



Potosi Boys keep rolling

SEE SPORTS

Lancaster EMS sees calls double over decade

SEE PAGE 3A

Destruction in 1876 Hazel Green

SEE PAGE 4A

Lancaster, time to make your view on childcare heard

COMMENTARY BY DAVID TIMMERMAN

Ok Lancaster, this is it. We are at the point where everyone who wants something to happen needs to speak up now, or forever hold your peace.

I don't know if we have months, weeks, or even less, but when it comes to handling the issue of childcare in this community, what I know is that we do not have years.

We had years, well two at least, when I first sounded off about this after the December 2021 Meeting of Electors for the Lancaster Community School District, when 61 people approved buying the former Scenic Rivers headquarters.

I wrote this for the Dec. 9, 2021 edition of the Herald Independent.

"The clock is ticking on this. Unless there is a boiler, Lancaster Community Schools will no longer have any offices in the former middle school building by the summer of 2023. That will mean the potential of Maple Street Kids losing their space any time after that (the district has said they will keep the building up for an undetermined amount of time, but really, this is the deadline)."

It was clear to me at that moment this was always going to be where we were going to be. To be honest, I gave the school district too long of time to make the move.

The school district believes that this has been a sufficient amount of time, and the time is to bring it all down. And they believe that was the directive when 61 of you voted to approve that purchase.

So did you? Now is the time to speak up, either that you agree with that, or you don't because when the building is gone, it won't matter.

At least tell me, because that is not what I remember hearing that night.

What I remember hearing was that a vocal number of you wanted to make sure daycare was taken care of. I heard that you didn't want to have the families of 60 children left not knowing what they would do.

It is why for the past year-and-three-months I have been the canary jumping up and down in the coal mine trying to raise the awareness to this danger. I have written front page editorials about this subject, I have written stories about how other communities have tried to tackle daycare, I have written about different possible funding methods.

I have held meetings that did not get a lot of people to attend. I have tried to get anyone involved in this.

Along with the Lancaster Area Chamber of Commerce, I conducted two surveys. The survey with parents showed that there is a great need in this community for childcare.

Losing 60 slots is not going to make it any better.

So Lancaster, what do you want to do. Again and again Friday night, I was told that people in this community do not want the school district involved. I asked, in the most generic sense allowed, what can the Lancaster Community School District bring to the table to assist in childcare.

I wasn't looking for the school district to handle the issue single-handedly, I just wanted to see what was willing and possible.

I was told one word. "Nothing."

They said they wished to help in any way they could, the caveat was added that as long as it didn't cost the district anything. Certainly not the cost of utilities. Definitely not any cost of upkeep for space.

Awhile back they said they would drive buses to daycares after school.

That is it.

Commentary | SEE 10A



The sun is setting both literally and figuratively on the 1925 Lancaster Middle School Building, also known as the Winskill Annex. The Lancaster Community School District has stated they plan to tear the building down, and it may not standing on what would have been its 100th anniversary of its opening.

Time running out for Maple Street Kids

District states their plans to raze Winskill Annex

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

The 1925 Lancaster Middle School Building west of Winskill Elementary School is going to be torn down, that much is clear.

During the district's Building and Grounds Committee meeting Friday night, the only question was when it would happen.

That question hinged on whether or not one of the building's occupants - Maple Street Kids Daycare - could raise money in a timely fashion for their own building project.

If not, the school district did not want to risk having the issue drag on without an end in sight, and may stop all use of the building by the end of September.

With the word 'disband' being used at the meeting by the head of the board of Maple Street Kids, it may mean that families of the 59 children who use the childcare facility will have to find an alternative provider by this fall in a market already short of spaces.

"I wanted to talk to them about moving forward," District Administrator Rob Wagner told the committee at the start of the conversation about the 1925 Middle School Building, which also served as the high school prior to when the 1960 High School Building was constructed. It returned to being the middle school until the 1994 High School was built. It then served as classrooms for the elementary school when there were larger classes, was the home of the district's administration offices until the end of last year (as well as the offices of the district's information technology department before that was contracted out) as well as the home of Maple Street Kids Daycare since it was created by Lancaster teachers needing childcare for their young children.

