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Muenster inducted into Shawano Speedway Hall of Fame

BY ANNIKA MORSCHAUSER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

GREEN BAY – Green Bay’s Eddie Muenster was inducted into the Racing Hall of Fame at Shawano Speedway on June 3.

Shawano Speedway inducts two people per year into their Hall of Fame.

Gordie Seegert, of Oostburg, was inducted along with Muenster this year.

Muenster’s racing career began at a young age as he started racing motorcycles at 12 years old in 1978, and continued to do so until 1988 when he switched over to racing dirt modified race cars.

The rest is history as he’s been racing for most of his life.

Due to current health issues, his racing has been put on hold, but he hopes to be back behind the wheel once he’s physically ready.

Throughout his racing career at Shawano Speedway, he’s been the champion of the IMCA Modifieds category four times – 1989, 2001, 2002 and 2003.

With his induction into the Hall of Fame, he joins his father, Jerry Muenster, who was inducted in 2010 and continues to race, as he took the track the Saturday.

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Eddie Muenster, at left, and Gordie Seegert with their Hall of Fame stones during the induction ceremony. Submitted photo



NEWLET Family Connections Chair Dr. Yolo Diaz speaks to the group on June 2 in front of the Green Bay Area Public Schools Office, calling for a larger voice in the decision-making process. Mike Hollihan photo

Group asks for equitable change in deciding the future of Green Bay schools

BY KRIS LEONHARDT/MIKE HOLLIHAN
PRESS TIMES STAFF

GREEN BAY – The Northeast Wisconsin Latino Educational Task Force (NEWLET), parents from Leonardo da Vinci for Gifted Learners and Wequiock Elementary Children’s Center for Environmental Science and members of the Hmong and Latinx community gathered at the front entrance of the Green Bay Area Public Schools (GBAPS) Office on

June 2 to ask for equitable change in deciding the future of the school district facilities.

Dressed in white in an act of solidarity, the group asked for a pause in voting on determinations presented by the GBAPS facilities task force, so an equitable change could be ensured — delivering statements in both English and Spanish.

“Today is a historic day because we are standing here in solidarity, from all backgrounds from

all ages, and we are here to send one message,” stated Steph Guzman, a member of the NEWLET.

“Each of us are standing here in solidarity aligned in stopping the vote on Schema 12.1 requiring that the board of education and the Green Bay Public School District address process transparency and communication concerns and are also requiring the development of a new schema

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Breaking the cycle: Intergenerational trauma and mental health

BY KRIS LEONHARDT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As generational cycles occur, negative patterns and traits are known to transfer through multiple generations via learned behavior, family dynamics and environment.

We continue to explore five northeast Wisconsin intergenerational family issues — physical health, alcoholism and drug use, mental health, education and housing — and what some

organizations are doing to address the trends.

NORTHEAST WISCONSIN – Intergenerational trauma is an emotional response to a deeply disturbing event that is passed down through generations and is often at the heart of family mental health issues.

While interpersonal trauma — abuse — can be a visible factor for mental health disorders, non-interpersonal emotional or

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A place for all to play

Seymour church works to build inclusive playground

BY RICK COHLER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

SEYMOUR – If all goes according to plan, all children in Seymour — regardless of their abilities — will have a brand new inclusive park and playground by this fall.

The state-of-the-art facility will

See PLAYGROUND page 8



A new inclusive playground is in the works adjacent to Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Seymour. Emmanuel Lutheran church rendering

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psychological trauma can appear silent or hidden, delivered through biological, social and psychological factors across generations.

This can result in distant parent-child relationships, complicated personality traits or personality disorders and negative repeated patterns of behavior.

The Duke University Office for Institutional Equity provides the following example of this type of transmission:

