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INSIDE



Six River Falls individuals won regional titles to lead the Wildcats to a first place team finish at the WIAA Division 1 wrestling regional in New Richmond Saturday. **Page B1**

A pair of candidates are facing off to be mayor of Hudson. Hear from them and the candidates running for Common Council at a forum hosted by the Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. **Page A7.**



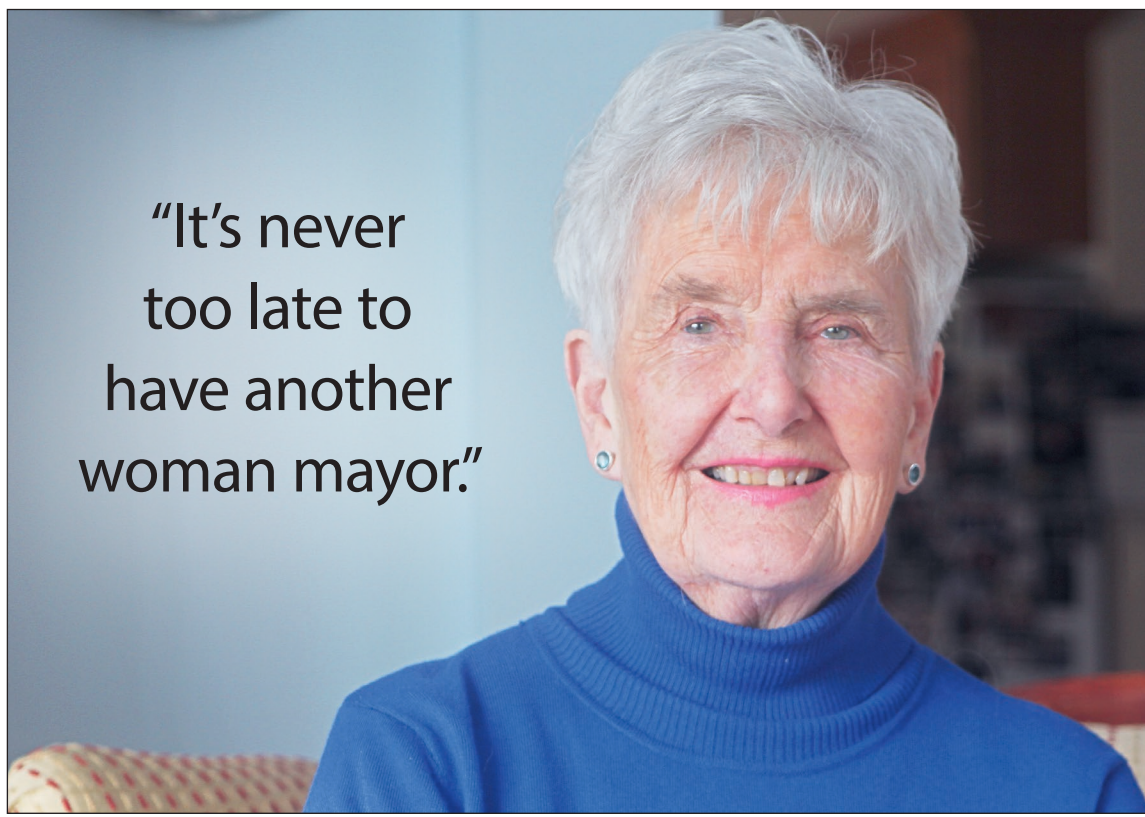
Customers of Whole Earth Market Co-op n River Falls rounded up their purchases and donated \$3,505 to The Forward Education Foundation. **Page A8.**

OBITUARIES PAGE B6

- Mary E. Aspenes
- Glen E. Beestman
- Nancy Bernard
- Sheila K. Charlson
- Virginia G. Malvey
- Virginia Nestrud
- Shirley Elizabeth DeBaun Storrer



HUDSON POLITICS



Mary Ellefson was born and raised in Hudson. She now resides in the home that has been in her family for about 100 years.

"It's never too late to have another woman mayor."

'I didn't want to run for mayor'

But Mary Ellefson ran and became Hudson's first and only woman mayor

BY HANNAH COYLE
Staff Writer

Just days before a reporter sat down at the kitchen table of Mary Ellefson in her family home, Liz Malanaphy, candidate for mayor, did the same.

Ellefson has much advice for women candidates. She was the first female council member, the first female county supervisor and the first female mayor.

Overlooking the St. Croix River, Ellefson recounted her story of running for office, blazing a trail for women in

Hudson and St. Croix County. Ellefson raised her young children in Hudson. Her political career began with those children. From where they lived, the children had to cross Vine Street on their walk to school.

At the time, this was a popular shortcut for semi truck drivers. It was frightening for Ellefson and the neighboring parents to send their children to school on a route that endangered the young ones' safety.