Currently, Maple Street and the school's physical education program occupy the building, as well as the

Snackpaks for Backpacks program. Wagner stated that the physical education classes were there because the district could not shut down the utilities to any section of the building, which meant they would be heating the space whether they used it or not.

Wagner said that a curtain system was installed in the main gymnasium, and they could move classes there next

The district does not plan to make any major repairs to the boilers, since they plan to vacate the building completely, nor would they replace anything either.

"What if something goes down?" Wagner asked. "How would that fall back on the district on a building that we don't need, and won't be standing any longer?"

Gary Whittaker, president of the Maple Street Kids Board, talked about how during their fundraising, they are attempting to get potential donors under the understanding that the daycare could use those funds to help cover some maintenance of the 1925 Building, while they were also raising for their \$1.9 million building project slated to be erected at Schacht Field. That fundraising was still in its nascent stages - Whittaker estimated they had raised about \$15-\$20,000 thus far this year, when they started working on the project. Maple Street also has a matching grant pledge of \$400,000 for the first \$400,000 they raise.

"What kind of guarantee is it that you can fundraise 1.9 million in a year?" Wagner asked Whittaker, referencing the request Gary made at last month's school board meeting. Whittaker wanted the district to keep the school open through the end of 2024 so they could fundraise this year, and build a new daycare facility next year.

Wagner was concerned about the timeline for the fundraising project. He was not only concerned about the looming boiler issue, but the fact that the district was subsidizing the daycare.

Under the revised lease the district has with the daycare, the ability to vacate the contract was reduced from 90 days to 30, and the indication was that if the boilers would have failed sometime over the winter, that would essentially be the end of the use of the school building.

Daycare | SEE 7A

"If you don't want us to stay and you knock the building down, we will have to close the center."
Maple Street Kids Board President Gary Whittaker

week, if needed.

Every other user of the building has since been moved. Special Education administration offices were moved out in the last month to the new offices at the former Scenic Rivers headquarters. That had followed the district offices that had moved in the past few months, and individual offices that were moved into new office space in the old presentation room. This past summer the boilers that heat Winskill were moved out of the annex's utility room, while SWCAP's Head Start was moved to the 1960 Middle School building.

Wagner stressed the district's concern about the boiler system for the school. While the building is in good structural shape, the longevity of the main systems that heat the building and its hot water are way past their life expectancy, and if they failed, it is unknown if they could ever be repaired to start up again.

The building's boilers are believed to date back to the school's opening in 1925. They were originally coal-fired units, that were converted at some point to natural gas. Currently, the boilers are cycled on and off during the day, rotating so only one is going at a time.

The biggest concern is that both will fail eventually, and literally leave the building in the cold.

Body of Ronald Henry found

Autopsy being conducted to try to determine cause of death

BY STEVE PRESTEGARD
EDITOR@THEPLATTEVILLEJOURNAL.COM

ELLENBORO — The body of Ronald Henry, 34, who had been missing for three months, was found Sunday afternoon about one mile south of the farm where he had been staying.

Henry's body was found by a 14-year-old boy who had been walking in the woods looking for deer antlers, according to a Grant County Sheriff's Office news release.

Sheriff's detectives identified Henry's body, according to the news release. An autopsy will be conducted to determine the cause of death, the news release said.

Henry had been missing since Dec. 5, when he left the farm on Condry Road north of Platteville where he had been staying since arriving in the area Dec. 1. Henry was last heard from in a cellphone voicemail Dec. 5 and a cellphone ping Dec. 6.

No trace of Henry had been found despite searches of almost 3,000 acres of land involving K9s, airplanes, a helicopter and drones and on foot, as well as interviews of about 50 people.

Henry's body was found just outside the search zone.

"We utilized the data analysis the Wisconsin [Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation] did for us on the cell phone data," said Sheriff Nate Dreckman. "That data analysis provided a cone-shaped area that it was thought the cell phone was in. He was located just outside of the cone shape, so that area was not searched back in January."

The Sheriff's Office received a report Dec. 7 of a missing person from rural Platteville. The Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Unit compiled a report of Henry's last moments before going missing — Henry arrived in the Platteville area from Milwaukee Dec. 1 to work for a few weeks to earn money for a sporting event to which he had won tickets.

