

SPORTS • Fall Creek's Wright back on field less than two years after chilling crash/1B
YOUR REGION • Area residents share remembrances of 9/11 20 years later/3A

Dozens give ARPA ideas City, county seek input on use of \$33.8 million

By Andrew Dowd LEADER-TELEGRAM STAFF

EAU CLAIRE — Supporting the arts, helping the homeless, giving a boost to minority groups and cleaning up area lakes are among ways Eau Claire County residents are suggesting \$33.8 million in COVID-19 recovery funds coming to the area should be used.

Two dozen people spoke Thursday evening during an outdoor listening session that Eau Claire city and county officials held to solicit ideas on how the community should use its share of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act.

"We know we're not going to recover without outside money," said Julie Pangallo, executive director of Sculpture Tour Eau Claire.

She was among the voices of the local arts community that spoke about their contributions to local culture and the economy.

SEE ARPA PAGE 8A

L-T INSIDE

'Ultimate play destination'

Children's Museum of Eau Claire groundbreaking to occur Oct. 1. Page 3A

Recalling tragedy

EC native reflects on 9/11 and aftermath. Page 10A

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MONDAY

Latest regional vaccination figures

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KEEP CALM and STOP THE SPREAD

Protect against COVID-19

FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS

'NEVER FORGET'

Chippewa Valley emergency responders reflect on Sept. 11 attacks, recall those killed in line of duty



Associated Press

A firefighter moves through piles of debris at the site of the World Trade Center in New York on Sept. 11, 2001.

By Eric Lindquist LEADER-TELEGRAM STAFF

EAU CLAIRE — The tragedy occurred two decades ago, but the number — 343 — remains burned into Allyn Bertrang's memory.

It represents the number of New York City firefighters who died responding to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"Within the fire service, we have a saying — 'never forget' — never forget that we lost that many firefighters," said Bertrang, a deputy chief with the Eau Claire Fire Department.

Lt. Steve Secker of the Eau Claire Fire Department also knows the number by heart.

"It's 343. I bet 90% of all firefighters know that exact num-

» INSIDE: Chippewa Valley residents remember the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Page 3A.

ber. It's just one of those things," Secker said. "Prior to that, loss of first responder life had never happened on that scale. Not even close. It took quite a while to process."

Firefighters and other emergency responders in the Chippewa Valley feel a special bond with those who gave their lives trying to save others in the attacks on the World Trade Center.

SEE ATTACKS PAGE 5A

SAWDUST STORIES

Lost and found in Lake Hallie



Patti See

See is an award-winning author whose work has appeared in Brevity, Salon Magazine, The Wisconsin Academy Review, The Southwest Review, HipMama, Inside HigherEd and many other magazines, journals and anthologies. She wrote the blog "Our Long Goodbye: One Family's Experiences with Alzheimer's" which has been read in more than 100 countries, and she is a frequent contributor to "Wisconsin Life" on Wisconsin Public Radio.

Here's what I know has been lost in the bottom of Lake Hallie. Three pairs of my reading glasses and one beater from my electric mixer. More hooks, bobbers, lures and other fishing gear than you could count. Thousands of balls from Lake Hallie Golf. Jewelry, like my neighbors Sue Mertens' and Marion Mecikalski's diamond rings and likely countless others.

Here's what's been found: About 1,000 golf balls a summer for over 50 years for Marion and her husband, scooped out of the shallows with a butterfly net. One pair of my glasses and my beater; one of those lost rings. Dave Mecikalski arrived unannounced

at a girl's house after she showed interest in what their mutual friend pitched as "a chance to date an outdoorsman." He and Marion have been together ever since.

They bought their house on Lake Hallie in 1967 and moved in after getting married. Marion was 18, and Dave was 20. A few years later, while Marion's family visited, she gave her wedding ring to her brother for their mother to hold. Marion never swam in her jewelry for fear of losing it. While she was cooling off in the lake, she noticed her brother raking the grass. Before he'd handed his sister's precious ring off to Mom, he flipped it in the air and caught it. Flipped it higher in the air and lost it coming down.

In the days that followed Dave ran a metal detector over every blade of grass in a grid pattern throughout their yard. Later he brought home

a military-grade mine detector that could search underwater. He found nothing but every screw, nail or wire ever dropped into that part of Lake Hallie.

Marion continues their story: "Twenty-six months later, on the 30th of October, Dave and his dad were taking the boats out after a belly-washer of a rain."

There were three holes in the bank near where the ring was lost. That heavy rain flushed everything out. Dave tells me, "I looked down and there it was, sparkling up at me in about six inches of water." How many times in those past two years had his eyes scanned their yard and beach for that ring? At first he thought he'd found another pop-top from a beer can.

