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Sparta's Payton Johnson

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MONROE COUNTY HERALD

Your Local State Award-Winning Newspaper

VOLUME 164 | NUMBER 25

THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2023

TWO SECTIONS | 22 PAGES

Fighting for change

Family pushes for new law after daughter attacked at school

By JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ MORAN
Staff Writer
and BENNY MAILMAN
Editor

On February 10th of this year, an 8-year-old female student was tackled and dragged into the Boys bathroom, at Herrmann Elementary School, in Sparta, Wisconsin. The assailant was a nine-year-old boy. According to the girl's mother, Jessica Crandell, the 9-year-old boy received a 5-day suspension. While at a daycare, during those five days, the boy sexually assaulted a 4-year-old girl.

"Superintendent Russ told me that in the state of Wisconsin, there is no law about sexual assault being grounds for immediate expulsion in any school in Wisconsin," Crandell informed the Herald. "And because of his age, we cannot press charges against him. We are in a frustrating and difficult position, where that boy is still at the school. He is supposed to be one on one, but my daughter, who now wears a rape whistle, at age 8, and wears a 911 watch, has called us and said that she sees the boy, without any teachers around. And if the school tells me one more time, how much they are paying for the boy's counselor... where is the school board? Do they realize they are separate from the Superintendent? Where is the relief from this? for our daughter, us and other families?"

*Pulled from Wisconsin State Legislature website
https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/120/i/13?view=section*



Jessica Crandell, seen here with her daughter, Aralyn. The bill, if it becomes law, will be called Aralyn's Law. The family pushes forward, hoping for help from other citizens in order to reach their goal of 10,000 signatures. Contributed photo.

120.13 School board powers. The school board of a common or union high school district may do all things reasonable to promote the cause of education, including establishing, providing and improving school district programs, functions and activities for the benefit of pupils, and including all of the following:

120.13(1)(c)1.1. The school board may expel a pupil from school whenever it finds the pupil guilty of repeated refusal or neglect to obey the rules, or finds that a pupil knowingly conveyed or caused to be conveyed any threat or false information concerning an attempt or alleged attempt being made or to be made to destroy any school property by means of explosives, or finds that the pupil engaged

in conduct while at school or while under the supervision of a school authority which endangered the property, health or safety of others...

Jessica Crandell has found herself struggling with what to do since the attack on her daughter. Her first response was to go into "Momma bear mode." An amazing support group of family and friends, however, has helped her

Scan QR code for full excerpt of state statute 120.13

Scan QR code for link to Jessica's change.org petition

to find and create a path of positive action and change. Crandell went on to say, "I tried to get on the agenda for our district school board, but have thus far, been reduced to my 2-minute-public comment, where I speak and there is no discussion at all. I am trying to change the law, so that sexual assault committed by a student, whether inside or outside of school, should be grounds for immediate expulsion, not up for debate, like it currently stands. I need as many signatures as possible, to be able to have our state legislation hear me. At the same time, in that law, I want help for the perpetrator. We must be strong for all of the children."

The little girl's screams were heard, and a teacher immediately came to the rescue. Despite this, her family has seen a change in their daughter. Although the bruises from being thrown down and dragged have physically faded, she no longer wants to

'CHANGE' cont. pg. 4

Get out to the polls on Tuesday

By KYLE EVANS
Staff Writer

This year's Spring election campaigns have been a ruckus of "he did this, and she did that," as far as the State Supreme Court race between Janet Protasiewicz and Daniel Kelly. The letters in the mail, as well as television commercials, have been something out of a horror movie. On Tuesday, one of them will be named the new Supreme Court Judge of Wisconsin, taking the seat vacated by Justice Patience Drake Roggensack, who was elected in 2003.

With that being the big race for the state of Wisconsin, locally, there are some contested races as well. The Sparta School Board of Education has six candidates running, with three of the six being incumbents. The top three vote getters will serve a three-year term and the fourth most vote getter will serve a one-year term.