The Hudson Common Council wasn't prioritizing

the issue. So Ellefson decided she would.

With support from other worried parents, Ellefson – Mary Hallen at the time – decided to run for council in 1970. Her biography in the April 2, 1970, edition of the Star Observer noted she was a 33-year-old housewife, previous member of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls student senate and had studied social sciences.

See Ellefson Page A5

COVID-19

St. Croix County extends health advisory

Cases drop, transmission rate high

ST. CROIX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

St. Croix County Public Health has extended the Health Advisory until April 5.

Although the number of reported cases are dropping, St. Croix County Public Health is asking for everyone's help to protect the community.

As of Feb. 6, St. Croix County was experiencing an average of 59 reported COVID-19 cases a day.

Transmission remains high for the county at a case rate of 651 cases per 100,000 population in a seven-day period for Jan. 30-Feb. 5. Community transmission is considered high when the COVID-19 case rate is at least 100 cases per 100,000 population in a 7-day period.

Help lower the spread by following these simple steps:

- ▶ Get your COVID-19 vaccine or booster if eligible
- ▶ Wear a well-fitting N95 or KN95 mask
- ▶ Practice physical distancing
- ▶ Stay home when you are sick
- ▶ Get tested if you have symptoms or are a close contact

See Covid-19 Page A7

BALD EAGLE

Midwinter count monitors eagle population

Counts evaluate stewardship efforts

BY TOM LINDFORS
Contributor

NEW RICHMOND – I did not have a lot of time. I was due at 45th Parallel to cover the second day of fat bike racing by 10 a.m. so I decided to focus my count on stretches of open water on the Apple River and the three eagle nests closest to where I live.

It was the second day of the 2022 Midwinter Bald Eagle Count

scheduled this year to take place on Jan. 29 and 30.

My wife and I have participated in numerous counts and surveys since we moved to Star Prairie in 2006. We have tracked wolves for the DNR but mostly we count birds, the annual sandhill crane count for the International Crane Foundation, various spring waterfowl surveys for the USFWS, the Christmas Bird Count for Audubon and the Eagle Count for the Eagle Nature Foundation (ENF).

See Population Page A8



TOM LINDFORS

"The first eagle was sitting toward the end of a limb coming off a large pine just on the other side of the open water. I did a double take, it looked like a large dark hump, but it was too large to be a natural part of the tree."

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NEWS

BRIEFS

Masks available at Public Health

High-filter masks, like N95 and KN95s, along with the COVID-19 vaccine and boosters offer the best protection against the virus. Public health has a supply of KN95 masks available for the public to pick up from its offices in Ellsworth and River Falls.

Ellsworth office, 412 W. Kinne St., room 171, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

River Falls office, 1234 Wasson Lane, suite A, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Builder joins housing partnership

St. Croix Valley Habitat for Humanity announced a new partnership with Creative Homes that supports the purchase of lots for affordable housing.

Creative Homes is an award-winning home builder with three decades of home construction in western Wisconsin and Minnesota.

St. Croix Valley Habitat for Humanity will initially purchase four lots in New Richmond as part of the partnership.

Additional funding for land purchases is provided by grants from the Hugh J. Andersen Foundation and the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation.

HUDSON

Hospital foundation grants, scholarships

The Hudson Hospital Foundation is offering community grants and student scholarships to local applicants.

Grants: Grants are open to local nonprofit charities for community activities and programs that advance the mission of Hudson Hospital & Clinic and Hudson Hospital Foundation – to improve health and well-being in partnership with its board members, patients and community.

The application deadline is March 15.

Any charitable nonprofit organization that is located in the geographic service area of Hudson Hospital & Clinic may apply.

Grants from Hudson Hospital Foundation's community health fund are available for amounts up to \$10,000 and must be used for the purpose requested. There will be up to 10 grants awarded throughout the year. To apply, go to <https://www.healthpartners.com/foundations/hudson/what-we-fund/>.

Scholarships: High school seniors residing in Hudson Hospital & Clinic service area who plan to pursue a career in health care are invited to apply for a scholarship. The foundation will award up to five \$2,000 scholarships to area students enrolling in a college or university to pursue a career in health care. For guidelines and an application, go to [hudson-hospital-foundation-scholarship-application.pdf](https://www.healthpartners.com/foundations/hudson/what-we-fund/) (healthpartners.com).

The application deadline is April 1.

The foundation has awarded scholarships for over 20 years, total-

ing more than \$80,000.

RIVER FALLS

KIAP-TU-WISH seeks volunteers

The lower Powell Falls dam will be removed, the built-up sediment in the impoundment will be stabilized and one-mile of river above the dam will undergo extensive habitat improvement.

