

**It's that time again**

CHRISTMAS IN CASSVILLE IS SATURDAY, FOLLOWED BY BLOOMINGTON'S NIGHT ON THE TOWN DEC. 1, THEN LANCASTER'S NIGHT OF FROSTY CHEER DEC. 2

SEE ADVERTISEMENTS INSIDE

**Sports** SEE SECTION B

**Classifieds** SEE PAGES 18-20B

# Mayor holds forum on childcare

Community leaders come together to discuss how to deal with impending crisis

**BY DAVID TIMMERMAN**  
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

"We are heading towards a steep cliff in the next year," Mayor Stuart Harper tried to spell out the crisis slated to strike Lancaster in the coming months - the largest daycare facility in the city, which handles 59 children, will be losing its home for the past three decades, and there is no building currently in the community that can house them. One of the other facility daycares in the city, which handles approximately 20 more children, will see the building its in go up for sale next month.

The loss of any volume of those two

institutions would already exacerbate the problem of daycare that families in Lancaster already having to deal with - there simply are not enough spaces for children, and that impacts businesses in the community, and the very ability of the community to grow.

This is why Harper called myself, and other community leaders together this past week for a roundtable discussion trying to deal with the existing problem and impending crisis facing Lancaster.

For Harper, the issue was crystalized a few weeks before when he attended a League of Municipalities conference,

and one of the sessions dealt with the childcare crisis facing rural Wisconsin.

At the meeting were Gary Whittaker, who is part of the board for Maple Street Kids Daycare, Developer Ted Schacht, Lancaster Community School Board President Mike Steffel and his wife, Kristin, who also own Giggles and Wiggles Daycare, Grant Regional Health Center President Dave Smith with hospital staff, Lancaster Community Schools District Administrator Rob Wagner, Lancaster Area Chamber of Commerce Director Heather Bontregor, and myself.

Also at the meeting was Grant

County Board Chair Robert Keeney, who led a contingent from Grant County government, including C.C. Fishnick from Social Services, Orchard Manor Administrator Alesha Erdenberger, as well as Grant County Economic Development Director Rob Brisbois.

Flanked by City Administrator David Carlson, Harper saw the meeting as trying to deal with two issues - the pending problem that Maple Street Kids will and Little Prints Daycare might see (their building goes up for sale in December) of losing their home, and the immediate impact that may

have on families who have childcare services through them, and the wider problem of insufficient childcare in the community.

**The Maple Street problem**

Maple Street Kids was formed more than three decades ago by a batch of young teachers with the Lancaster Community School District who had young children they wanted taken care of while at work. With the 1994 building project that created the current Lancaster High School, that converted the 1961 high school building into Lancaster Middle School, moving most classes out of the 1925 Middle School Building that is attached to Winskill Elementary School.

In addition to allowing the district to move administrative offices into a school building, which had been housed elsewhere, those teachers took the opportunity to utilize the available space in the former middle school for Maple Street Kids, which not only handles younger childcare needs, but also handles after school childcare.

Last year, Lancaster Community School District moved to purchase the former Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative headquarters, which is adjacent to the high school campus, for the new location of the district offices, as well as the location for the district's buses, as well as storage.

That move, however, placed a timeline for the end of the 1925 former middle school building that Maple Street Kids has always resided in, as well as the SWCAP Head Start program. Head Start moved to a location in the current Middle School building, but the district had no room for Maple Street Kids in any of their facilities.

During a December district meeting of electors held to approve the purchase of the Scenic Rivers complex, the issues with the 1925 Middle School building were pointed out. Closing in on its 100th year of existence, the building still had its original roof, as well as its original boilers, both well past their life expectancy. The roof over the utility room at the rear of the building was leaking, causing damage to boiler units for Winskill (which have subsequently been moved into the elementary school), and district maintenance staff were uncertain how much longer the original building boilers (which at some point in their life had been converted to natural gas, would remain running.

Other, modest improvements made to the building, like an elevator installed in the 1980s for accessibility, and energy-efficient windows added in the 1990s, were showing their age.