Also, in Sparta, there are a couple of contested races for city council. In District 8, David Kuderer is running against Gordan Dace (incumbent), and in district 6, Robert Arnold is running against Ed Lukasek (incumbent).

In Tomah, there are four candidates running for three spots, on the school board. Rick Murray, Susan Bloom and Mike Gnewikow are all incumbents running for re-election, with Jenny Walworth being the lone candidate who is not an incumbent. The top three vote getters will serve a three-year term.

Also, in the Tomah School District, voters will be asked to either approve or disapprove of a \$2.5 million operational referendum for the school district. If the referendum passes, it will allow the district to maintain their current trajectory with their operations. The referendum is \$2.5 million for each of the next four school years, totaling \$10 million.

In Cashton, there are three registered candidates for school board. Amanda Schulz Garcia and Sara Cook will be on the ballot, and Brandon Flock is registered as a write-in candidate. The top two candidates in this race will serve for a three-year term.

There are also some town and village board and president contested races throughout Monroe County, which could get interesting. To see what will be on your ballot, go to myvote.wi.gov. Make sure to vote on Tuesday, April 4th. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Herald will report on the election results in next Thursday's paper.

Sparta High School Junior Prom nears

Sparta High School's Class of 2024 is hosting Junior Prom this Saturday, April 1st. The event will be taking place in the Sparta High School Alton Ask Gymnasium. This year's theme is Hollywood Red Carpet. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The Grand March will commence at 7 p.m., with the dance to follow. The Junior Class is making special efforts to honor the memory of beloved classmate, J.D. Olson. They will also be hosting a miracle minute, to help fellow classmate, Emmett Brooks, as he is battling leukemia. There is a benefit account at 1st Community Credit Union, for Emmett Brooks, to help with medical and travel expenses.



Class of 2024's Junior Prom Court: Back row, from left: Isaac Rettler, Walker Green, Rhett Swenson, Christian Perez, Nathaniel Puzach. Front row, from left: Corin Milne, Lilly Steele, Serena Swenson, Celia Olbert, Kira Markuson, and Chloe Allen. Contributed photo.



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OBITUARIES

ANN M. WELLS

September 10, 1943 — March 26, 2023

ROCKLAND - Ann M. Wells, 79, of Rockland, WI, passed away Saturday, March 26, 2023, at Country Terrace in Black River Falls, WI. She was born September 10, 1943, to Elmer and Neva (Young) Olson. Ann was united in marriage to James R. Wells Sr. on August 26, 1961.



Ann Wells

Ann worked at St. Mary's Hospital (now Mayo Clinic Health Care) in Sparta, WI for over 25 years in the housekeeping department. She enjoyed baking, working in her flower gardens, painting, and collecting old junk.

Ann is survived by her daughters Debbie (Rick) Wells of Sparta, WI, and

Brenda (Michael) Klingler of Charlottesville, IN; a grandson, Anthony Klingler; great grandchildren Adrienne and Leo Klingler; and great grandbaby Odin, on the way; sister Sue Kniefl of Bangor; brother Pete Olson of Rockland; along with other relatives and friends.

Ann was preceded in death by her parents; husband, James Wells Sr.; son, James Wells Jr., sister, Jenny Fryseth; brothers, Harold, Emil, Bob, Bernie, and Mike Olson; and a grandson, Ricky Klingler.

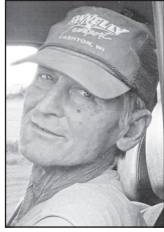
A Private Family memorial service is being planned. The Torkelson Funeral Home of Sparta, WI, is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences can be offered at www.torkelsonfuneralhome.com.

