

IT'S THE CLIMB

Odyssey Climbing and Fitness is Green Bay's first indoor climbing gym

By Janelle Fisher
City Pages Editor

The new year is bringing a new indoor climbing gym to Green Bay.

Co-owners Ben Ganther and Sam Howard are preparing to open Odyssey Climbing and Fitness in early 2023.

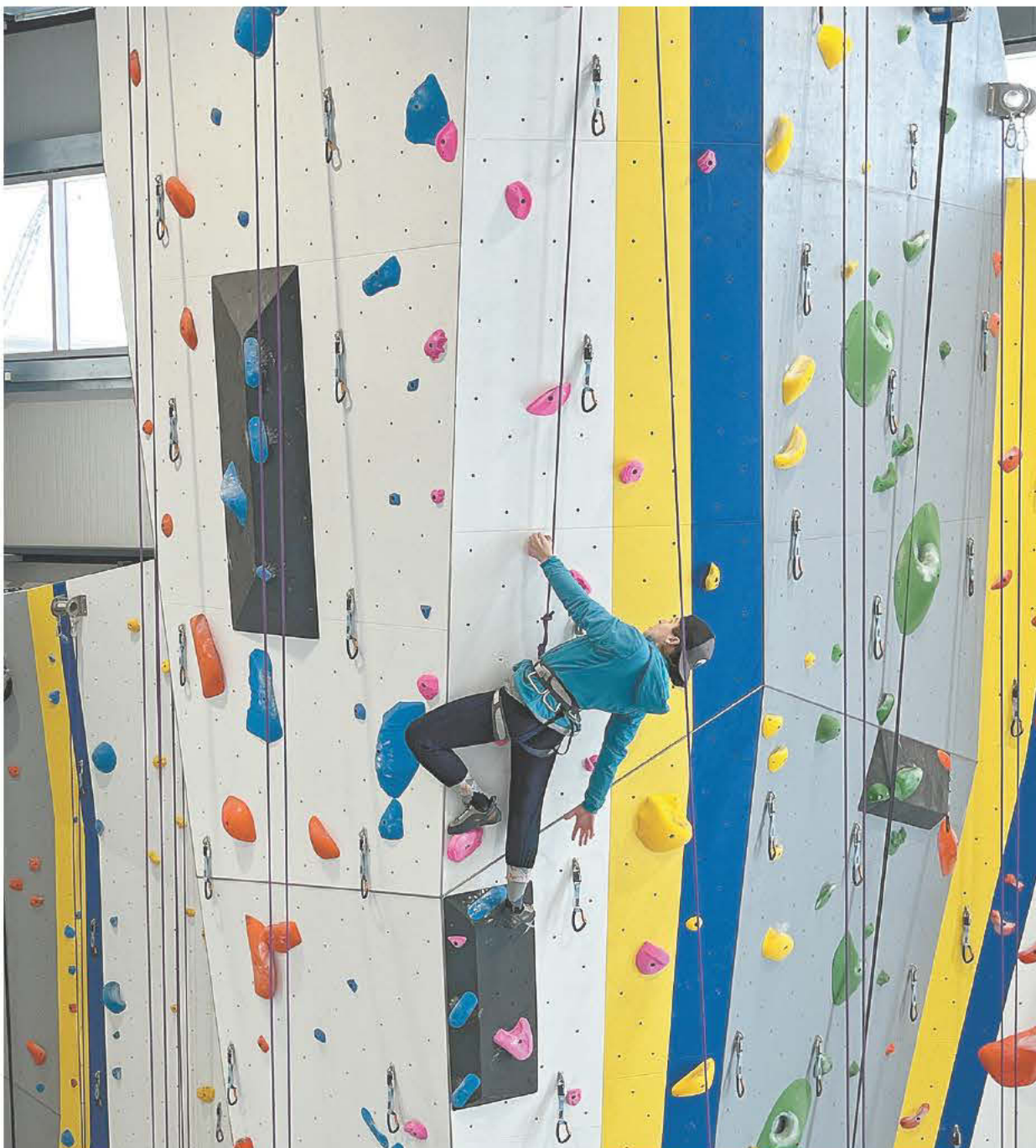
Odyssey will be Green Bay's first indoor climbing gym and house the tallest indoor climbing wall in the state.