Due to the nature of the purchase from Scenic Rivers, which did not get completed until this past September (as the cooperative finished their new headquarters) the district set having Maple Street Kids in the former middle school building until the end of June 2023, although the district changed the lease for the daycare to have a termination provision for 30 days, to allow the daycare to leave early if they found a new location, or if the boilers failed and the district wished to vacate the building before then.

For Maple Street, finding a new home in Lancaster has been all but fiscally impossible, Whittaker told the group. The buildings they investigated would need hundreds of thousands of dollars of modifications, and that would be for space they would be leasing.

Whittaker also noted these options were to bring those buildings to be able to handle their existing license of 75, but no possible room for expansion, which is needed for their viability.

"If we had the staffing and the room, we could expand as we have a really long wait list," Whittaker told the group.

Carlson stated that in the city's research on daycares, hitting a threshold of handling 125 children is important to the bottom line of a daycare facility, as it makes the expenses and the revenue more in check.

Whittaker said that they had done extensive research on the subject, which is why Maple Street Kids were attempting to move forward with constructing a new facility at Schacht Field.

Ted Schacht said that he was finalizing the estimated cost of building a new facility, which is expected to be finalized by the end of the year.

# Emergency crews rush to fallen hunter

911 system allowed pinpointing location

**BY DAVID TIMMERMAN**  
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

Lancaster Fire Chief Steve Braun recounted a rescue emergency responders made earlier in the day Monday, one that between the staff and technology involved, amounted to a quick recovery of a seriously injured hunter in the middle of the woods.

The call came in just after 9 a.m. Nov. 21, with a hunter who had fallen out of a tree stand at a location adjacent to Airport Road south of Lancaster. The hunter had struck their head, and had back injuries due to the fall.

Using their cellphone, the hunter was able to call the Grant County Dispatch Center, part of the Grant County Sheriff's Office.

"We have some of the most fantastic dispatchers," Braun said of the crew.

That group began working on relaying emergency responders to the scene, being able to pinpoint where the hunter was, calling a medical helicopter to respond, and have a fast response that Braun stated would not even be thinkable a decade ago.

The current 911 system came online in March 2017 to add mapping features to the system, as well as streamline the process for dispatchers and responders to operate more effectively. The final part of upgrades that included replacing the county's records, mapping, and telephone systems, the new dispatch system allows for pinpointing cellphone calls, and onscreen option lists that allow dispatchers to handle everything from selecting which medical helicopter service they wish to bring in, to tow service to come to a scene of an accident, bringing in county plowing crews, to paging neighboring fire departments to offer aid in an incident.

With Grant County fire departments utilizing the MABAS mutual response system, the 911/dispatch system also allows for a streamlined alert system for fire departments to call in exactly what form of mutual aid they need for a scene.

Braun explained how the system worked on Monday. When the hunter called into dispatch, dispatchers were able to send information to deputies, where the location of the person not only popped up on the screens of the computers in their squads, but also on their smartphones.

For firefighters, coordinates were sent to them via text to pull up the location on their smartphones in Google Maps.

"It was easier to follow the cops," Braun quipped when relaying the incident to the Lancaster Common Council Monday night.

As dispatch was alerting local emergency responders, they were also getting a hold of a medical rescue helicopter to race to the scene, able to prompt this on their displays at the dispatch center.

Before the current system was installed, a dispatcher would have had to pick up a telephone, look up the number, and call that service.

Braun stated that the closest helicopter at the time was in Portage,



# The Duty Dozen

Well, actually 14 area veterans take part on Badger Honor Flight

**BY DAVID TIMMERMAN**  
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

"It was something," Don Dressler knows he is underselling the experience he and 13 other area veterans went through at the end of last month, when they participated in the Oct. 29 Badger Honor Flight to Washington D.C., where they saw numerous memorials, monuments, and Arlington National Cemetery.

With his fellow veterans, as well as his son and grandson, Dressler, who served during Vietnam, said the experience, including the welcome they got both when they arrived to the Nation's Capital, as well as when they got back, was the welcome he and his fellow soldiers did not get when they returned from southeast Asia when their tour was up.