Torkelson Funeral Home

ALAN H. SCOTT

July 15, 1949 — March 19, 2023

TOMAH - Alan H. Scott, 73 of Tomah passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, March 19, 2023 at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, LaCrosse. He was born on July 15,



Alan Scott

1949 to Howard Eugene and Arlene Florence. (Johnson) Scott in Tomah. He was a member of the Tomah High School Graduating Class of 1967. On April 5, 1968, Alan was united in marriage to Sandra D. Marsh, together they bought a farm south of Tomah. In his early 20's, Alan started working in construction first as a laborer and later as an Operating Engineer with Local 139, which he was very proud to be a member of. He also had the heart of a farmer and the labor of love that came along with it. Never shying away from a hard day's work, Alan always kept himself busy with daily chores that came along with farming. He was an avid horse lover and enjoyed countless days tending to his team, with his beloved four-legged companion, Waylan was never too far behind. Alan

and his friend, Jr, spent a lot of time together with their horses assisting many folks. Shooting the breeze with family, friends and any stranger along the way, Alan always had a new story to tell. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather, who will be missed by all those that loved him.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy of Tomah, children, Randy (Lori), Chad (Wendy) and Tracy (Wade) Lambert all of Tomah, grandchildren, Derrick (Yen), Shelby (Cody) Stone, Mariah (Daniel) Riese, Hannah (significant other, Garrett), Caleb (Cassandra), Vince, Gianna, Haden, and Cortney, great grandchildren, Luna, Rosie, Carter and Hallie, sisters, Carol Tillotson, Judy (Bob) Geertsma, and Karla (Rob) Biller, in-law, Mike Marsh and Ruby (Jerry) Adkins. He is further survived by other relatives and many dear friends.

A Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date. Sonnenburg Family Funeral Home is assisting the family. Online condolences can be offered by visiting www.sonnenburgfamilyfh.com

Sonnenburg Family Funeral Home

MADONNA THERESA (ALTHOFF) HUNDT

March 25, 2023

BANGOR - Madonna Theresa (Althoff) Hundt, 94, of Bangor passed away peacefully on Friday, March 25 with her husband of 75 years, Arnold, holding her hand.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, April 1, 2023, 11:00 a.m. at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Middle Ridge, WI. Burial will follow in the church cemetery. Family and friends are invited for visitation Friday, March 31, 2023, 3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. at St. Peter's Church. Rosary will be prayed at 3:00 p.m. and visitation will begin immediately following and conclude at 7:00 p.m. Visitation will also be held at the church on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until the time of service.

Memorials may be given in Madonna's name to the St. Peter's Catholic Church; or to a charity of your choice.

The Torkelson Funeral Home of Cashton, WI, is assisting the family with details. Online condolences may be offered at www.torkelsonfuneralhome.com.

JEROME R. WHITROCK

January 15, 1955 — March 28, 2023

SPARTA - Jerome R. Whitrock, 68, of Sparta, died peacefully on Tuesday, March 28, 2023 at Tomah Veterans Medical Center, Tomah, with Jerome Whitrock family by his side. He was born on January 15, 1955 in Janesville, WI to Emery and Betty Lou (Niebuhr) Whitrock.



Jerome attended school in Janesville. He lived briefly in Marshfield, WI before spending the next 25 years in Sparta. He was a 23 year Air Force veteran.

Jerome is survived by his sister, Marcia Suchy (Jim);

and brothers, Jim (Mary), Jerry, and Jeff (Ginger). He was preceded in death by his parents; grandparents; sister Linda Lou; and many aunts and uncles.

A memorial service will be held on April 13th, 10:00 a.m. at Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Spooner. A luncheon to follow in Spooner. Online condolences may be offered at www.schanhoferfh.com

Lanham-Schanhofer Funeral Home and Cremation, Sparta, is assisting the family with arrangements.

Lanham-Schanhofer Funeral Home and Cremation

CHANGE

Continued from Front Page

spend extra time at school, and she has begun to hit. She is undergoing therapy, and the school is working with the Crandell family, to help her heal, and to help her feel safe.

