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SPORTS

Courier Hub

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StoughtonNews.com

Wrestling



Photo by Jack Miller

Stoughton's Cole Sarbacker wrestles Madison East's Mikel Myadze in a 145 final during a WIAA Division 1 regional on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Sun Prairie East High School.

Stoughton advances to team sectional

Vikings crown five regional champions on way to top finish

JACK MILLER
Digital sports editor

Like usual, the Stoughton wrestling team is putting its best foot forward in February.

The Vikings crowned five regional champions on their way to winning a WIAA Division 1 regional title on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Sun Prairie East High School.

"We've been focused on these next three or four weeks all year," Stoughton co-head coach Dan Spilde said. "We've been looking forward to February. We finally got our full team on the mat, 14 kids representing Stoughton. We're excited that they're wrestling at their best right now."

Stoughton and Sun Prairie United

Turn to **Regionals/Page 7**

Football

Empey announces commitment to NDSU

Stoughton senior is reigning Badger Small Offensive Lineman of Year

JACK MILLER
Digital sports editor

Stoughton senior Griffin Empey recently announced his commitment to play football at North Dakota State University.

Empey made his announcement on Twitter on Feb. 10.

"First off, I would like to thank my family, friends, teammates and coaches for everything they have done for me to help me achieve my dreams," he wrote. "Second, I would like to thank coach Entz, coach Larson, coach Roehl and all the coaches at NDSU for believing in me. That being said, I am excited to announce my commitment to the University of North Dakota."

Turn to **Empey/Page 6**

Girls hockey

ONE GRAND SEASON

\$ Gruner joins exclusive save club \$

Icebergs goalie has crafted first 1,000 save season in over a decade

JACK MILLER
Digital sports editor

Aven Gruner has made about every save imaginable this season.

That's because the Stoughton Icebergs senior goalie has made 1,054 of them this season. Gruner past the 1,000-save milestone during a game against Cap City on Feb. 7.

"I think it's (milestone) pretty badass and that's a memory that's going to stay with me for a very long time," Gruner said.

Gruner leads the state in saves by a large margin. Her 1,054 saves is 185 more than Rock County's Jillian Traver — who is second in the state with 869.

Gruner has the first 1,000 save regular season in over a decade, according to the Wisconsin Prep Hockey database. The last time it was done was back in the 2011-2012 season when there was a pair of 1,000 save goalies — Viroqua's Theresa Knutson (1,091) and Beaver Dam's Maddi Lockwood (1,008).

"Aven has a great ability to stay focused on the task at hand," Icebergs head coach Chris Hinrichs said. "If a shot happens to get past her, she is able to refocus and move forward with ease. She has great determination and plays the game with an uncanny amount of heart. Basically, she is just tough as nails."

Gruner has logged over 1,124 minutes this season. She has nine games with 50 or more saves — including a pair of games with 70 or more saves.

With a lot of pressure being applied throughout a game, Gruner said she likes to keep her mind clear and just have fun with it.



Photo by Jack Miller

Stoughton's Aven Gruner leaves after the end of the second period during a Badger Conference game against the Rock County Fury on Friday, Jan. 13, at Mandt Community Center.

State's Saves Leaders

Rank	Name	Team	SV
1	Aven Gruner	Stoughton	1,054
2	Jillian Traver	Rock County	869
3	Sydney Magnuson	Black River	697
4	Izzy Hahn	Cap City	626
5	Jenna Uhrine	Northland	608

"Sometimes I do get physically overwhelmed but my team and I have great communication and they know when I need a break and they push harder so I am so thankful for them," she said.

Hinrichs said Gruner's teammates look for her for guidance

and constant motivation.

"Knowing how hard she works, they all want to work hard to support her," Hinrichs said.

Despite facing over 1,100 shots, Gruner has turned in an efficient season in goal. Her save percentage of .915

is the seventh best in the state for goalies that have recorded more than 500 saves this season.

"I like to keep my mind clear during a game and just have fun with it," she said.

Gruner's grand season comes after she collected 187 saves on a .878 save percentage last year. Gruner said her mentality has improved the most from last season.

"I used to always get in my head when one would go in, but now I just brush it off and look further into the game, not the past," she said.

Gruner will look to lead the Icebergs when they face Rock

Turn to **Grand/Page 9**

Boys swimming

Callender wins sectional title in 200 IM

Vikings will send two individuals in three events, two relays to state meet

MARK NESBITT
Sports editor

Stoughton sophomore Julian Callender won a sectional championship in the WIAA Division 2 Sauk Prairie sectional on Saturday, Feb. 11, to earn an automatic berth to state.

Callender swam the 200 IM in 2 minutes, 1.74 seconds to win a sectional title. He also took second in the 100 breaststroke (58.77) and reset his school record in the event for a second straight week to qualify for state. The Vikings will have two individuals in three events and two relays at the Division 2 state meet on Friday, Feb. 17, at Waukesha South High School.