This will reduce the water temperatures in the lower river and protect it from sediment, as well as creating an outstanding stretch of publicly accessible angling water just a short walk from downtown River Falls.

Public funding will cover most of the cost of removing the dam and stabilizing the banks, but private donations are needed to conduct habitat improvement and set up a monitoring system that will allow us to collect data and build the case for removing the upper Junction Falls dam. KIAP-TU-WISH, its sister Trout Unlimited chapter, Kinni Corridor Collaborative and a number of other partners are continuing to raise additional funds needed for the project.

If you are interested in volunteering as part of the fundraising team, visit <https://us2.list-manage.com/survey?u=a423c1f059368f-ce4e1171d94&id=c5f7e92161&e=8da60b91fb>.

Comprehensive plan open house

City of River Falls announces opportunities to provide input on Comprehensive Plan update. The public is invited to attend an open house Thursday, Feb. 24, 2-7 p.m. at River Falls

Public Library. The city of River Falls is embarking on the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, Outdoor Recreation Plan and Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

These documents will serve as decision-making tools for the future of River Falls and are built from community input.

Participants may register before Feb. 24 at engagerf.org for a chance to win one of three \$25 Chamber Checks. More prizes to come.

NAMI Family Support meets

NAMI Family Support Group is an open-ended support group of people who are joined together for mutual understanding and support for coping with serious and persistent mental illness. This structured group is led by trained facilitators and focuses on offering ongoing support to the family members and caregivers of a person with mental illness.

People are free to attend whenever they like. Benefits include: connection and support when loved ones are in crisis, gaining knowledge about community resources, learning about advocacy opportunities and building a support network.

This group will meet at 6:30-8 p.m. the second and fourth Thursday at Luther Memorial Church, 420 S. Fourth St. For more information, email namiscv@gmail.com.

SHRINE CLUB

Valentine's party gets taste of beers

BY MILT HELMER

The St. Croix Valley Shrine Club really knows how to throw a party.

They held their Valentines Day party on Friday, Feb. 11, at the Hancock Lodge No. 229 Masonic Center. Club President Carl Gaulke and his board of directors combined a fun gathering with a business meeting.

This year they welcomed the owner of Commonman Tap and Table in Ellsworth as the guest speaker. Russ Korpula not only explained how beer was made but also had samples for all in attendance.

Korpula, who is originally from Ashland, Wisconsin, where he holds the record of being the youngest mayor in that northern Wisconsin community. He now lives in Ellsworth. Korpula not only owns the Commonman Tap and Table, he is the director of the River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce.

Noble Charlie Webster, who was Korpula's first customer, introduced him to the Shrine gathering.

In his talk before the nobles and their ladies, Korpula explained that regular beer sales are on the decline right now and craft beers on the rise.

He went on to explain the making of beer can be traced back 5,000 years to ancient Egypt. He went on to outline just how modern day beer is made. There are three main ingredients in all beers, Korpula said. Barley malt is the primary ingredient. Then water and hops.

There are two kinds made today, lager and ale. Lager has a crisp taste, the kind you find in Miller, Budweiser and other popular brands. Ale has more flavor like the 21 tap offerings at the Commonman.

Korpula not only explained the many different varieties, but



Left: Bob Hering issues his report on the Shrine Children's upcoming events planned for their kids. Right: Guest speaker Russ Korpula is shown with Shrine Club President Carl Gaulke at the club's annual Valentines Party in Ellsworth.



MILT HELMER PHOTOS

Shown is a portion of the crowd at the Shrine club's annual Valentines Party.

with the help of his wife, offered attendees samples of some of the more popular ale offerings.

Also on the agenda was a report from Bob Hering of the Shrine Board of Governors. He mentioned the upcoming 2022 camp and events calendar. Among the activities being planned are the prom on April 2; Camp Achieve for ages 5-8 on June 20-22. Also on June 22 will be trout fishing in Star Prairie. Camp Achieve for ages 9 to 14 will be held July 10-20 with trout fishing in Star Prairie on July 20. Camp Bravo will be held June 27-30. Achieve Adventure is set for Aug. 4-7.

Events with dates to be announced are: Water Skiing, Summer Family Fun Day and Halloween Party.

In the report on onion sales, President Gaulke said the popular Vidalia onions go on sale depending on the harvest the end of April or beginning of May. The coming year the club is in need of someone in Clear Lake to head up sales in that area, and Jim Hines in Ellsworth could use some help with sales in that village. The annual sales provide much needed funds for all of the club's activities as well as Shriners Children's in the Twin Cities.

ELLEFSON PAGE A1

'Keenly interested'

She was quoted in 1970 saying "I have always been keenly interested in public issues. If we are to ensure the development of good government, it is essential that every citizen be concerned with its development. This means every citizen regardless of sex, race, color or creed."

