



Customize a perfect bowl of soup at De Pere eatery Page 11



Hornseth wins it for De Pere at the buzzer Page 29



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Wards 1-2, 9-14 polling location in Howard on primary day, Feb. 15. Josh Staloch Photo

Local incumbents advance in primary election

BY KEVIN BONESKE STAFF WRITER

BROWN COUNTY - Unofficial election results indicate all incumbents on the ballot in local primaries Tuesday, Feb. 15, advanced to the April 5 general election.

Green Bay City Council

Three of the 12 Green Bay City Council seats up for grabs this spring had

primaries - with two seats being vacated by the incumbent and the current alderperson in the other race advancing.

In the four-way primary in District 2, where Veronica Corpus-Dax did not seek another two-year term, a former alderperson, Andy Nicholson, received the most votes at 378. He will face Jim Hutchison (364) in the general election. Cassidy

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A look to the skies: Nearly a century of flight in Brown County



North Central Airlines was the main commercial air service at Austin Straubel International Airport for many years. Photo courtesy of the Neville Public Museum

Green Bay airport evolves to remain competitive

BY RICK COHLER CORRESPONDENT

BROWN COUNTY - As the fourth-busiest commercial service airport in the state, in terms of passengers served, the Green Bay-Austin Straubel International Airport (GRB) has

come a long way in the last seven-plus decades.

Opening in December 1948, the 12-gate, two-runway airport sits on more than 2,000 acres of land in Brown County and on the Oneida Nation reservation - approximately seven nautical miles from Green

Bay's downtown.

The airport's namesake - Lieutenant Colonel Austin Straubel - was the first aviator from Brown County to die in World War II, after serving for 13 years in the U.S. Army.

See AIRPORT page 8

Green Bay schools moving to optional masks Feb. 28

BY HEATHER GRAVES EDITOR

GREEN BAY - For the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Green Bay School District will have a districtwide optional masking policy beginning Monday, Feb. 28.

After a lengthy discussion, the school board voted unanimously at its Monday, Feb. 14, meeting to transition to optional masking at the end of the month.

Green Bay is the last school district in Brown County to have a universal masking mandate, with many surrounding districts shedding masks after the holiday break

See MASKS page 10



Brown County home to a myriad of Black-owned businesses

BY JOSH STALOCH STAFF WRITER

BROWN COUNTY - Black History Month is a

time when the country celebrates the achievements of African Americans, and recognizes their contributions to society and culture

- both personally and professionally.

Brown County is home to several Black-owned businesses thriving as they

each carve out their own niche in the Greater Green Bay economic ecosystem.

Black History Month is an opportune time to highlight the countless contributions these businesses offer the community we all call home.

Lil Jamaica

Nemard Wilson said life bought him a ticket to Green Bay.

Born and raised in Jamaica, his journey to owning a business began as a 27-year-old when he left his

See BUSINESSES page 12

De Pere senior accepted into the U.S. Naval Academy

BY HEATHER GRAVES EDITOR

DE PERE - From an early age, De Pere High School senior Emma Hujet said she knew she wanted to be in some branch of the military.

"I had always had a little bit of an interest in the military, ever since I was little," Hujet said. "When I was in elementary school,

we used to take these sort of aptitude tests that would tell you top careers that would fit with your personality. And I remember in like third grade, I got a military officer, and my whole family laughed, because I thought it was such a joke, because I was one of the little kids that was always wearing pink

See ACADEMY page 6



Like all incoming freshmen, or plebes, as they're referred to, De Pere High School senior Emma Hujet will enter the U.S. Naval Academy as a midshipman this fall. Submitted Photo

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U.S. Sen. John F. Kennedy came to Green Bay through Austin Straubel International Airport to campaign for senatorial candidate William Proxmire in August 1957.



Astronaut John Glenn is greeted by well-wishers at Austin Straubel International Airport, prior to his participation in commencement ceremonies at St. Norbert College.

Photos courtesy of the Neville Public Museum

AIRPORT
from page 1

Straubel died in February 1942 after his B-18 bomber was shot down.

Airport Director Marty Piette said the Straubel family has a long history in the area.

Austin's grandfather, H.A. Straubel, served for the union in the Civil War and spent time in a Confederate prison.

His father, owner of C. A. Straubel Cheese Co., was part of a group of cheese-makers, who Piette said were responsible for putting Wisconsin on the map for cheese production.

"All three men are buried in Green Bay," he said.