The Vikings' 200 freestyle relay team of Callender, sophomore Josh Phillips, junior

Parker Housley and freshman Gavin Reiser took second (1:33.18) to earn a trip to state as an extra qualifier. Reiser added a fourth-place finish in the 100 breaststroke (1:02) to earn a berth to state. In the 200 medley relay, the Vikings' team of senior Max Mueller, Callender, Reiser and Housley placed fourth (1:44.75) and qualified for state.

In the 400 free relay, Phillips, Housley, senior Dylan Hill and Reiser took fifth (3:40.63) and just missed a trip to state.

Junior Matt Sorg finished sixth in the 200 IM (2:16.68), a 10 second drop from his seed time in the event. Sorg added a 10th-place finish in the 100 breast (1:07.05).

Phillips took eighth in the 100 free (53.55) and Mueller placed ninth in the 100 backstroke (1:05.59). A quartet of other Viking swimmers improved on their seed times in the 50 free. Phillips finished 14th in the 50 free (24.63)

Turn to **Sectionals/Page 6**

Dane County

Officials: County allots \$1.6 million to improve water quality, increase food production

Helping to acquire 105 acres of property in the Sixmile Creek Watershed

Dane County will allocate over \$1.6 million through its Conservation Fund to support projects that improve water quality and increase local food production.

According to a Feb. 2 Dane County news release, the county will allocate \$1,004,900 to the Town of Westport to acquire 105 acres of property in the Sixmile Creek Watershed. Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens, Inc. (MAFPG) will receive \$660,000 to acquire 15 acres of property for a food pantry garden and related activities next to Pope Farm Park in the Town of Middleton.

"The Conservation Fund is one of many ways Dane County works to preserve land with clear quality of life, conservation, and recreational benefits in our rapidly developing community," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Through these partnerships, we will be able to improve water quality in the Sixmile Creek Watershed and increase local food production and educational opportunities around sustainable agriculture."

The Town of Westport, in partnership with Groundswell Conservancy, will acquire approximately 105.45 acres of land from Lena LLC. The land is located off County Highway M and Woodland Drive, lying between DNR Six Mile Creek Fishery Area lands to the west and the Westport Town Hall and Daleo soccer fields to the east. It contains a mixture of grasslands, wetlands, and woods.

The Town's acquisition of this parcel connects a corridor of public lands that surround the north side of Lake Mendota. The property will protect existing wetlands, provide opportunities for wetland enhancement and restoration, and offer stormwater management benefits to enhance Lake Mendota water quality. The parcel creates additional open space for passive and organized public recreation, trail connections, native vegetation restoration, and wildlife and pollinator habitat.

The estimated project costs for this acquisition

total \$6,009,724. The Town has committed \$5 million and applied for a grant award. The Dane County Park Commission recommends up to \$1,004,900 in county matching funds for the acquisition and related transaction costs.

Another organization receiving support from the Dane County Conservation Fund is Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens, Inc. (MAFPG). MAFPG has been leasing land for one of its network gardens, known as Forward Garden, from Elizabeth Pope and the Pope Family Trust since 2020, but now has the opportunity to purchase the land.

MAFPG strives to provide local food pantries with first-choice, fresh, nutritious, and culturally relevant produce. This non-profit organization - with its thousands of volunteers - creates nutrition security for those who rely on the Dane County emergency food system by collecting surplus produce from area farms and markets and by growing produce in its network of gardens for food pantries and other emergency food programs.

These 15 acres of land are located on the Pope Farm Homestead in the Town of Middleton off of West Old Sauk Road, adjacent to the Town of Middleton's Pope Farm Conservancy. The parcel lies within the southern boundary of the county's Black Earth Creek Natural Resource Area.

Through this purchase, MAFPG will be able to increase operations at Forward Garden and also provide educational opportunities revolving around sustainable agriculture, food, and wildlife ecology to the community. The Agriculture, Gardening, and Foraging Initiative in the 2018-2023 Parks and Open Space Plan supports grants to non-profits for the protection of lands for sustainable agriculture, local food production, and creating opportunities to bring people outdoors and connect to the land.

The estimated project costs for this purchase are \$1,570,000. MAFPG applied for a grant award, and the Dane County Park Commission recommends up to \$660,000 in county matching funds for the acquisition and related transaction costs. Donations and fundraising will cover the balance of the acquisition cost.

Contact reporter Scott De Laruelle @sdelaruelle@ourourkemediagroup.com

Yahara: Site will be future maintenance facility

Continued from page 1

lease with Gingerbread House from Aug. 31 to Nov. 30 to give the business more time to move into its new location. The board will likely vote on the matter at its Feb. 20 meeting.

District director business services Erica Pickett told board members at their Feb. 6 meeting that once the former school is razed, it will start a "domino effect" of moves the district can make on its capital maintenance needs, funded by the successful fall referendum, ending with the construction of a new community gym to replace the current one by River Bluff Middle School.