As a woman, "you have to convince people you're worthy," Ellefson said, sitting at her kitchen table. "It hasn't changed."

She took office on April 21, 1970, as the first woman council member.

She served three terms, two years each, before running for mayor, being elected twice.

Ellefson's first husband, James Hallen, died in 1973. Before aspiring to run for mayor, Ellefson was raising her three boys, teaching economics and political science at Stillwater High School and representing residents on the council and St. Croix County Board of Supervisors, a position she was appointed to in October 1974, another one where she was the first woman to hold the position.

"I didn't want to run for mayor," she said. Her plate was full.

Her kids were older by this time, her youngest a sophomore in high school. The boys, especially her youngest, were not keen on her being in government.

Evening meals often were interrupted with calls before council meetings.

Madam Mayor

As the first, and only, woman in office, talk around town was not quiet. And not always kind.

But when a couple of staff members at City Hall approached her to run for mayor, she took it to heart.

The incumbent, John Schommer, was running unopposed, and Ellefson thought it best to give the community of Hudson options in the 1984 mayoral election.

With her experience in local governance and support from active Democrats and Republicans, she decided to give it a shot.

Ellefson, born and raised in Hudson, grew up as a Jensen in a family familiar with public service.

Her grandfather served as fire chief as well as with public works.

Her dad served on the police force.

But that didn't make campaigning easy.

"The most important thing is to have strong backing," she said about running for mayor. "You need deep pockets to get your ideas out there."

One of the most challenging campaigning strategies, Ellefson said, was going door to door, introducing herself to residents.

"I was told to never go alone, because they may resent you for running against the person already in office," she said.

Once the votes were in, and Ellefson was announced as the new mayor of Hudson, her opponent requested a recount. The race was close.

"It's sour grapes on Schommer's part," Ellefson was quoted as saying in the April 12, 1984, edition of the Star Observer. "Let's get on with it."

The results were unchanged by the recount.

Her margin of victory when she was reelected in 1986 was not much wider. Her opponent requested a recount, coming in just dozens of votes behind. That challenge, too, was unsuccessful.

About being mayor

Beyond the feat of breaking the glass ceiling, Ellefson had other notable accomplishments during her time in office. It wasn't all about being a woman, she said, it was about being mayor.

A story titled, "I don't have ax to grind," in the April 12, 1984, edition of the Star Observer, a reporter noted this.

"Believed to be Hudson's first woman mayor, Hallen [Ellefson] does not expect her sex to make any difference in her decisions nor in the way she works with the council."

Ellefson's level-headed work ethic led to significant change for Hudson.

When she was elected, the drinking age in Wisconsin was 18 years. By the time she left, it was 21.

"First-time drinkers would come by Greyhound buses," she said. It impacted businesses downtown, both positively and negatively. Though there were more legal bar goers, the streets, as she described it, needed to be cleaned up.

Ellefson spoke at both the Wisconsin and Minnesota legislatures to encourage change.

It was a contentious debate with little middle ground.

When Governor Anthony Earl came to Hudson on June 7, 1986, to sign the bill raising the legal drinking age, armed guards took to the roof as protesters took to the steps of the Hudson City Hall.

Working together

It was legislative change and work with a dynamic council that left Ellefson feeling successful as a local politician.

When she served as mayor, her councils worked wonderfully together, she recalled.

"It's the mayor's job to facilitate that on the council," Ellefson said.

Local politics are nonpartisan elections, so as a local political leader, you don't represent a political party. "You need to put that aside."

Upon marrying her second husband, David Ellefson, in October 1886, who also had three boys, Ellefson made the decision to move to his home with her three boys.

David lived in the Town of Troy, putting her address outside of town and ineligible to be mayor.

She resigned for that reason during her second term. Her last day as the mayor of Hudson was Jan. 1, 1987.

"There was a little hiccup there," she said, as the candidate she ran against accused her, prior to resigning, of already establishing residency outside of the city.

"I don't know if they would have done that if I was a man," she said.

Since her stint as mayor, Ellefson has seen exceptional growth in Hudson. It was something she saw coming, advocating for the planning for future growth as an elected official.

But some things haven't changed.

Though it's not all based on gender, Ellefson noted that the issues that face women intersect with each other. Where you're from, where you live and what party you're affiliated with all influence relationships and how an individual is treated.

Throughout the years, other women, like current alderperson Joyce Hall, have run for mayor. None have been elected.

In April, Malanaphy will be on the ballot, hoping to follow in Ellefson's footsteps.

"It's never too late to have another woman mayor," Ellefson said. "She's going to have her hands full."

Readers can reach Hannah at hc Boyle@ourourkemediagroup.com