SEE SAWDUST PAGE 2A

Advertisement for Nels Gunderson Chevrolet, featuring staff photos and contact information for various roles like Owner, Operations Mgr, Sales Mgr, Finance Mgr, and Sales.

# TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Friday, Sept. 10, the 253rd day of 2021. There are 112 days left in the year.

## Today's Highlight in History

On Sept. 10, 1963, 20 Black students entered Alabama public schools following a standoff between federal authorities and Gov. George C. Wallace.

## On this date

In 1813, an American naval force commanded by **Oli-ver H. Perry** defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. (Afterward, Perry sent the message, "We have met the enemy and they are ours.")

In 1919, New York City welcomed home Gen. **John J. Pershing** and 25,000 soldiers who'd served in the U.S. First Division during World War I.

In 1935, Sen. **Huey P. Long** died in Baton Rouge two days after being shot in the Louisiana state Capitol, allegedly by Dr. **Carl Weiss**.

In 1960, Hurricane Donna, a dangerous Category 4 storm eventually blamed for 364 deaths, struck the Florida Keys.

In 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the University of Mississippi to admit **James Meredith**, a Black student.

In 1987, **Pope John Paul II** arrived in Miami, where he was welcomed by President **Ronald Reagan** and first lady **Nancy Reagan** as he began a 10-day tour of the United States.

In 1991, the Senate Judiciary Committee opened hearings on the nomination of **Clarence Thomas** to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1998, President Clinton met with members of his Cabinet to apologize, ask forgiveness and promise to improve as a person in the wake of the **Monica Lewinsky** scandal.

In 2005, Cadaver dogs and boatloads of forensic workers fanned out across New Orleans to collect the corpses left behind by Hurricane Katrina; cleanup crews towed away abandoned cars and even began readying a hotel for reopening.

## Ten years ago

On the eve of the 10th anniversary of 9/11, former Presidents **George W. Bush** and **Bill Clinton** paid tribute to the 40 passengers and crew who fought back against their hijackers aboard Flight 93 during a ceremony dedicating the first phase of a memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. A pair of NASA probes — named Grail-A and Grail-B — rocketed toward the moon on the first mission dedicated to measuring lunar gravity and determining what was inside Earth's orbiting companion. Oscar- and Emmy-winning actor **Cliff Robertson** died in Stony Brook, New York, a day after turning 88.

## Five years ago

**John Hinckley Jr.**, the man who tried to assassinate President Ronald Reagan in 1981, was released from a Washington mental hospital for good. **Angelique Kerber** won her first U.S. Open title and the second Grand Slam trophy of her breakthrough season, beating **Karolina Pliskova** 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.

## One year ago

Authorities in Oregon said more than 500,000 people statewide had been forced to leave their homes because of wildfires; the number represented more than 10% of the state's population. Houston's police chief said four officers had been terminated after an internal investigation determined they did not use reasonable force when they fired their weapons 21 times at a man who had been experiencing a mental health crisis, killing him in April after he was already injured and on the ground.

# CORRECTIONS

The Leader-Telegram strives for accuracy in all stories. But if mistakes occur, a correction will be printed. Contact Assistant Editor Liam Marlaire at 715-833-9215 for assistance or email liam.marlaire@ecpc.com.

# Woman gets probation for exposing baby to drugs

By DAN HOLTZ

LEADER-TELEGRAM STAFF

EAU CLAIRE — An Eau Claire woman will spend three years on probation for exposing her 3-month-old daughter to various drugs including methamphetamine and cocaine.

Kristen A. Alba, 33, 2634 South Slope Terrace, pleaded guilty recently in Eau Claire County Court to a felony count of neglecting a child.

Judge Sarah Harless fined Alba \$518.

As conditions of probation, Alba must maintain absolute sobriety, undergo any recommended programming or treatment, and complete treatment court. If she is not successful with treatment court, Alba will have to spend nine months in jail.

Alba also cannot have

contact with known drug dealers or users.

According to the criminal complaint:

The Eau Claire County Department of Human Services contacted an Eau Claire police detective on May 7 with concerns that Alba was under the influence of drugs while caring for her 3-month-old daughter.

The detective and a social worker made an unannounced visit to Alba's residence.

Alba's hands were shaking and she appeared nervous.

Alba denied using any drugs other than marijuana. She consented to a urinalysis, which was positive for the presence of methamphetamine, co-

caine and amphetamines. Alba said she used cocaine three days earlier, when she and her roommate took a last-minute trip to Florida. Alba said her baby was with someone else when she used the cocaine.

Alba gave the detective consent to take a hair follicle test of her baby. Results of the test were positive for the presence of amphetamines, methamphetamine, cocaine, benzoylecgonine and norcocaine. Alba said the baby's exposure to the drugs was neonatal.

