



Ladysmith News

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Vol. 128, Number 42

Ladysmith, Wisconsin 54848

Thursday, January 26, 2023

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Coloring contest for kids Page A12

\$100,000 donation for Ladysmith schools

Superior Choice secures stadium naming rights

By Luke Klink
Superior Choice Credit Union made an unprecedented donation this week to the Ladysmith School District, securing naming rights of the stadium at Ladysmith Middle & High School.

The \$100,000 donation was presented Monday at the school board meeting in the library, and then at halftime of the basketball game in the gym.

The stadium will be named Superior Choice Credit Union Stadium. The sponsorship donation will be used to make needed upgrades to the stadium, track and other athletic facilities. The sponsorship will lead to a robust partnership including financial literacy for students in the school district.

Superior Choice Credit Union CEO and President Tim Foster said, "Funding upgrades to this athletic facility and stadium for Ladysmith Middle and High School speaks directly to who we are as a credit union and our mission to positively impact our members and our communities." "With our brand new Ladysmith branch opening in 2022, this partner-

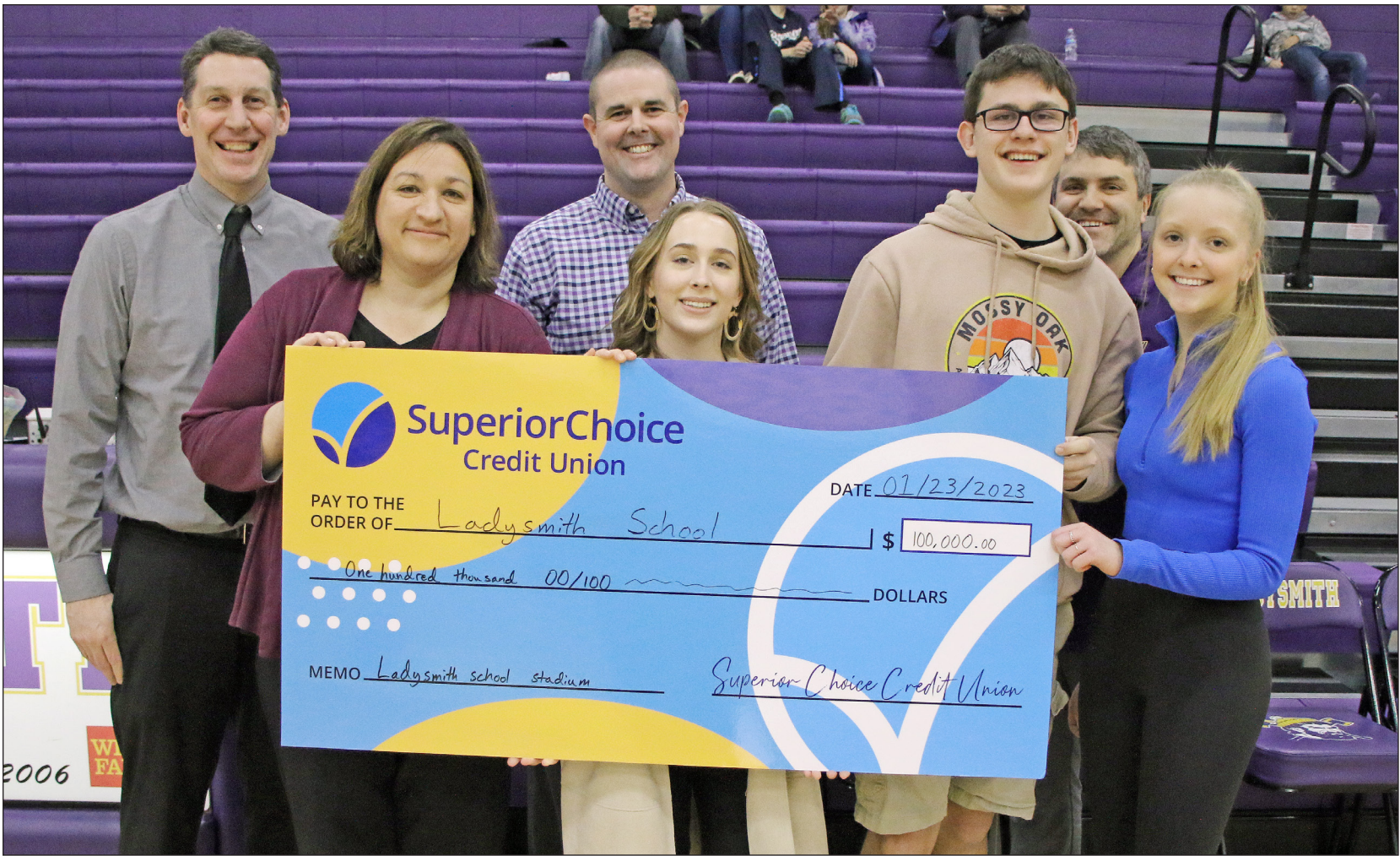
ship emphasizes our commitment to the local area, and we look forward seeing this stadium full of athletes, students, employees, members and the local community."