"It was 52 years late, but it was something to see," Dressler said, noting when they returned to the Dane County Regional Airport, he estimates there were 3,000 people greeting them, shaking their hands as they deplaned.

Started nearly 20 years ago, the honor flight program was created as a way for veterans to be recognized with a free trip to Washington, and given a chance to see the memorials and monuments created to recognize the sacrifice each generation has made to their country.

Badger Honor Flight has been flying veterans since 2010. Area veterans turned to the Madison-based group after the Dubuque Honor Flight disbanded in 2014 (it has since relaunched this past year).

Fellow veteran Dave Peterson got involved with the Badger Honor Flight program to recognize his childhood friend, and fellow veteran Phil Baus, and the pair were on a flight together in 2018. Baus passed away weeks after that flight, and Peterson wanted to make sure other veterans got the opportunity to be recognized in that way.

Peterson and Mike Lieurance had begun working on getting veterans signed up after that 2018 trip, getting a total of 18 submitted.

Then COVID hit, and the flights were temporarily suspended.

Peterson said he thought that once they started up again, those names of veterans would be divvied up on the following flights. Jerry Swab and Chuck Swab were selected for the Sept. 17 flight, but for the 14, they were selected to be part of the Oct. 29 flight.

"When you go as a group of veterans, it adds to the experience," Lieurance said, one of the individuals who went last month.

Honor | SEE 5A

Braun explained how the system worked on Monday. When the hunter called into dispatch, dispatchers were able to send information to deputies, where the location of the person not only popped up on the screens of the computers in their squads, but also on their smartphones.

For firefighters, coordinates were sent to them via text to pull up the location on their smartphones in Google Maps.

"It was easier to follow the cops," Braun quipped when relaying the incident to the Lancaster Common Council Monday night.

As dispatch was alerting local emergency responders, they were also getting a hold of a medical rescue helicopter to race to the scene, able to prompt this on their displays at the dispatch center.

Before the current system was installed, a dispatcher would have had to pick up a telephone, look up the number, and call that service.

Braun stated that the closest helicopter at the time was in Portage,

Above, some of the contingent from Grant County pose for a picture during the Badger Honor Flight trip they took at the end of last month. Honor Flight recognizes the service of veterans by providing them a trip to the memorials and monuments in Washington D.C.

Right, after they returned, many of the families of the veterans greeted them at Dane County Airport, including the family of Joe Reuter.

Photos provided



Response | SEE 3A



# Childcare

FROM PAGE 1A

million for a facility that could handle 125 children.

Whittaker noted that in working with their bank, they would be able to borrow one-third of the cost, and then would look to fundraising and programs to help cover the rest.

Harper and Carlson stated they were exploring different programs that may help in funding the project, but did not give specifics.

It was stated at the meeting that the school district extended the timeframe for the daycare, giving them up to October 2023 to find a different space, but that still presents a daunting timeline of 11 months for Maple Street Kids to line up \$1 million in fundraising, grants, and other program funding, break ground, and construct a new facility.

Harper noted the urgency in making something happen for the facility - not finding any place for them means 59 children do not have a place to go, any smaller place where they could not handle that number means some of those families left out in the cold.

## Assistance programs getting in the way

Another issue when it comes to finding a childcare solution is one program meant to help families in need of childcare who work paycheck to paycheck have to deal with a program that often times hinders them, instead of helping.

Fishnick oversees the assistance programs at Social Services, and she took to pointing out the issues with YoungStar, the state's rating and assistance system.

"YoungStar negatively impacts childcare," Fishnick said. "There are a lot of hoops you have to jump through."

For many childcare providers, getting approved with the program is so difficult, and with the level of demand such for childcare already, going through the process is not worth it.

But not being approved means that families that use assistance programs either have to pay for daycare out of pocket, or are out of luck.

School-run childcare facilities do not need to go through the normal licensing other types of daycare facilities have to, because they are under the umbrella of the Department of Public Instruction. Fishnick pointed out, however, because they are not licensed, assistance programs will not cover their fees, which means many families cannot use them.