Police told Alba the baby tested positive for amphetamines and marijuana at birth. She didn't test positive for the other

drugs until after she was born.

Alba told police she doesn't use methamphetamine, but used ecstasy, cocaine and marijuana while on her Florida trip.

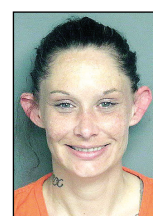
She said she is not a "meth head" and likes cocaine.

When asked why her baby's hair follicle test was positive for so many drugs at such high levels, Alba said it was because of her former roommate.

Alba said her former roommate is a methamphetamine user and was responsible for watching the baby on three separate occasions.

Alba was prosecuted as a repeat offender. She was convicted of a felony count of neglecting a child in March 2020 in Eau Claire County.

Contact: 715-833-9207, dan.holtz@ecpc.com



Alba

# Lake reminds us that universe is fragile

» SAWDUST

FROM PAGE 1A

He says, "I never gave up looking." Marion adds, "It was a shock." She put the ring back on next to her replacement band and wore them as a set, a story of hope on display.

Lives have also been lost in Lake Hallie. A boating accident made the front page of the Eau Claire Leader on July 25, 1917. Oscar Anderson, 33, was a tailor; John Anderson, 37, was a baker. They shared the same surname but were not related. One friend rowed while the other stood at the bow of their rented boat. An oar fell in the water and when one man reached for it, the boat tipped, and they both tumbled in. Oscar was found immediately, John the next day. Their families buried them together in one grave.

This was not the only tragedy here. The first was reported by the Leader on July 13, 1883: "A little Norwegian boy, whose name we were unable to learn, was drowned at Badger Mills last Sunday." The second happened in July, 1897. A short Leader article reads, "A 15-year-old-boy named Larson was drowned in Lake Hallie. ... The family are farmers and live near Badger." No obituaries appeared for these immigrant children. They are likely buried near where they died.

In July, 1939, 3-year-old Esther Revor stumbled off a dock while playing. Her grandfather found her body in Lake Hallie one hour after she was missed. He may have grown up hearing stories about the others lost to this lake. Such heartbreak is unimaginable, which makes all of the replaceable things that have vanished seem so insignificant.

My former neighbor Sue Mertens' expensive ring has never been found. Her husband's gift was a heart design with a diamond in the center. Inside the band, he had engraved "I give my heart to you."



Contributed photo

Dave and Marion Mecikalski travel the waters of Lake Hallie. They bought a home on the lake in 1967.

After a day in the water raking weeds to clear her beach, Sue realized her ring was gone. She tells me her husband is a gentle man: "He wouldn't yell at me, ever." Still, Tom was stunned at the loss.

Once they searched the sand and found nothing, Sue quipped, "I guess my heart belongs to Lake Hallie now."

People may wonder how I could lose a beater in a lake. Simple: To save gray water from filling my septic tank, each night after doing dishes I throw a bucket-full over my balcony onto the rocks that hold up my shore. Sometimes I miss a utensil or two. At first I accused my husband, the one who empties the dish rack, of losing our beater. I held its partner in my hand. Beaters only function as a pair, like chop sticks or knitting needles or oars.

"Think," I said impatiently. "Where did you put it?" This was February, back when we mostly only saw each other. Some days I was testy. Bruce shrugged. We both wanted butterscotch pudding. That night, and for many afterward, I mixed with just the remaining beater.

A few weeks ago while trimming shrubs along my bank I noticed something silver wedged in the

sand. Six months earlier that beater had pierced the frozen earth like a now-banned lawn Jart tossed from one story up. After the spring thaw it likely slid into the lake. I scrubbed off the grime and made our next dessert in record time. Still, I may

never again run my mixer without remembering the months of my one-beater pudding. Each time I was reminded of that Zen koan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" As if we need a riddle to remind us that the universe is fragile.

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**Remembering Jim Kiesow**

**9/18/1946 – 7/13/2020**  
A Celebration of Life at his home  
**N8582 County Road A, Colfax**  
**September 18th, 1-4 PM**  
A casual short service will be held at 2 PM  
The event will be held outdoors, bring lawn chairs if desired

**Celebration of Life**

**DELORIS THOMPSON**  
**September 19, 2021**  
**1:00 - 4:00 p.m.**

Pleasant Valley Town Hall (Cleghorn)  
From Eau Claire, Hwy 93, East on HH,  
1 mile to First Intersection,  
Turn Right (South) on HH I.  
Hall is Just Down the Road.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

**Elizabeth Kleinwachter**

JANUARY 13, 1929 - OCTOBER 25, 2020

Join family and friends:  
Sunday, September 19, 2021  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Irvine Park - Main Pavilion  
125 Bridgewater Ave., Chippewa Falls, WI 54729