Henry was last seen Dec. 5 around 3 a.m. after returning home from a social gathering. Henry reportedly awoke a man at the farm around 3:30 a.m. because dogs were crying outside and needed help.

By around 7:30 a.m., Henry was no longer at the residence.

Henry left a voicemail with a phone on the farm Dec. 5 around noon in which he asked the home owner to "Give me a call back as soon as possible."

Henry had been making plans to meet with friends in the Platteville area, so the people he was staying with initially believed he may have followed up on these plans.

Henry's cellphone pinged Dec. 6 around 8:20 p.m., but the cellphone has not been found, according to media reports.

When no one had seen Henry for two days, friends contacted law enforcement Dec. 7.

An immediate search of the area where Henry was last known to have been was conducted by multiple officers and a drone using its thermal capabilities. The next day, an expanded area search was conducted using a helicopter from the University of Dubuque Flight School, tracking/human remains K9 from Richland Center police, and Sheriff's Office personnel.

On Dec. 17, Search Teams of Wisconsin provided nine personnel and seven K9s trained in locating human remains. These were from K9 Emergency Response Teams, Wisconsin K9 SOS Search and Rescue, and Minnesota-Wisconsin K9 Search and Rescue. During that search, nearly 300 acres of land were searched.

On Jan. 4, the state Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation assisted in a case review

Henry | SEE 2A

Hearings

FROM PAGE 5A

The public hearing schedule is:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5
WAUKESHA EXPO CENTER
1000 NORTHVIEW RD

TUESDAY, APRIL 11
UW-EAU CLAIRE STUDENT CENTER
OJIBWE GRAND BALLROOM 77
ROOSEVELT AVE.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12
WILDERNESS RESORT
SANDSTONE MEETING ROOM
45 HILLMAN ROAD,
WISCONSIN DELLS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26
LAKELAND UNION HIGH SCHOOL
9573 STATE HIGHWAY 70,
MINOCOUA

The public hearings will begin at 10 a.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. Attendees will be asked to fill out a form upon arrival to be added to the queue to testify.

The JFC has also created an online portal for constituents to provide input. All entries will be circulated to the full committee: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/>

The JFC has also developed a dedicated email address for input only: budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov and all emails will be circulated to the full committee.

Bowman

FROM PAGE 2A

police when he was arrested. Bowman was taken to Southwest Health for medical clearance, but at the hospital after getting two cups of water he spat the second cup at an EMT. Bowman also tried to leave the hospital after getting out of the ambulance, the criminal complaint said.

UW-Platteville police assisted Platteville police at the scene.

Bowman pleaded not guilty Jan. 13 to battery or threat to a judge, prosecutor or law enforcement official, disorderly conduct, criminal damage to property, resisting or obstructing an officer, and four counts of misdemeanor bail jumping.

Police were called to the Super 8 Dec. 19 around 8:30 a.m. for a report that a guest had made threats to other guests and staff. Bowman had barricaded himself inside a room and had damaged property, police said, and made other threats and refused to leave.

Bowman also faces Dane County charges of disorderly conduct — use of a dangerous weapon and resisting or obstructing an officer, for an incident Dec. 4. A pretrial conference is scheduled for March 15. He was free on \$500 signature bond with the condition he not threaten or engage in acts of physical violence against four people, according to court records.

Daycare

FROM PAGE 1A

The district spent roughly \$11,000 on utilities for the Annex Building for the first two months of the year. Committee member Dean Noethe noted that before the building was vacated by the different district offices, that cost would have been spread out over other entities, and during the discussion it was noted the district cannot shut down any portion of the building, given the way it is designed.

Wagner noted that the rent charged to Maple Street is only \$1,250 a month. The new former Scenic Rivers complex, which includes a shop for the buses, cost \$8,800 for utilities the past two months by comparison.

During that exchange, Whittaker talked about closing the daycare.

“If you don’t want us to stay, and you knock the building down, we will have to close the center,” he replied.

During his part of the discussion, Whittaker revealed that the one location everyone assumed may work for them, the former Shopko Hometown store on the northern edge of the city, was not feasible cost-wise, as requirements for a childcare facility would mean structural improvements too costly for them.

