

The race is on

It's time to choose the Best of the Amery Area. The polls are open and it's again time to pick your favorite local people, places and things.

The fourth annual Best of the Amery Area Contest begins accepting votes at 9 a.m. July 12. All votes are cast online at www.theameryfreepress.com/bestof. The polls close at 5 p.m., Sunday, August 6.



From the
Publisher's
Desk
Tom Stangl

Unlike other elections, you can vote multiple times. In fact, we encourage voting once every 24 hours to help your favorites win in their respective categories.

Running a small business in a rural community has never been easy. In the past four years since we launched the contest, businesses have struggled with

everything from a global pandemic to shortages and inflation. And that's on top of regulations, taxation and competition.

That's one of the many reasons I love Best Of. This is a quick and easy way for many of us to show our appreciation and love for the people, places and things that have been here for us.

If you are new to all of this, here's a short primer about the contest.

Nominations for the best in seven categories: eating and drinking, sports and recreation, health and fitness, shopping, arts and entertainment, local and services were accepted online from May 3 – May 19. We received over 4,300 nominations this year in over 80 different categories. The people, places or things with the highest number of nominations made the ballot. We have a limit of five names per category. A few contests have less than five candidates.

Now that voting is underway, you can head to the online ballot and begin selecting your favorite things from best celebration or festival to best local sports team and anything in between. The website will ask you to register and provide an email address. We do this to ensure people vote only once every 24 hours. You will receive a confirmation email to verify your email address as well as a custom link you can use once daily while voting is open to return to the ballot to vote.

When voting ends August 6, we will tally the votes and begin preparation of the special section announcing the winners. This section will come out online and in the Free Press the week of October 4.

Winners and finalists will receive a certificate (suitable for framing), a window or door cling and bragging rights for the next 12 months. The recommendation of the readers of the Free Press carries weight when some people are deciding which places or services to patronize.

Whether we want to admit it or not, there is a deep-seated desire in many of us to excel and for our hard work to be recognized. Contests like Best Of provide a friendly way for us to let people know their hard work has been noticed and is appreciated.

I encourage you all to check out the contest, cast a vote for one or more of your favorites and return each day to do it all over again. If you are in doubt of who is the best, you have time to visit and or sample the products.

Encourage your family and friends to do the same.

Best of luck to all the nominees!

As always, I welcome your comments. You can reach me by email at tstangl@theameryfreepress.com, telephone 715-268-8101 or write me at P.O. Box 424, Amery, WI, 54001.

Thanks for reading. I'll keep in touch. Feel free to do the same.



We didn't start the 54001 fire

To say it has been a week with a rollercoaster of emotions would be an understatement. As many of you know by now, for the past six months I have been gathering information concerning the debilitated environment at Amery's City Hall.

I poured myself into conversations where I wrote down every word, with the time and date. I



Editor
April Ziemer

noted when someone told me a story and it was different than what they had told me the previous time. I noticed behaviors, made countless open records requests and spoke with attorneys to stay on top of our rights as

a newspaper.

On top of this, it has been my year as Amery Community Club President. I have barely seen my family, I have gone on very little sleep and shed many tears of frustration, but I kept on while watching a community I loved grow more concerned and bursting at the seams with distrust.

I had readers call, email and stop me in the grocery store and voice their disappointment and anger. I watched as some people I truly cared for went through a lot of turmoil either as City employees or City Council members

Eventually I watched this beautiful little city be absolutely shamed on the internet and it seems that was the beginning of the end. What I mean by that, is two resignations soon followed—the Mayor and the Chief of Police (Technically I guess the Chief retired).

I had people ask if it felt like a weight off of my shoulders, but it did not. While I was relieved when residents learned about the secrets of the past months, last week for me came with nasty emails, phone calls, blasts and cheap shots.

There is no doubt it can be a really hard thing to take accountability. While over my years here I have grown thicker skin than I had in the beginning, I can't say it is ever easy. I also know it hasn't been easy to be in the shoes of people in the police department, city council, other city staff, the Mayor, ex-Chief Hainzl or his wife.

I would like to make it clear though, I have a job to do and I certainly do have an agenda. My agenda is to seek the truth and print the news. My agenda is to provide real transparency for the community and not various versions of transparency based who is reading the publication.

If your actions provide me with material, then your self-written script will play out on these pages. It has always been that way since the newspaper was founded in 1892. Sometimes the script handed to me is full of amazing and wonderful things and other times it isn't. Sometimes it is a fire storm- but like a wise rock n' roller once said, "We didn't start the fire. It was always burning, since the world's been turning. We didn't start the fire- No, we didn't light it, but we tried to fight it."

With his hit song "We Didn't Start the Fire," Billy Joel managed to cover 40 years of history in roughly four minutes, beginning with Harry Truman's presidency in the late 1940s and concluding with the "cola wars" that extended into the 1980s.

"We Didn't Start the Fire" was a massive success.

Now, love it or hate it, rock band Fall Out Boy has picked up where Joel left off. In a video released June 28, they take listeners on a ride from 1989 through 2023, chronicling "newsworthy items." Music icons like Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly have been swapped for Prince and Michael Jackson; sports figures like Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle have been replaced with LeB-

ron James and Tiger Woods; and "Catcher in the Rye" has given way to "Harry Potter" and "Twilight."

"I thought about (Joel's) song a lot when I was younger," Fall Out Boy bassist Peter Wentz said in a statement attached to the official lyric video on YouTube. "All these important people and events — some that disappeared into the sands of time — others that changed the world forever. So much has happened in the span of the last 34 years — we felt like a little system update might be fun."

After I heard about the remake of the tune, it really resonated with me that the lyrics were so much like being a journalist. During my time here at the Amery Free Press, I have covered swell things, sad times, epic events and gut-wrenching moments for Amery, WI. 54001.

So, move over Fall Out Boy. I am hoping readers can start to cue up an arrangement of piano, Hammond organ, clavinet, synthesizer, harpsichord, accordion and percussion in the key of G Major in their minds and sing along to my version of We Didn't Start the Fire-Amery edition

City crewmen, beach decay, dine China, FFA

Lots of thrifts, books on Kindle, National Night Out

No more Hardees, vape addiction, Summer Lakers, street revision

Good ideas, bad ideas, more "I told you so"

Golf Course, Northwest Comm, Mayor Kay, Camelot

Land goes, a thing to lie, and beers at the Alibi

Water tower, ArtZ, he's hard working Rodney

Luciana, Garibaldis, Darcy Long goodbye

We didn't start the fire

It was always burning, since the world's been turning