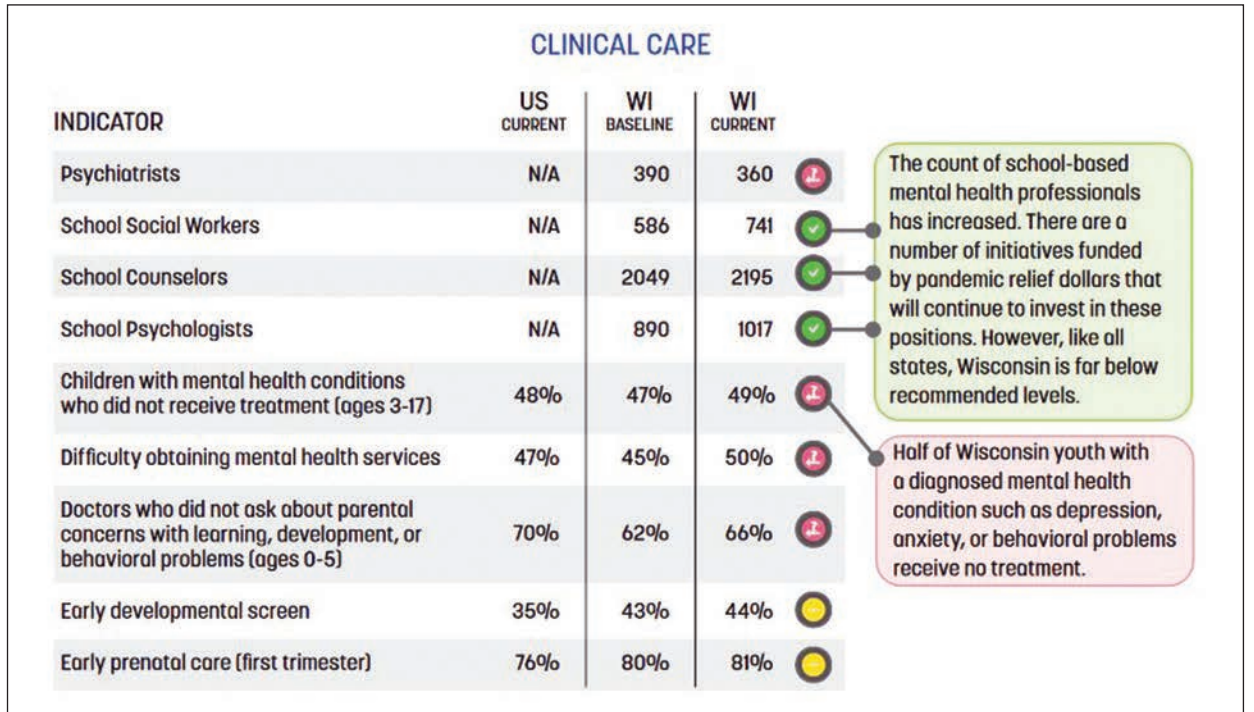
“Intergenerational trauma is a concept developed to help explain years of generational challenges within families. It is the transmission (or sending down to younger generations) of the oppressive or traumatic effects of a historical event. For example, a great-grandmother who was placed in a concentration camp in Germany may have learned to cope by ‘cutting off’ her

emotions. Because of this, this grandmother may interact with her family in an emotionally distant fashion. That relationship may be tumultuous, to say the least.

“The transmission of the historical trauma may begin to negatively affect her grandchildren and her grandchildren’s children, etc., leading to generations of emotional distance, defensive behaviors around expression of emotions and denial.”

A report from the National Library of Medicine, “Intergeneration trauma: A silent contributor to mental health deterioration in Afghanistan,” provides another example:

“The triggering traumas can be personal, such as intimate partner violence, or collective, as in war or genocide. Intergenerational trauma is passed down in complex and subtle ways through attachment re-



Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health diagram

lationships and within family and community groups. One study discovered that successors of Holocaust survivors had

shown changes in stress hormonal changes, indicating a change in their genetic makeup, implying that stressful experiences experienced by parents and grandparents can affect children even before they are born. Even after the threat has passed and they have resettled in a safe country, the body does not return to an unstressed state, and this response causes physical and psychological problems for future generations.”

Family dynamics can be key to the child’s development and the transmission of that trauma, as studies show positive childhood experiences, PCEs, and a healthy family environment can reduce the effect of adverse family experiences, or ACEs, such as intergenerational trauma.

The state of mental health

Early this year, Gov. Tony Evers declared mental health a “burgeoning crisis” affecting both students and families.

“We cannot overstate the profound impact that the past few years have had on our kids in many ways — and that includes their mental health. According to the Office of Children’s Mental Health’s 2022 Report, about a third of our kids experience feelings of sadness and hopelessness nearly every day — a 10% increase over the last decade,” Evers said.

“Kids in crisis are often distracted and disengaged in class, might not be able to finish their homework and won’t be able to focus on their studies at home or at school. Improving student mental health can also improve student learning outcomes and school attendance, while reducing bullying, risky behaviors, violence, involvement in the juvenile justice system and substance misuse.”

The Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health (OCMH) 2002 report stated that “school belonging is on the decline in Wisconsin. High school students are feeling less connected now than a decade ago. 40% of high school students in Wisconsin feel they do not belong at school.”

The report also found that screen time increased greatly during this same timeframe, partially due to reliance on technology in-

duced by the COVID-19 environment.

Extracurricular participation in activities such as sports, music, art, drama or afterschool clubs decreased from a five-year average of 68% to 64% in 2022.

OCMH said that these activities have a positive effect on mental health by improving self-esteem, resilience, social skills, school connections and academic performance.

The report also showed that while the number of school-based mental health professionals has increased, Wisconsin still lags behind in the recommended levels and half of the Wisconsin youth with a diagnosed mental health condition are not receiving treatment.

Data also shows that 34% of Wisconsin high school students feel “sad or hopeless” and nearly half — 48% — of LGBT youth have seriously considered committing suicide.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Children’s Bureau said that up to 80% of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, and Native American/Alaskan Native people report experiencing serious psychological distress 2.5 times more often than the general population in one month.

A Wisconsin Department of Health Services report reflects that increase in mental health services use in Brown County from 2,842 to 3,065; Door County from 478 to 535; Kewaunee County from 346 to 365; and Manitowoc County from 1,236 to 1,393, while Outagamie County decreased from 1,897 to 1,843.

Family Services of northeast Wisconsin said there is also a “huge discrepancy in access to mental health care in Wisconsin. Waitlists are weeks long, and the ratio of the population to mental health providers in Wisconsin is 440:1, 22.8% higher than the national average (the national average is 350:1).”

A 2022 University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute study backed that up, stating that there are 440 people for each mental health provider in the state.

What’s being done

Access to mental health programs, social connectedness and family dynamics play a large role in

breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma and other mental health issues.

OCMH said that “82% of Wisconsin high schoolers have an adult, besides their parents, whom they feel comfortable seeking help from. 67% of high schoolers have an adult at school they can talk to” adding that “just one accepting adult in the life of an LGBTQ youth can reduce their risk of a suicide attempt by 40%.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Wisconsin, which provides one-to-one mentoring for youth, said that when compared with their peers, youth matched with adults through their programs showed “84% improvement in socio-emotional competence, 82% improvement in avoidance of risky behaviors (and) 83% educational success.”

Family & Childcare Resource of N.E.W. works to support family child development through education and support.

Programs such as the Triple P Positive Parenting Program focus on family dynamics and helping families grow together.

Family Services of northeast Wisconsin makes mental health services accessible to the community and works to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

Family Services said they have received “over 45,000 plus calls, texts and chats across Wisconsin through the 988 Suicide Crisis Lifeline, which is housed within Family Services.

“In May of 2022, Wisconsin Lifeline became the primary call center for all 72 counties in Wisconsin. Three-digit dialing for 988 rolled out in July of 2022, making Wisconsin Lifeline easier to access and increasing call volume in the state. Wisconsin Lifeline calls increased by 26% following the rollout of 988, providing Wisconsin residents with life-saving crisis counseling at a moment’s notice. Our very own Crisis Center, which has served the region for 43 years, serves as the primary backup to Wisconsin Lifeline.”

This spring, Foundations Health & Wholeness added free mental health therapy services for foster parents and their youth, as well as biological parents who are associated with the Foster Care by Foundations program.

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Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health said that 82% of Wisconsin high schoolers have an adult, besides their parents, whom they feel comfortable seeking help from, which increases their chance for socio-emotional competence. Stock photo

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Project SEARCH celebrates success

BY MELANIE ROSSI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

GREEN BAY – Project SEARCH, a program designed to help young adults with disabilities prepare for and enter the workforce, recently hosted two graduation ceremonies for nine interns in the Green Bay area.

On Tuesday, May 30, five interns — Ashley Hollrith, Ashley Phillips, Hannah Platkowksi, Fabian Smith and Grace Weyenberg — graduated from Bellin Health/HSHS St. Vincent's Hospital, where they had worked as on-site interns for nine months.

At the Aurora BayCare Medical Center on Wednesday, May 31, four more interns — Angela Crowder, Drew Gustin, Kalista Izard and John (David) Jones — graduated from their on-site immersive work experiences.

Beginning at Cincinnati's Children's Hospital

in 1996, Project SEARCH is now an international program with 733 sites spanning 48 states and 10 countries.