Ladysmith Middle & High School Principal Greg Posewitz thanked Superior Choice Credit Union for their generous donation.

"This donation will help us tremendously in our effort to ensure that all our students have the proper facilities to safely participate in athletic events, physical education and other activities," Posewitz said. "We look forward to working together with SCCU to continue to enhance opportunities for our students both in the classroom and on the field."

School District Administrator Laura Stunkel said the funds will be used on the football/track stadium and will have a positive impact on all current and future students.

"This donation from Superior Choice Credit Union is a game changer for the School District of Ladysmith," Stunkel said. "We are so fortunate to have such generosity in our community."



BIG DONATION — A \$100,000 sponsorship donation to help with athletic facility improvements from Superior Choice Credit Union is presented on Monday to Ladysmith school officials. The donation will help with upcoming football field and track upgrades at Ladysmith Middle & High School. It will lead to a robust partnership including financial literacy for students in the school district. Participating in the donation are (in front, from left) SCCU Regional Director of Branches Julie Anderson, SCCU Community Engagement Coordinator Abigale Brandt, student representatives Cole Sanderson and Payton Wold; and (in back) Ladysmith Middle & High School Principal Greg Posewitz, SCCU CEO Tim Foster and Ladysmith School District Athletic Director Troy Gago.

— News photo by Blake Melin

Winter storm damage total tops \$1 million

By Luke Klink
Rusk County, municipal and electric cooperative leaders are estimating more than \$1 million in costs associated with the severe winter storm in December that downed numerous trees across the area, rendered roads impassable for days and left thousands without power for almost a week in some places.

Local officials finished submitting their preliminary claims to Rusk County Emergency Management last week. These estimates — totaling close to \$1.03 million — will be forwarded to the Wisconsin Disaster Fund Coordinator within Wisconsin Emergency Management.

The Wisconsin Disaster Fund is a state-funded reimbursement program that allows local governmental units — namely, counties, cities, townships, villages, and tribal units of government — to recoup costs incurred while responding to and recovering from disaster incidents. The state reimburses 70 percent of eligible costs after the local governmental unit submits a complete

WDF application.

The fund reimburses public disaster costs under three categories of work including debris clearance, protective measures and road and bridge repair. It does not cover individuals, businesses, agricultural sector, costs associated with snowstorms or damages covered by insurance. It also does not provide funds for mitigation activities.

National Weather Service data shows 17 inches of snow fell at a weather station 3 miles west of Ladysmith between last Dec. 13 and 17 for a 5-day total of 17 inches with the highest 24-hour total of 10 inches on Wednesday, Dec. 14.

NWS data shows 14.3 inches of snow was recorded at the Ladysmith Wastewater Treatment Plant during this same period for a 5-day total of 14.3 inches in the city with the highest 24-hour total of 12.2 inches on Wednesday, Dec. 14.