Even programs like Lancaster Preschool, since they are not in the daycare category, run into issues with some assistance programs.

## County coordination?

During the League of Municipalities conference, Harper said that he listened to a presentation that was conducted by the City and County of LaCrosse, who worked together to handle their own childcare problems.

Their solution was to create

a childcare coordinator to focus on all sorts of items related to childcare, from reviewing and presenting information to families about available options within the county, to helping with funding options.

"None of us can afford that position," Carlson said, noting the tight budgets of all local governments. He added, however, that if something was created, similar to economic development, where communities gave some funding, along with the county, a position could be funded to assist with countywide efforts.

"We are all here for the same reason," Keency said, but noted that for this issue, none of them have this task assigned to them, while the duties of the governmental entities are extensive. "The challenge is we have other things to do."

## A problem bigger than each

Bontregor noted that while the impending loss of space for Maple Street Kids is what brought this issue to the forefront at this moment, that the problem has been ongoing for many years, and even if Maple Street Kids were able to build their facility and get running, there are still many families who would still need to find childcare, as those additional spaces would not fulfill the need.

And the need was varied and extensive. During the meeting, individuals raised the issue that not only do families have needs for younger children, they also have needs for school-age children having a place to go after school while their parents may be at work.

Kristin Holman-Steffel, who works at Schreiner Memorial Library, notes that a number of children come to the library after school, as that is the place they go while their parents are still at work.

Others brought up that while normal work-day childcare care is insufficient for the needs of the community, for those families who work second or third shift, childcare for them is practically non-existent outside family or friends.

## Fund 80

One of the items I brought to the discussion was looking at a provision that the Lancaster Community School District has open to them for funding sources on childcare, Fund 80.

Fund 80 is a provision that allows the school district to have an additional tax levy, outside the state-imposed levy caps, to use for 'community good.' In other communities, the provision has been used to fund senior programs, summer recreation programs, and in a growing number of places, to act as a guaranteed funding source for childcare programs.

Many communities are apprehensive to use this funding provision, concerned about taxing residents on items that are outside the normal responsibilities the school district is tasked to do.

Lancaster Community Schools has diminished its use over the years, to at this point it is not being used at all, Wagner told the group.

It had been used to give the city some funding for summer

recreation programs.

Southwestern School District had utilized Fund 80 to be a funding source for its childcare program. Ultimately, however, the school district saw enough revenue generated by daycare fees to not have to use the levy.

Fund 80 has its own limitations, however. For one, it cannot be used for capital projects. Southwestern had classrooms that were converted over for daycare space under the school budget, whereas there are not the available spaces within the school district buildings in Lancaster.

Over the course of the meeting, the group created a list of problems they see Lancaster has related to childcare, which included the overall lack of childcare spaces for families, the lack of any available space for a childcare facility to move into without extensive, expensive work, the lack of available labor to staff childcare facilities (for example, Maple Street was running below its licensed capacity of 75 because it did not have enough staff).

While no easy actionable items were brought forward at the meeting, Harper hoped that it was a good start to bring everyone together, and begin working on the issue so that this time, something may happen.

He wanted to get people involved in different aspects of the issue, playing to their strengths and interests.

He also wanted to see about getting businesses involved. With the exception of Grant Regional, no other business outside the childcare industry was there (with the exception of media) which Harper was disappointed in.

After all, one of the key aspects Harper felt childcare was such an issue is its impact on economic development. Businesses cannot recruit employees if there is not sufficient childcare available, and both businesses and people will not look to move to, or stay in a community which cannot handle their childcare needs.

No date was set for the next meeting.



A 1912 image of the Mt Hope School. The Adventist Church is at the left. There is a wood pile and an outhouse on the right. There is a wonderful belfry and three chimneys crowning the building. There is a ladder attached to the right rear of the building. A fire escape that is a bit short of meeting code?

# Revisiting one-room schools

## Part 2

We have many photos of Grant County schools, pictures of the students, and pictures of the buildings. There is an early 20th century collection of glass plate photos, which include every schoolhouse in the County. Unfortunately, it was donated to the Wisconsin State Historical Society and Grant County folks have had a difficult time retrieving them to maintain in-house access.