In Wisconsin alone, 200 young adults had the opportunity to work at 28 sites during the 2022-23 year.

Jessica Klemens, the Project SEARCH program manager with Aspiro, said, "It really started as a program to serve individuals with developmental disabilities but also to help them find a purpose and be part of their community."

The program is highly collaborative, working with partners such as the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and Aspiro, the "license-holder for the Green Bay sites," Klemens said.

Green Bay's two sites, Bellin Health/HSHS St. Vincent's Hospital and Aurora BayCare Medical Center, allow their interns to develop transferable skills that can be adapted

to work in a variety of departments.

"It starts in the beginning of September, and it goes until the end of May," Klemens said. "In that time, there are three ten-week internships, and there are also some work weeks in between where they are doing job development, which includes filling out applications, creating a resume, gathering workplace references and then there is volunteering, job tours, interview skills — a variety of different things happen during those work weeks."

"The goal is to gain some of those hard skills that are needed; we call them transferable skills because the skills they are learning are skills that they will be able to take anywhere with them in work and life in general. So they are doing a lot of tasks in the different departments, but they have a variety of different environments that they are in throughout the hospital... They are in the NICU; they are in the ICU; they are also in environmental services and Food and Nutrition and everywhere in between."

The recent graduations marked the end of each intern's nine month training experience at their respective site and recognized each intern for their achievements, granting them their certificates of completion.

Klemens said, "Both celebrations had probably 80 to 100 people in attendance, and those people in attendance included some



Drew Gustin poses for a photo after the May 31 ceremony at Aurora BayCare Medical Center.

Submitted photos

of the collaborative partners of the program but also many of the hospital's staff, including supervisors and mentors and interns' families, friends and other supporters that they have in their lives."

These graduations — the culmination of each intern's training — mark a shift in the lives of each intern, as they prepare to enter the workforce.

"The goal of the program is to obtain competitive, integrated employment in the community — at least 16 hours a week or more. We have until February 28, of 2024 to help them to obtain that employment for it to be considered a success on Project SEARCH's terms."

For four interns, Project SEARCH can already be considered a success.

"Four of the nine interns are already hired and will begin working," Klemens said. "One has already started, and the other three will be starting in the next couple of weeks. The remaining interns who are still looking for employment will continue to look for employment weekly with our career specialist and attend interviews to help them find employment in the very near future."

While the financial benefits offered by future employment already highlight Project SEARCH's value, Klemens noted the more personal, subtle effects the program has been having for its interns.

"They find purpose, and they gain confidence — and, really, it shows. They go to interviews and are able to communicate effec-

tively to advocate for themselves, and a lot of times employers will contact us and ask us, 'Is there any Project SEARCH intern who is in this type of work?' They are highly sought after based on the skills that they learn through the program. A lot of the interns that complete the program, the jobs that they get following the program is the job they stay at long term... Many of the jobs that they've obtained they are still in today."

Project SEARCH works hard to help young adults with developmental disabilities find and secure stable jobs — and the graduation of the nine recent Green Bay interns acts as a testament to this goal.

To learn more about Project SEARCH, visit www.projectsearch.us.



Hannah Platkowksi speaks at the May 30 graduation ceremony at Bellin Health/HSHS St. Vincent's Hospital.

PLAYGROUND

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be on a site adjacent to Emmanuel Lutheran Church on Main Street but its story goes back a number of years according to church member Barry Kailhofer.

"We as a church really believe the Holy Spirit moved us into this," Kailhofer explained. "There was a young gentleman who ended up living with his grandpa in a house on a lot where this is situated. The young man had some problems and he spent a lot of time here; he'd come over and our custodian would give him things to do. When his grandfather died and the house had to be sold, we had a family that gave us the money to purchase the residence and their only request was that we do something with it to help people with special needs."

Kailhofer is the re-

tired owner of Kailhofer's Greenhouse and Flowers in Seymour, so he figured he could supply the greenery, but then discovered an inclusive playground needed different things.

"We ended up talking about people who have different needs; whether they were in a wheelchair or were autistic, and I was really moved by that first meeting. Not only did we have people who were willing to work on it, but we had people coming in and telling their stories about how hard it is when they go to parks but there is no way for their children to play on the equipment," he added.

Other strong support came from Alyce Dahlin of Nichols.