GRB is also affectionately known by many as "The Gateway to Lambeau," as it is the primary airport utilized for people traveling to Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers.

Owned and operated by Brown County, the airport has 27 staff members, plus 13 contract employees through ProTec.

"ProTec handles all of our aircraft rescue and fire-fighting and law enforcement activities," Piette said. "ProTec has been here since the 1970s."

The 27 staff members in-

clude administrative staff, housekeepers, landside maintenance and airfield maintenance.

"Other airport staff have changed over the years as the industry has changed," Piette said, "one specific example being the creation of our marketing and communications department in 2019."

Green Bay was added to the name in 2016 by resolution of the County Board.

But, to fully appreciate the now, one must look to the past.

The beginning

Northwest Airways started flights out of Green Bay in December 1928, at Blesch Field, which was located at the intersection of Ashland and Lombardi Avenues.

Chief Pilot Charles "Speed" Holman, Northwest's first pilot, who was known for setting records in national air races and stunt flying, flew the inaugural flight.

At the time, Northwest Airways was flying routes from Minneapolis-St. Paul to Chicago with stops in La Crosse, Madison and Milwaukee.

The new "Fox River

Valley Branch" extended Northwest service to Green Bay, with stops in Fond du Lac, Oshkosh and Appleton.

Northwest discontinued its GRB service in 1933.

Commercial travel was revitalized in 1948 when Austin Straubel Field re-

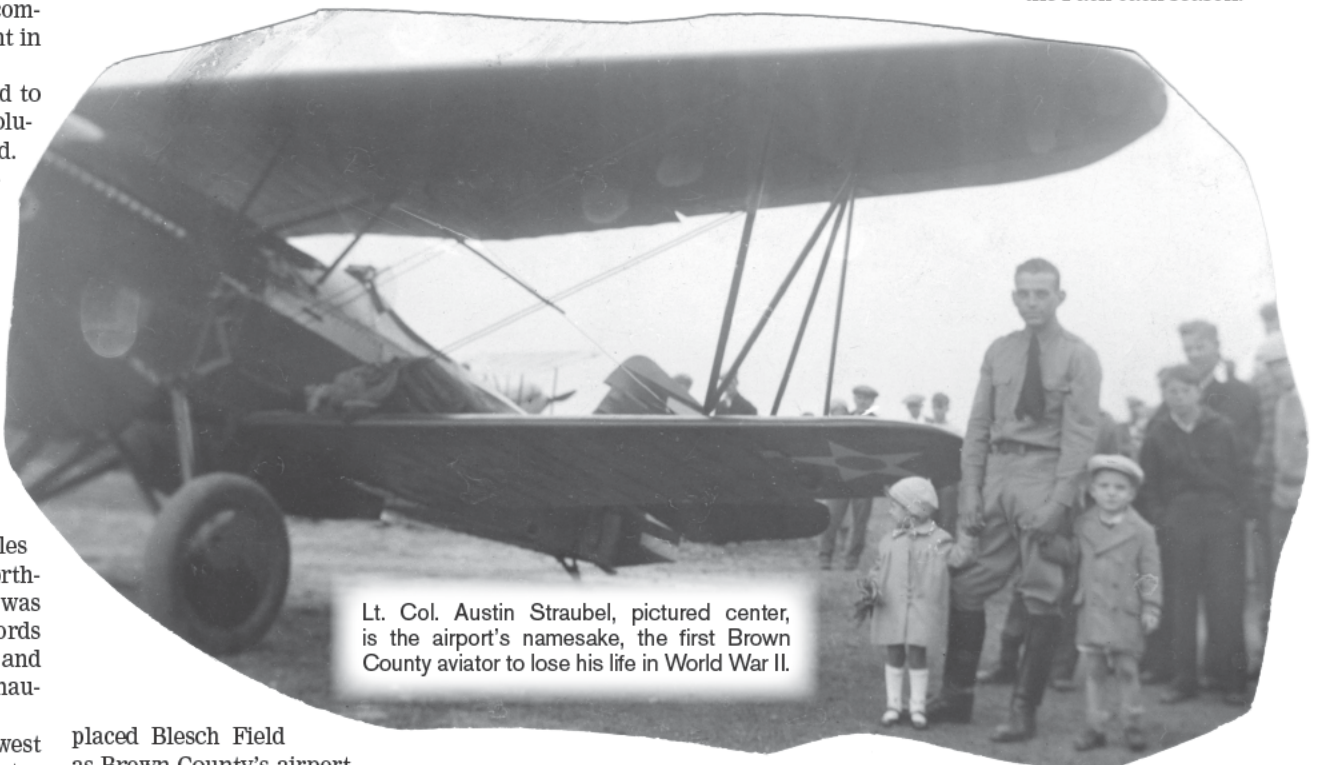
Today it takes just 45 minutes.