Whittaker noted he had initial plans lined up to move into that building with another business, but a review by a structural engineer showed the building would need reinforcements that it did not have when it was built as a store in the 1990s.

“It shut it all down,” Whittaker stated of that review.

That was the third time the daycare attempted to find an existing building in the community to utilize. The previous two needed approximately \$400,000 of remodeling to meet the codes daycares need, and would not have allowed them to expand.

“We have a fiscal responsibility for the people who fund our school,” Wagner said, noting that money being spent to subsidize the daycare is taking away from other programs for the district. “If there is any way to help daycare without costing the residents of our district.”

Committee member Dean Noethe stated that he didn’t think the problem should fall on the school district. “It’s not a school district issue. It’s a city issue,” Noethe said.

“It is a community issue,” Committee Member Mike Steffel revised.

Steffel noted that he and his wife own the property that the community’s third largest daycare, Giggles and Wiggles is in, and that the way daycare is, it is not a money-making venture. “You get into it because you love kids,” Steffel said. “Daycares are not publicly funded.”

Steffel pointed out

that there is no space in the community that could accommodate Maple Street Kids at their size, not even two buildings.

Given the idea that Maple Street will not be able to raise enough money in an adequate timeframe, the committee wondered about giving the parents of the 59 children using the program enough time to find another place.

“If September is the deadline, we have to give parents notice,” Adam Arians said.

“Sometime we have to rip that bandaid,” Wagner said.

Wagner stated to Whittaker that he should go back to the daycare board, and look to see if they can raise the money so it would only be one year, as well as to see if money raised can also go to help cover the monthly expenses for operating the 1925 Building in the meantime.

No desire to retain 1925 Building

What was made clear during the meeting was that for the school district, there was no reason to keep the 1925 Building up any longer than they need to.

Whittaker asked if the school district would be open to handing the structure over to the daycare so they could renovate that instead.

Wagner said they would not, and that their plan is to remove the building, and deal with the longstanding issue of parking for school staff.

“Residents don’t like them on the street,” Wagner said of the staff parking in surrounding neighborhoods, before he inadvertently channeled Joni Mitchell when he said of the building that they would “knock it down and make it into a parking lot, so they have a place to park everyday.”

After the meeting, Wagner was asked if entities came forward with sufficient funds to renovate the building to still be owned and used by the school district, as well as to have space to lease to the daycare, and Wagner said, “I would advise giving the money to (Maple Street) for their project.”

What the electors said in 2021

Wagner said he believed that the district gave the daycare sufficient time to come up with alternatives, intimating that the district knew it was going to shutter and demolish the Annex as early as September 2021. Wagner said he talked with Jim Muench of Maple Street, who was the president of the board then, and he told him that the daycare would need to find a new home, as the district was going to purchase the Scenic Rivers property.

The district held a meeting on Dec. 1, 2021, where the public voted 61-14 to spend \$1.175 million on the purchase of the Scenic Rivers property.

“There were a few people who were worried about that concern,” Wagner said of

people raising concern about Maple Street, but it didn’t seem to rise to a high enough of an issue since the group overwhelmingly voted in favor of it. Wagner told the committee he felt the majority of electors felt that giving the daycare a year and a half was more than enough time.

“That was ample enough time,” Wagner said to the Building and Grounds Committee.

No exact date was given during the Dec. 1, 2021 Meeting of Electors on when the district would close the building. Wagner told the crowd during the presentation that the school district would be out of the building by summer 2023, but that the district could keep the building running for ‘the foreseeable future.’

District looks at \$800k in building projects

After discussing the end of the 1925 Middle School Building, the committee turned their thoughts to the summer, and what capital projects they would like to prioritize to be done during the off-months.

Leading that list was the renovation of the old bus garage, which would be taken down to the frame, and rebuilt to become a new tech ed shop for the district. The district is looking at alterations costing between \$400,000-\$650,000, which would replace the roof, the exterior walls, add new doors, restrooms, and recreate a space for educational efforts.

The remodeling of the space was one of the items that was listed as ideas that could happen if the district purchased the former Scenic Rivers headquarters, since all bus maintenance has moved to that site.

One item High School Principal Mark Uppena wants to make sure is a priority is the replacement of the high school bell system. Uppena stated he was told by the firm that installed and handles maintenance of it that it will no longer be supported after this year.