The 47-foot-tall climbing wall has routes set up for auto-belaying, top rope climbing and lead climbing which will be changed up on a regular basis so there's always something new to climb.

In addition to the traditional climbing wall, Odyssey also has a bouldering wall, traditional fitness equipment and space to hold programs, classes and other events.



▲ Ben Ganther, one of the founders of Odyssey Climbing and Fitness, can be seen here on one of the gym's lead climbing routes. Lead climbing is a more advanced style of climbing which requires climbers to continually clip into points along the route as they move up the wall.



▲ Co-Owner of Odyssey Climbing and Fitness Sam Howard can be seen here top rope climbing — a style of climbing which involves a second person on the ground belaying for the climber to ensure a safe descent in the event they slip or fall while climbing.

Ganther said even for people who have never climbed before, Odyssey will have something for everyone.

"A really important part of what we stand for is this idea of humility, or meeting people where they're at," he said. "That starts with our staff and making sure we meet them where they're at and then train them to be able to be professionals within the climbing gym industry. But we meet our members and our guests where they're at, too. Climbing is an inherently dangerous sport and it can be intimidating. If somebody's a first-time climber we can give them the same fun, engaging experience as someone who has been climbing for 20 years. The way that we've designed our space and the way that we plan to have our routes set with difficulty ratings will be really approachable for everybody and that's something we believe pretty strongly in."

For Howard, the love of rock climbing started young — and he passed that passion onto Ganther as they became friends.

"I grew up climbing with my dad," he said. "He has taught me ever since I can really remember. Trips to Devil's Lake to go rock climbing for a week were a key part of our summers. I met my wife in college — she's actually Ben's sister, so that's how Ben and I are connected. Ben and I started climbing in Milwaukee and it just became an integral piece of our social fabric. It was like every Tuesday we were climbing, then we

were grabbing tacos. It became a really important piece of our social circle."

Howard said that when he and Ganther came to Green Bay, they realized that integral part of their social lives just didn't exist here.

"When we came up here to visit Ben's family, we just didn't find it," he said. "We'd bring all our climbing gear and try to find something, but it didn't exist. So that kind of got the gears turning. We thought, 'hey, there's something really special in these gyms that help people connect and we can bring that to the community in a really cool way.' So that got the gears turning almost four years ago now."

Bringing climbing to the community is a big part of what Ganther and Howard want to accomplish with Odyssey, but Ganther said it's not the only goal they have.

"A big part of what we want to do is obviously expose people, and especially kids in the area to climbing," he said. "To expose them to, 'hey, this is something you can do in your state,' but then also expose them to all the other great outdoor activities that we have not just in Wisconsin, but specifically in the Green Bay area. And kind of use our programming arm of Odyssey to really get people aware of the really fun outdoor activities that are in the area."

Beyond the sports aspect of it, Howard said he and Ganther hope Odyssey will bring the social element of climbing to the area like they experienced in Milwaukee.

"Climbing in general, when you look at other fitness centers or activities, is a very social sport," he said. "There's a really huge social aspect to it. You're constantly interacting with other people — top roping involves multiple people and you're taking classes. So it kind of breaks down a lot of the barriers that exist in traditional fitness centers. We'll be a social touchpoint for the community and a place where people can come in and feel comfortable to grow beyond what they thought they might be doing, especially when we're talking about climbing to a new height, taking classes or meeting new people. It's going to be a fitness center and a climbing gym, yes, but it's also going to be a social touchpoint for the community as well."

GRIFFON STRING QUARTET
Inaugural Winter Retreat
 Featuring Suzuki Strings of Madison and the Griffon String Quartet lesson program
 January 6-7 events open to the public. Brown County & Door County strings students — and anyone considering learning to play violin, viola, or cello — are especially welcome!

- Music games
- Play-in for all strings students and community members
- Performance classes for students
- Student performances



SUZUKI STRINGS OF MADISON

Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church • Ellison Bay
 Visit midsummersmusic.com or call 920-854-7088 for the schedule and more information.

NOW OPEN!