Over a month has passed, and the attacker is back at school. Crandell wants to pass a law that requires expulsion after committing a sexually violent attack, with the ability to return only granted after therapy, and then upon examination and approval by a psychologist, stating that the attacker has reformed and is able to be a safe, nonviolent student.

In a school district that makes statements against bullying, a law like this makes sense. Crandell found herself against a wall, after asking to be heard and denied by the school board once, twice, three times in total. While frustrated, she understands and still supports the district and the board, who say that their hands are tied.

The Crandells do not want to seek vengeance and iterated those sentiments to the Sparta

Area School District Board, at Monday nights meeting, during her allotted 2 minutes of public comment. They are also not suing anyone. They just want a better and safer world for their daughter, and for all children. Not only would their progressive and compassionate law protect victims, it would also help attackers to heal and grow into functional, nonviolent adults. Jessica put a strong emphasis on helping the young boy.

The Crandells are a military family. Husband Mark Crandell put twenty years of service in, for our country. An army lawyer at Fort McCoy has offered support and guidance, regarding how to proceed with the first steps in crafting, writing and enacting a new law. What they need now are signatures on their petition and more people to step forward with similar stories, and support. Some businesses have already begun to step forward, offering special sales, to help raise money, and a GoFundMe page will be created. Once 10,000 signatures are collected, along with evidence of a need for this new law, through more

people sharing their stories. The Crandells' will soon approach a new lawyer in Madison: one with experience in writing new laws.

Jessica reported that another victim wrote to her, one whose voice was never heard. Without intervention, her attacker went on to commit many more sexual assaults. He grew into adulthood and was finally caught during one attack. He then committed suicide. His earlier victim believes that had she been heard, had the attacker been helped, many lives would have been far different, and his life could have been saved.

If you or someone you know has a story to share, please reach out to Jessica Crandell, on social media or via email, at Jessi03091981@gmail.com. Your story will be shared anonymously and will help affect positive change. If you know someone who can help or offer support in any way, including regarding crafting new legislation, please reach out. Anyone and everyone can take immediate action and help by signing the petition at: <https://www.change.org/jessicacrandell>.

At the time of writing this story, there were 2,633 signatures, with a goal of 10,000 signatures. The signatures are not relegated to Wisconsin residents, according to Jessica. "Share and share again, please. We just want to ensure the safety of all children," she stated.

Follow the story for updates on the law and to learn about more ways to help at <https://www.change.org/jessicacrandell>

The Monroe County Herald reached out to both the Sparta Area School District Board President, Anthony Scholze, and Superintendent Sam Russ, via email. From Board President Anthony Scholze, "Thank you for your inquiry regarding Mr. and Mrs. Crandell. At this time, I will defer to Mr. Russ for comment."

From Superintendent, Sam Russ, "Due to student confidentiality, I cannot go into the specifics of this situation. I can tell you that Sparta Area School District is dedicated to, and will work to have the safest learning environment for all."

Where there is a need, you will find a Lion

By JOHN GESSNER
Staff Writer

Lions Club International serves in over 200 countries worldwide, with over 1.4 million members in 4800 clubs. However, even though they are the largest international service organization, their focus is always on the community. Where you find a community, you will find a Lions' organization. In fact, where there is a need, you will find a Lion. There are 48 Lions clubs in District 2, which covers Monroe and its surrounding counties. They meet, both separately and in combined events, such as the district open house, which was held on March 27th, at the Sparta American Legion. By combining resources, the local clubs can have an even greater impact on the communities they serve.

Local Lions Clubs are involved in a variety of causes in their local communities. Historically, their projects have included adopt-a-highway cleanup, Boys & Girls club support, Brighter Tomorrows, Christmas for needy families, Deke Slayton bicycle and history museums, families first, food pantries, Freedom Honor Flights, holiday lights in the park, Monroe County dog shelter, plastic recycling, soup suppers, Sparta Area Cancer Support, libraries, Sparta Police Department, St. Clare Health Mission and tree planting, with the parks department.