The bell system is connected to both the school’s fire alarm system, and the WAVE safety/security alert system.

That cost is not exactly known, as the months’ old estimate placed it at \$77,000.

The committee also looked at replacing floors in different office spaces in Winskill with laminate, which was estimated to cost \$35,000, as well as removing the tile and polishing the hallway floors of the seven-decade old school.

Wagner also updated the committee that the district submitted their portion of the county hazard mitigation plan, which would allow the district to qualify for grants through the FEMA BRIC program. The school district is looking at possibly expanding the current Winskill gymnasium, as well as the cafeteria, sometime in the future.

Ihm, Vernon to leave as parishes see priest shifting

Fr. Leffler will be retiring as part of the changes

BY STEVE PRESTEGARD
EDITOR@THEPLATTEVILLEJOURNAL.COM

Several Southwest Wisconsin Roman Catholic churches are getting new priests, and churches are being put into new groups, as part of the Madison Catholic Diocese’s Into the Deep parish reorganization plan.

It has been common practice for the Catholic Church to move priests out of churches, and onto a new mission after a period of time — in the past it usually is a decade, although in recent years some older priests have been able to stay in parishes longer as they move closer to retirement.

The diocese’s website calls Into the Deep “a multi-year comprehensive strategic planning process” “to realign our resources — physical, financial, human, priestly, etc. — so that we might move our parishes and other Catholic institutions from maintenance to mission, in order to share the life-changing good news of Jesus Christ more effectively in our increasingly secular culture.”

New church groupings, or pastorates, and priest reassignments, which are effective July 1, were announced in churches this weekend.

Rev. John Blewett, the current pastor of St. Mary Catholic Church in Platteville, is leaving to become parochial vicar of a pastorate based in Baraboo, Reedsburg and Wisconsin Dells.

Blewett will be replaced at St. Mary’s by Rev. Gregory Ihm, who now is a pastor of Catholic churches in Bloomington, Cassville, Glen Haven and Patch Grove.

Rev. Richard Leffler, pastor of St. Andrew Catholic Church in Tennyson and St. Thomas Catholic Church in Potosi, is retiring.

Rev. William Vernon, pastor of St. Clement Catholic Church in Lancaster, is leaving to become pastoral vicar for a group of churches in Sun Prairie, Waterloo and Marshall.

The group of churches that includes St. Clement And St. Andrews/St. Thomas will have three new priests — Rev. Stephen Brummer, who is now at Christ the King Catholic Church in McFarland; Rev. Mark Miller, who now is at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Belleville, and Rev. Sudhakai Devarapu, who is now pastoral vicar of Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic

Church in Madison.

That will be Pastorate 1: St. Mary, Bloomington; St. Charles Borromeo, Cassville; St. Mary Help of Christians, Glen Haven; St. Clement, Lancaster; St. John, Patch Grove; St. Andrew, Tennyson, St. Thomas, Potosi, and St. Clement, St. Charles, St. Mary and Sts. Andrew-Thomas schools; Rev. Stephen Brummer, now of Christ the King Catholic Church in McFarland, parochial administrator; Rev. Sudhakai Devarapu, now at Our Lady Queen of Peace in Madison, and Rev. Mark Miller, now of St. Francis of Assisi in Belleville, parochial vicars.

Pastorate 2: St. Mary, Platteville; St. Patrick, Benton; St. Rose of Lima, Cuba City; Holy Ghost, Dickeyville; St. Francis de Sales, Hazel Green; Immaculate Conception, Kieler; St. Joseph, Sinsinawa, and Holy Ghost-Immaculate Conception, St. Joseph and St. Rose of Lima schools; Rev. Gregory Ihm, now of St. Mary in Bloomington, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John in Patch Grove and St. Mary Help of Christians, parochial administrator; Rev. David Flanagan of St. Rose of Lima and St. Patrick, Rev. Peter Auer of St. Francis de Sales and St. Joseph, and Rev. Bernard Rott of Holy Ghost and Immaculate Conception, parochial vicars.