They also had reclining seats.

A new terminal was completed in 1965, and the airport became more extensive and more convenient

Piette said Austin Straubel has become one of the backbones of the local economy, connecting Titletown to Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Denver, Tampa and Orlando, with an even further reach

former presidents, including John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, George W. Bush and Donald Trump, and not to mention the hundreds of professional athletes arriving through GRB to take on the Pack each season.



Lt. Col. Austin Straubel, pictured center, is the airport's namesake, the first Brown County aviator to lose his life in World War II.

placed Blesch Field as Brown County's airport, and welcomed North Central Airlines.

North Central began flights in late 1948, utilizing a nine-passenger Lockheed 10A, with a yearly passenger traffic total of 242.

The airline introduced its new DC-3 planes in 1951, which increased its passenger limit to 21, with enough room for a three-person crew.

The new planes shortened flights from Green Bay to Minneapolis from 2 hours and 53 minutes to 2 hours and 24 minutes.

for passenger traffic.

Northwest Airlines resumed flights in 1986.

Delta Connection began service in 1998.

Today, Piette said passenger traffic is nearly 500,000 on more than 50,000 flights annually, carrying between 50 and 162 passengers per flight.

GRB is currently home to five major airlines - American, Delta, Frontier, Sun Country and United Airlines, and two fixed-base operators (FBOs), Jet Air Group and Executive Air.

through connections.

The airport is also one of only two commercial airports in Wisconsin designated as a Landing Rights Airport by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection for international flight arrivals.

Piette said the airport has received a variety of "special" visitors throughout the years, such as John Glenn, Bobby Vinton, Gunsmoke's James Arness, the Apollo 16 astronauts and several

"Certainly, many more have traveled privately through Jet Air or Executive Air - Oprah and Paul McCartney are just a couple that I am aware of," he said.

GRB has also received an occasional visit from the Goodyear Blimp, been host of a handful of honors flights for veterans and a stop for a variety of military aircraft.

"The 128th Air National

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Local Boy Scouts welcome the Apollo 16 astronauts that landed at the airport in 1972 for a visit to the Green Bay area. **Photos Courtesy of the Neville Public Museum**

AIRPORT
from page 8

Guard, based in Milwaukee, comes to GRB often to practice approaches to our runway," Piette said. "They are the large, gray aircraft with four jet engines often seen. For Game Day flyovers, military aircraft will come a couple of days in advance from various air bases around the country. We have hosted F-16s, F-15s, F-22s and many more."

The experience

In terms of passenger experience, Piette said much has changed in some respects, particularly from a security standpoint after 9/11.

"No longer are non-ticketed passengers allowed beyond the screening checkpoint, and all checked and carry-on bags are screened," he said.

Piette said the list of prohibited items allowed on an aircraft has also grown.

The airport is home to three restaurants – one pre-screening and one in each concourse.

Three retail shops are available – one pre-screening and Piette said soon-to-be one in each concourse.

GRB also boasts a game room, cornhole, ping pong, nursing mother rooms, free Wi-Fi and free gift wrap stations and musical performances during the holidays.

Piette said airport staff, even more so now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, focus and pride themselves heavily on sanitation efforts.

The airport's housekeeping department was recently recognized for its work throughout the pandemic by Wisconsin's Federal Security director.

Piette said the cleaning team's enhancements to its cleaning and sanitizing protocols and procedures require extra effort and diligence.

"This team was all-in on doing whatever they could to keep people safe," he said. "They are among the unsung heroes of the

pandemic, which is why I am very pleased they are being recognized for their efforts."

Piette said GRB also installed UV-C light sterilizing hand rails on escalators and air purifiers, boasting a touch-free experience from parking lot to aircraft.

Last fall, the airport launched the PawsAero Therapy Dog program, aimed at spreading puppy love to passengers who may be anxious about flying, or who just want to pet a pooch.

The program has four therapy dogs – Baillie, a Newfoundland; Blue, a Miniature Australian Shepherd; Rizzo, an Australian Shepherd; and Tucker, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, with the possibility of more in the future.

The Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting opened a new building in 2012, which provides emergency crews improved response time in case of an emergency.