"The sooner we can get to work in that area the better," she said. "If that building is down, then we can start building our maintenance building there, then we can take our other maintenance building down, which makes space for the new gym."

2023-24 calendar approved

Time to break out the calendars and look ahead to the next school year.

At its Feb. 6 meeting, the board approved the district calendar for the 2023-24 school year, which technically starts July 1. The district had been in discussions with families and staff about several proposed options. Here are some highlights:

- The first day of school is Tuesday, Sept. 5
- No school the Wednesday before Thanksgiving
- Winter Break begins Friday, Dec. 22, with students returning Tuesday, Jan. 2
- The end of the first semester is Friday, Jan. 19
- Spring Parent/Teacher conferences have been moved to the end of Feb. 28-29 to be more in the middle part of the semester, with no school March 1
- Spring break will be March 25-29
- No school on Friday, May 24
- The last day of school is a half day on Friday, June 7
- Summer school begins Monday, June 10 and will end before July 4

Contact editor Scott De Laruelle @sdelaruelle@wisconsinmediagroup.com

Grand: More than 1,000 saves

Continued from page 5

County in a regional final on Thursday, Feb. 16.

"Having over 1,000 saves just shows how durable and dependable she is," Hinrichs said. "She has taken some tough collisions and some pucks have slipped by her padding, leaving some pretty nasty

bruises. She has been this team's rock throughout the season. Her teammates and coaches can't express enough how thankful we are for having her on this team. She has cemented her legacy for this program with this season's amazing performance."

Girls basketball



Photo by Mark Nesbitt

Stoughton sophomore Ella Hamacher pushes the ball on the break after coming up with a steal in the first half against Fort Atkinson on Friday, Feb. 10, at Stoughton High School.

**EMERGENCY BACK-UP
PART-TIME SNOW PLOW DRIVER
TOWN OF PLEASANT SPRINGS**

The Town of Pleasant Springs is accepting applications for an emergency Public Works staff member. This position would be on an as needed basis for emergency snow events. This position would be called upon during snow events to assist the Town of Pleasant Springs in plowing and clearing snow during heavier snow events. Position requirements include: current CDL, previous experience operating a snow-plow truck and plowing of roads preferred. Must be available for snowplowing on an as needed emergency basis as weather conditions warrant, including early mornings and weekends. The wage for this position up to \$25.00 depending on qualifications.

Applications can be obtained at the Pleasant Springs
Town Hall, 2354 CTH N, Stoughton, WI 53589.
Or online at pleasant Springs.org, under Announcements,
Phone # (608) 873-3063
E-mail: clerktreasurer@pleasant Springs.org

Applications must be received no later than
Monday, February 27, 2023 by noon. EOE

Musikk: Shows are set for an expanded 2023 season

Continued from page 1

expanded to 14 shows happening every Thursday between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

These days, the audience has swelled to over 300 fans every week ranging from infant to golden-ager. Along with great music, audience members bask in the fun energy of all the kiddos dancing near the gazebo, enjoy a variety of foods from local vendors, and book some quality time with friends, family and neighbors.

Gazebo Musikk started with a philosophy of exposing kids to a variety of music, perhaps some they may not hear at home. Watching young families fill the park every week and seeing how much kids love music are vibrant expressions of this philosophy.

The series has continued every year, even during 2020's Covid shutdown where shows were a drive-in style, held at the fairgrounds grandstand. Car horn honks replaced the audience applause but we would not be denied our Musikk!

Gazebo Musikk exists as a cooperative effort

between the City's Parks and Recreation Department and a citizen group of volunteers, Friends of Gazebo Musikk, led by Tom Veek.

The City incorporates Gazebo Musikk into its summer recreation programming and sponsorship opportunities - all the behind-the-scenes work. The Friends of Gazebo Musikk manage everything you can see - the bands, the food, the vibe.

All of the bands are paid by both the City and the Friends of Gazebo Musikk. When you see folks walking through the crowd passing out show schedules and collecting dollars, those are the Friends. Your dollars are used to pay the bands over and above what the City has budgeted.

This year, Friends of Gazebo Musikk are celebrating the series' 10th season with an inaugural winter concert from 3-6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25 at Mershon's Cidery with Stoughton's own "The McCloskey's on the mic. Middle Eastern food and ice cream will be available for purchase. No carry-ins are allowed.

Editor: De Laruelle has worked at the Courier Hub since 2013

Continued from page 1

editor and staff reporter for the four publications since starting with Unified Newspaper Group in 2013, which was purchased by O'Rourke Media Group in 2022.

De Laruelle has been working in the journalism industry for various

newspapers and business-to-business trade publications since 2003 and lives in Arlington with his wife, two fast-growing boys and two occasionally naughty cats.

Email him at sdelaruelle@wisconsinmediagroup.com.

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