At the open house, guests were introduced to many of the specific projects and causes that the Lions are involved in. The local Lions collect deer hides from hunters that can be sold to tanneries,

to make gloves and even fish lures. They are involved in the local food pantries, books for kids and Stuff-the-Bus, which brings in school supplies for students. Their donations go to support the Freedom Honor Flights, sending veterans to Washington D.C., as honored guests, to see the memorials built in their honor. The Lions are also strong promoters of diabetes prevention.

You will find the Lions at various community events, including the Kriskindmarkt, Butterfest, Concerts in the Park, and food booths supporting sporting events at Memorial Park. In fact, history tells us that the Lions "staked a claim" by building a shelter at Memorial Park, as a down payment in the 1950's. This allowed the city to purchase the park land from Northern States Power, and build the playgrounds, ballfields and aquatic center.

Several programs were highlighted at the open house. One fascinating project is that of vision care. This year, the Sparta Lions screened 1,209 students, at the Sparta area schools, using a special camera, which can photograph the eyes, to assist patients in receiving ophthalmology care. They partnered with the local Wal-Mart, to provide free vision exams to students and free glasses, totaling \$2200. Of particular interest, the Lions provided actual eye transport. If someone passes away and donates their eyes, these organs can be transported by Lions club volunteers, to hospitals in Wisconsin Dells, Eau Claire and Chippawa Falls. This gift of sight can be passed on to living recipients, to improve their own eyesight.



West Salem Lion Virgil Thompson (left) displays the Deer Hide collection program. Verne Nauman (right) displays the Diabetes Prevention Program. Herald photo by John Gessner.

In 1925, Hellen Keller addressed the Lions International convention, at Cedar Point, Ohio. She said, "This is the opportunity I offer you, Lions - to foster and sponsor the work of the American Foundation for the Blind. Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness, no little deaf blind child untaught, no blind man or woman unaided? I appeal to you, Lions - who have your sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind - will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind, in my crusade against darkness."

Almost 100 years ago, this became one of the Lions' core objectives. As such, in Wisconsin, a Camp was built in 1956 in Rosholt, Wisconsin, to provide a quality camping experience for persons with disabilities. The camp is free of charge and provides a week of camp activities geared to the particular need of the week's theme. The camp structures activities for adults and youth who are deaf or hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired, and those with intellectual disabilities or autism.

Additionally, they offer

camping to youth with diabetes and epilepsy. For more information about the camp go to: www.wisconsinlionscamp.com.

Heard from more than one parent with a child experiencing special needs or a disability, "I'd like to have my child go to a playground designed just for them." The Lions have stepped forward and their next big project is to construct an All-abilities playground, somewhere in the Sparta area. In the planning stages, the City of Sparta has budgeted \$300,000 to the cause and the Lions have raised \$22,000, so far. The goal is to raise a total of \$600,000. This will be their biggest local project ever. Donations can be sent to P.O. 15, Sparta, WI 54656.

If you are interested in becoming a Lion or finding out what the individual clubs are doing, the Sparta Lions Club meets every 2nd and 4th Monday, at the Sparta American Legion, beginning at 6:30pm. The Tomah Lions meets at the Tomah American Legion on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday beginning at 6:00 pm. To find another Lions club near you, go to: www.lionsclubs.org.

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KELLY, L. KUEHNE
March 27, 2023

NECEDAH - Kelly, L. Kuehne, 41, of Necedah, died suddenly on Monday, March 27, 2023.

A Memorial Service will be held on Friday, March 31st, 2023, 6:00 P.M. at the Oasis Church, 22547 Highway 21, Tomah. Pastor Steven Brown will officiate.

Relatives and friends are invited to call from 4:00 P.M. until the time of the service.

Online condolences may be sent to www.sonnenburgfamilyfh.com. The Sonnenburg Funeral Home is assisting the family with the arrangements.

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