There were no 24-hour records or near-records during this period. The 3-day snowfall record for this area is 20.2 inches.

The County must be within 10%

or exceed the highest record snowfall within the county for either a 1, 2 or 3 day time period.

According to National Centers for Environmental Information at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration the snowfall record for Rusk County over a 1-day period is 16.0 inches in Sheldon on Dec. 11, 2010. The snowfall record for Rusk County over a 2-day period is 18.0 inches in Ladysmith on Dec. 12, 2010. The snowfall record for Rusk County over a 3-day period is 20.0 inches in Ladysmith on Dec. 12, 2010.

Downed trees caused most of the damage being claimed, according to Rusk County Emergency Management Director Tom Hall. He called the preliminary claim estimates "a best guess" by local officials at the current time.

"Now they have to go out and do damage assessment," said Hall, who added the process of documenting and proving the estimates now begins.

Damage assessment documentation can be completed using several meth-

ods including by taking photographs, cataloging in a computer survey application and the paperwork intensive listing each damage site on a separate sheet of paper. This information then is forwarded to Wisconsin Emergency Management for review and reimbursement.

Reimbursements are allowed for expenses above and beyond regular work-day obligations. This includes costs for items like paying staff overtime, hiring additional labor and contracting for machinery to do debris removal. It also is restricted to work to clear roadways, not recreational corridors like those for snowmobiling or skiing. Regular payroll staff time that is not overtime is not reimbursed.

There are other programs available to assist with clearing snowmobile trails and other public use lands, according to Hall.

"There are so many different programs going on," Hall said. "The Wisconsin Disaster Fund is one of them."

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RESCUE EFFORT — Ladysmith Fire Department Assistant Chief Shane Bishop helps rescue a cat during a call to a house fire in the city on Tuesday. More photos on Page A11 in this week's Ladysmith News.

— News photo by Luke Klink

Residents fight to restore county meeting access

By Luke Klink
Area residents continue their efforts to have the Rusk County Board return virtual access to government meetings since cutting off video and teleconferencing to the public last fall.

Erin Webster and Nanci Mertes have waged a phone call campaign and petition drive with little success, yet they refuse to give up. The county board is scheduled to consider a new resolution this week that could restore public access with a few conditions, but that's only if it passes as currently written.

Mertes points to county resolution 20-09, originally adopted by the county board in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The resolution that has a paragraph that allows virtual access to open meetings should the need arise, stating "in-person attendance may not meet health and safety objectives" as the county tries to "ensure the health and safety of the Rusk County staff,

residents and those traveling throughout Rusk County." Directly after the passing of this resolution, virtual access instructions were placed on all agendas allowing the public to telephone in to listen to elected officials in action during open meetings.

While the resolution is vague as to specific details of virtual access to meetings, Mertes believes the actions of the county directly after the passing of this resolution are clear.

"Our elected officials through this resolution thereby authorized virtual access to meetings for all, which created a bridge with the people thereby creating

Our elected officials through this resolution thereby authorized virtual access to meetings for all, which created a bridge with the people thereby creating safety for those that needed it and transparency of government proceedings to all in a day and age of virtual access to just about everything," Mertes said in an email.

In the last year, health concerns about COVID-19 have waned. Many governments have lifted emergency actions taken during the pandemic.

Virtual access to Rusk County government meetings continued until about October of 2022, when this access was abruptly suspended, according to Mertes. She believes the decision was made administratively without explanation to the public or without explanation of who on the county board authorized the suspension.

The resolution states in lines 47 and 48, "Be it further resolved that this resolution will remain in effect until rescinded by the Rusk County Board of Super-

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The Rusk County Shopper
Published by Bell Press, Inc.
120 W. 3rd St. • P.O. Box 189
Ladysmith, WI 54848
Phone: (715) 532-5591

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