GENERATIONS GALLERY

SPECTACULAR SCIENCE

NEVILLEPUBLICMUSEUM.ORG



#MYGBCITYSCENE
@GBCITYPAGES



ABOVE: LAST WEEK'S SNOW STORM MEANT ICY ROADS AND HARSH HOLIDAY TRAVEL CONDITIONS FOR MANY IN THE GREATER GREEN BAY AREA, BUT SOME GOOD THINGS CAME ALONG WITH THE SNOW, TOO. TRIANGLE HILL OFFICIALLY KICKED OFF ITS WINTER TUBING SEASON ON TUESDAY, DEC. 27. RIGHT: NEW FOR THIS SEASON IS THE ADDITION OF A NEW MAGIC CARPET CONVEYER BELT SYSTEM WHICH SAFELY AND SMOOTHLY BRINGS TUBERS LIKE 10-YEAR-OLD MACK MANDY, PICTURED HERE, BACK TO THE TOP OF THE MAIN HILL. DANIEL KRAMER PHOTOS

TO HAVE YOUR PICTURE OF A SLICE OF GREEN BAY

featured in an upcoming issue of Green Bay City Pages, post your photo online, tag @gbcitypages, and use the hashtag #mygbcitypages.



Being a space where people can grow and learn, Ganther said, is what inspired the name of the gym.

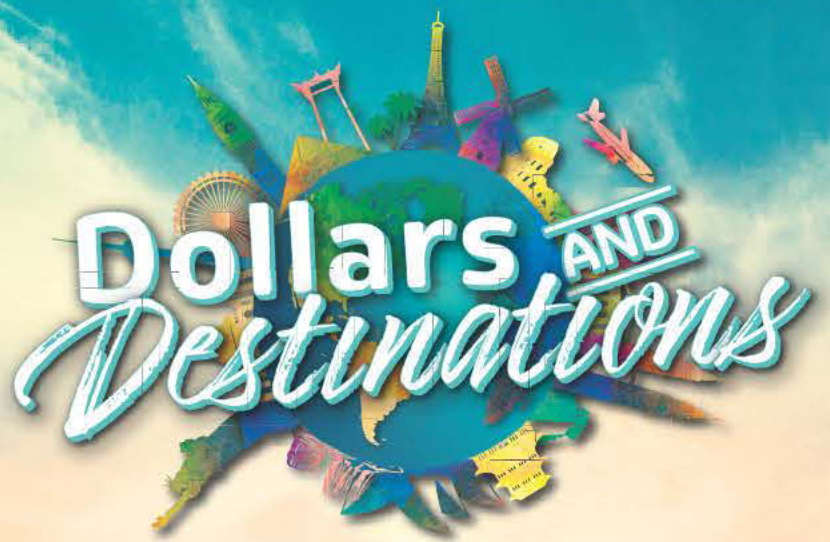
"We had scribbled out a whole bunch of different ideas," he said. "And it turns out a lot of the good climbing names have been taken already. So we were kind of hitting a dead end and we talked a lot about this idea of community and being a place for people to start their journey, whether it's climbing or just expanding their comfort zone and pushing their boundaries. So the idea of Odyssey is that it's the journey — it's the process and where people are going. So simultaneously, the logo became this circle with abstract mountains and kind of like the portal to that next step for people whether they want to grow within climbing or just want to be a little bit more adventurous or just grow as a person. Odyssey can be that first step and the place where they do that."

Ganther said interest in Odyssey has already been high.

▲ Some of the climbing routes at Odyssey have auto-belay systems, seen here with the orange and green triangles at the bottom, which allow for solo climbing.

"It's been really cool since we've started getting closer to opening and we've been pushing out into the community to have all these people reaching out to us and asking, 'hey, are you guys open?'" he said. "We're getting calls from people with all these different area codes asking if we're open and we say we're not and they go, 'okay, well is there anywhere else I can climb around here?' And the answer is truly nowhere, unless you want to go climb at a trampoline park in Appleton or UW-Green Bay has a small climbing tower. But to have something that's even remotely close to what people experience in other areas with climbing gyms, this will be the only one in the area." **CP**

MENOMINEE CASINO RESORT



EARN ENTRIES JANUARY 1 - 28

Receive an entry for every 50 base points earned

Drawings on Saturdays, January 7, 14, 21 & 28

Win a \$3,000 Travel Gift Certificate & \$500 Cash!



N277 Hwy. 47/55 • Keshena, WI 54135
800-343-7778 • MenomineeCasinoResort.com

Must be a Pages Club member. Membership is FREE. Must be present to win. For complete rules see Guest Services. Menominee Casino Resort reserves all rights to alter or cancel any promotion at any time without notice.