She and her late husband, Bernard, were the owners of Nichols Paper Printing and Converting Solutions, providing personal and company gifts to the project.

Another Emmanuel member, Mary Brown, said it was good to hear people's stories.

"What struck me was the sense of isolation that many of these people have," Brown said. "They can't take their kids to a park or to a movie — just the things that most families take for granted. Along with the park we want to develop some programming for their families and supply some supportive connections so they can meet with each other. A young mother talked about her isolation and said, 'I would just love to be able to come to a fenced park.' The fence was the biggest thing for many of the families so they could sit on a bench and watch their child play without worry and maybe converse with other parents who have the same struggles."

"We wanted the park to be open to the entire community and we wanted to

collaboratively plan it with the families giving us advice."

Brown said they consulted recreation experts, read a lot of literature and talked about it in devising the plans.

At first, restrooms were thought to be too large of an expense but families told them otherwise.

One parent told them if toileting was an issue, people would not use it. Plans were then revised.

"We did a total turn-around and said if we're going to stay true to our vision and meet the needs of these families an accessible restroom, changing table and an open-air pavilion is a must," Brown said.

"From there we had three goals: build a park with inclusive equipment, create ministries that would provide activities for kids built around movement, socialization and connecting people."

Emmanuel Pastor Ty Stoneburner added that two pieces of equipment are designed for older residents.

"We were hearing from people who are caregiving people who are on the other end of the spectrum," Stoneburner said. "They were finding the same feeling of isolation, so we reached out to Good Shepherd Services to see how the park might help with enrichment for the residents there."

The Emmanuel Lutheran congregation was quick to get behind the project.

Kailhofer said the church council decided to give a large interest-free loan to the project.

"The neat thing is I remember standing up at a council meeting and telling them it could be several years to accomplish the project," he recalled. "I am so happy I was so wrong! In December we signed a con-

tract with Lee Recreation of Cambridge.

"We'll be having a meeting and Sandy, our secretary, will come in and say 'I just got a check for \$3,000.' It's helping us to know we're on the right track," he said.

As for the congregation as a whole, Pastor Stoneburner said it is exciting because it has opened an opportunity to have honest conversations.

"We have learned together," he said. "It's been a good opportunity to hear lots of connecting stories and it's given a lot of people an opportunity to support this and to serve."

Other members of the Executive Council include: Brian Maas, Sandy Sachs, Lynette Stoneburner, Tanya Noll and Vern Ossmann.

For more information, visit seymourfaith.org/inclusive-park or Emmanuel Lutheran Church Seymour on Facebook.

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Through the "Get Kids Ahead initiative" state funding is being provided to public and independent charter schools to grow comprehensive school mental health systems to provide support and services for social and emotional well-being in Wisconsin school districts.

Through the initiative, school districts were eligible for a per-pupil alloca-

tion in funding.

In May, the Unified School District of De Pere (USDDP) selected Care Solace and its Care Companion program to expand the district's access to mental health and substance use treatment.

"Support for mental health issues is a top concern expressed to us by our community," says USDDP Superintendent Chris Thompson. "Care Solace has a proven track record of effectively coordinat-

ing mental health provider access for more than 300 school districts throughout the U.S. We believe they will be a valuable resource that our students, staff, families and community members can turn to in their time of need."

The program assists in navigating the mental health care system.

"It's hard to know where to begin and which provider would be a good fit. Then it can take weeks or even months to get an ap-

pointment. Care Solace is a single point of contact to help manage all the variables, and they can do it much more quickly than an individual can," added USDDP Director of Student Services Jerry Nicholson.

During Public Schools Week, Evers said no one working at the state level should say that we are doing enough in addressing the mental health crisis.

"Folks, 'enough' will be enough when these are not the statistics we're reading

about our kids in the news. It's time to get serious," he stated.

This story is part of the NEW (Northeast Wisconsin) News Lab's fourth series, "Families Matter," covering issues important to families in the region. The lab is a local news collaboration in northeast Wisconsin made up of six news organizations, which includes Green Bay Press-Gazette, Appleton Post-Crescent, FoxValley365, The Press Times, Wisconsin Public Radio and Wiscon-

sin Watch. The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay's Journalism Department is an educational partner. Microsoft is providing financial support to the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation and Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region to fund the initiative. The mission of the lab is to "collaborate to identify and fill information gaps to help residents explore ways to improve their communities and lives — and strengthen democracy."