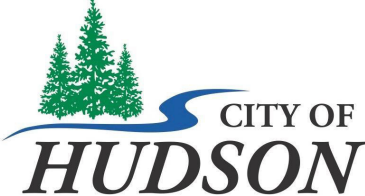
The City of Hudson is hiring a Public Works Maintenance worker to perform skilled work in the operation of light and heavy equipment and manual tasks in maintenance of parks, streets, buildings, urban forestry, and storm sewers. This position helps to efficiently maintain public property and infrastructure throughout the City.

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**Other:** Assist in the construction, maintenance, repair and cleaning of stormwater systems, Assist with tree trimming operations, which may involve use of chainsaw and other tree trimming equipment, Paint curb and gutter, crosswalks, posts, signs, Plow and remove snow from roadways, alleys, trails, and sidewalks; Chemically treat roadways, parking lots and sidewalks using various vehicles and equipment. Responds to emergency callouts for traffic lights, snow removal, flooding, accidents, etc.

For a full position description and to apply visit:  
<https://hudsonwi.gov/336/City-EmploymentApplications>

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