The second page of the November 2022 issue of the Grant County Genealogical Society's publication, Grant County Heritage, is titled "One Room School Project." It notes the following:

"The committee has been working diligently on the One Room School House project. Our goal is to have the book finished in the spring of 2023. This book is our attempt to organize the schoolhouses that were part of Grant County from the mid 1800's to the early 1970's. Consolidating and creating this book will complement the research which Helen Jentz began in 1991. This book will be indexed by municipality with past and present pictures

## GRANT COUNTY HISTORY

### HISTORICALLY SPEAKING...

BY JON ANGELI

along with directions for each schoolhouse location (or estimated location).

"The probable charge will be \$20 for the book to cover our printing costs. We would like to hear from you if you would be interested in purchasing this book. Contact Chris Carl, 3244 County Rd E, Stitzer, WI 53825-9802 or [mccarl@centurylink.net](mailto:mccarl@centurylink.net)."

The featured photo this week is Public School Mt. Hope, Wis. The c. 1976 Mount Hope Memories includes eleven pages under the title "Mount Hope School Photographs" and thirty-seven separate photos. The photos date from 1886 to 1917.

It tells on page 30 the story of today's photo's building:

"The rock school was struck by lightning and destroyed August, 1885. The Union Free High School was organized in 1876. A two story frame school building

was erected about 1876 and opened in 1877. M.B. Phillips, Boscobel, and Lizzie Howes were the first teachers. The lower floor was used for the grades and the upper floor for the high school. When the brick school building was opened January 13, 1913, the old building was moved to main street to the site of the fire station. The first floor was converted to a hardware store. The second floor was used for a meeting room for the Masonic and Eastern Star Lodges, a dentist's office, and a living apartment. The building burned in 1940."

Today's school speaks to us in the message on the back. It is postmarked Feb 14 1912 MOUNT HOPE WIS and addressed to Mr. Harvey Groom, Cassville, Wisconsin:

"Do you want me to get homesick up here? Nobody writes to me. I telephoned to Dona Sat. but she had gone to Cassville to the dentist. There is lots of scarlet fever around here. This is a picture of my place of business."

We wonder if the writer [Estell] is pictured among the many photos in the c. 1976 History?

## RANDY'S TAXIDERMY

Game Heads • Game Birds • Small Mammals  
Wisconsin Licensed  
Deposit Required  
**822-3967 - Fennimore**



**Your comfort. Our company.**

SERVICES WE OFFER:

 **HEATING**  
 **AIR CONDITIONING**

 **PLUMBING**  
 **ELECTRICAL**



WANT TO GET TOGETHER?  
**1-888-822-3258**  
SERVING SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN SINCE 1958

CELEBRATE

# FARM

## Classics



**Submit a photo to feature your classic tractors**

Join us in celebrating our Farming Heritage in Southwest, WI on Dec. 12 as a part of Farm Finale Winter Ag Section. We will dedicate a portion of the section to feature antique tractors. The Section will be delivered in selected rural areas of The Reminder, Round-Up and Republican Journal.

**COST TO ENTER:**

**1 or 2 Tractors \$10.00**

**3 or 4 Tractors \$15.00**

**5 or 6 Tractors \$20.00**

**ENTRY DEADLINE:**  
Thursday, Dec. 1st

**Reminder**

P.O. Box 310, Lancaster, WI 53813

**REPUBLICAN JOURNAL**

316 Main St, Darlington, WI 53530

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Make: \_\_\_\_\_

Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Tractor Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card\*  
  Check  
  Cash

\* 4% Charge will be added to your total when you use credit card

## EDGE ELECTRIC SERVICE, LLC

### JOHN EDGE

Office: (608) 723-2445  
Cell: (608) 732-3377  
[edge.john50@gmail.com](mailto:edge.john50@gmail.com)

1550 Industrial Park Road  
Lancaster, WI 53813

GOT BODY DAMAGE?

We Can Help!



CALL 723-6800

YOU'LL LIKE OUR GUARANTEE!



1175 HWY 61, LANCASTER, WI