The future

GRB recently received \$2.8 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which is part of nearly \$2.9 billion in funding distributed to nearly 3,100 airports across the country to invest in runways, taxiways, safety and sustainability projects, along with improvements to terminals, airport transit connections and airport roadway projects.

Piette said the allocation will help the airport pave the way for several long-planned projects, as well as planning for the future.

"The previous allocations we received were dedicated to our operating budget to help offset our revenue losses caused by the loss of passengers due to the coronavirus pandemic," he said. "We have a lot of needs just like all of the airports in the country. One of the challenges we have as a smaller airport is competing for federal dollars, because we're in the same region as Chicago, which gets a lot of atten-

tion. We've spent a lot of effort on the airfield over the years, so this year we'll concentrate on the access roads, parking lots, the front of the building, and then next year we'll turn our attention back to the airfield."

Piette said pavement rehabilitation and building innovation projects will also be addressed.

"This will help us be more sustainable from an energy standpoint," he said. "It's a big, overarching project-HVAC and chillers, boilers and just making sure that our aging buildings are more energy efficient."

By their very nature, infrastructure improvements aren't particularly visible to airport passengers, but changes to the front of the terminal will be.

"We'll be rehabilitating the front of the terminal building, the canopy and the drive lanes underneath the canopy," Piette said.

"We'll be resurfacing the long-term and the short-term parking lots. We have a couple access roads to the fixed-base operators that will be rehabilitated, and we will be widening both the long-term and short-term parking lots. That will be very visible and honestly be kind of a mess while we're working on it. But it will be nice in the end."

He said some of the dollars will be used to improve utility access to the airport's business park, which includes sites near the current Wingate Hotel, near the intersection of Wisconsin Highway 172 and Packerland Drive and on the west side of the airport in the Town of Hobart off of Pinetree Road.

"Knowing that there are some limitations as far as utilities to some of those sites, maybe we can install utilities to some of those sites that would spur future development," he said.

Piette said there is significant interest from businesses wishing to locate near the airport.

He said the parcels cannot be purchased because



The frame for a six-sided glass observation cab is hoisted to the top of the observation tower skeleton in 1972. The observation tower was built to be five stories tall.

it's federally-grant assured, but the airport can grant long-term leases.

Piette said the projects are all part of the continuing effort to keep GRB up-to-date and competitive.

"There's always the challenge of matching the available funding to the high-priority projects," he said,

destinations, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the airport's last two years have been successful.

"Frontier has done really well with their Orlando and Denver routes," he said.

"They are actually adding more Orlando flights next month, and recently started Tampa service and will

rebound – making a full recovery to match or exceed 2019 passenger levels.

"Much of our recovery is thanks to two things: the resumption of private business travel and full stadiums for football games," Jet Air Group CEO Al Timmerman said. "The Pack-



This photo illustrates a before-and-after look at the entrance to the terminal at Austin Straubel International Airport. The renovation project is expected to start this summer. **Submitted Photo**

"but that's what's so important about this announcement of the \$2.8 million, because it gives us added ability to do some of these projects and move some of them up a little bit sooner than we originally planned. The overall goal is to make sure we're a safe facility, efficient, with the services that our passengers request and ultimately to become the airport of choice for Northeast Wisconsin and the U.P. of Michigan."

Moving forward

Passenger volume dropped to 285,649 during the pandemic in 2020, but Piette said it rebounded to 538,302 in 2021.

Piette said carriers are continuously working on adding new routes and

begin Ft. Lauderdale this month."

GRB's newest carrier, Sun Country, started flights in December to Ft. Myers and Phoenix.

"We'd love to continue to see that and help our existing partners get back to where they were pre-pandemic," Piette said. "A lot of that is business travel, which is coming back. In 2021, we were still down about 24%, so we were back to 75% of our 2019 passengers, which is better than the national average. We're starting to see the businesses come back. We're seeing more briefcases, more suits in the airport, and that's what the airlines are dependent on."

Piette said fixed-base operators are also seeing a

huge draw, and we have a lot of people flying in for games, as well as flying out to road games."

In addition to leisure travel, Jim Prast, general manager of Executive Air, said private and charter business travel have come back strong.

"We really started to see it return in the last half of 2021," Prast said. "It makes sense when you think about it, because business development, expansion or sales are all relationship-based. You need to get out to your plants, to meet with your customers and prospects. We think it's a trend that will continue."

Press Times Editor Heather Graves contributed to this article.

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