Pastorate 4: Corpus Christi, Boscobel, Avoca, Clyde, Muscoda; Queen of All Saints, Fennimore. Castle Rock, Mount Hope; Rev. Carlos Reinoso, SJS, now pastoral administrator t Queen of All Saints, parochial administrator; Rev. Christobal Padilla, SJS, now pastor of Corpus Christi, parochial vicar.

Pastorate 29: St. Augustine University Parish, Platteville; Rev. John Del Priore, SJS, parochial administrator.

St. Mary in Fennimore is listed as one of four churches listed in the diocese in which the Traditional Latin Mass, also known as the Extraordinary Form of Mass, may be celebrated as of July 1. Other churches celebrating the Traditional Latin Mass will be allowed to do so until June 30.

The Latin Mass change is based on a directive from the church in Rome that Latin Masses not be celebrated “at the principal church of any parish.”

More information is available at www.intothedeepmadison.org.

SIGHTS, SOUNDS,

displays touch spring’s high notes

BY JERRY DAVIS

Who would redirect an ear away from a wild tom turkey’s gobbling without getting closer to see what is generating such a sound, causing barred owls to hoot back, and hen turkeys rushing in?

Within moments, unless movement, sky-lining, or human mimicking, a big bird’s 18-20- primary tail feathers appear as a perfect hemisphere. All goes quiet, the fan hemisphere drops and with an outstretched neck he gobbles again, this time double or even triple talking.

The display continues with wings dropping, cutting marks in the dew-laden vegetation. The sounds cause human hairs to become erect, the bird’s body feathers do the same, then quickly the bird is twice the size moments earlier.

No one is exactly clear on how this bird does his drum and spit (another sound), let alone what it means to other turkeys, individuals or rafts. This subdued sound, we learn, reveals distance better than a rangefinder. Body hairs respond, again, this time all of them and stay in position as blood rushed to the bird’s head and neck, coming close to the skin and the bird’s caruncles turn red; then white; and finally blue. Ugly? No time to even think of rating the bird’s beauty. Gobbles, colors, drumming, going from 30 pounds, estimated weight, to 60 pounds it seemed in a matter of seconds are exciting, beautiful, and miraculous.

Trying not to be undone, Wisconsin’s

unofficial state game bird is still no match for the tom turkey, but he, too, has a fan, and also a ruff about his neck which when excited will nearly cover his head. When in full flare, he sometimes looks unnatural but unlike tom, the grouse is beautifully drab.

He has one more spring thing to show us, and tell us. He drums but it is clear how he does it. While standing on a log, he fans, raises his wings and starts a fast motion of bringing wings both toward his body. The putt sound some say sounds like a farm tractor starting and is a mechanical, not vocal, sound. The best mimic we can master is one of cupped hands clapped together resulting in a very loud pop. Our pops are too far apart compared to those of the grouse wings but the clap does show us that a sound can be created by trapped air.

A rooster ring-necked pheasant is almost gaudy grand in an iridescent head region. His sounds are mechanical and vocal. He seems to be about to lift off but somehow remains connected to the earth. This call, dubbed crowing, has a loud double squawk followed by a brief wing flapping. His wattles are red like the turkey’s but he has no fan.

On a 30-degree April morning, the male ruby-throated hummingbird appears to be swinging like a pendulum forming an arc of 20 feet. The sun, at the right angle, causes his throat to flash fiery red;

she must notice it, too. During the arcs there is a subtle chipping, humming, and buzzing. He tires and at the low point of the arc drops to the ground where the female has landed and they mate during the one time a hummingbird comes in contact with the earth and its wings are still.

Woodcocks’ dance for mating preparation, even under Aldo Leopold’s crafty pen, took two pages in his 1949 A Sand Count Almanac. Any sound here is subdued from the rush of wind through several wing feathers. It’s almost horrifying to note that that was confirmed by clipping those wing feathers and eliminating the sound.

Color is not major for the always-camouflaged timberdoodle. Its bill is long enough to speak for itself.

Another dance also occurs in lowlands where the sandhill crane uses his legs and wings to stir the emotions of his lady. Other than a red cap, the sandhill is mostly gray or rust, depending on the soiled feathers caused by a bird’s preening with a dirty bill.

Who has heard the song of the male red-winged blackbird and forgotten it? Possibly none. The song is a liquid gurgling konk-la-ree, as the male raises



A tom turkey is beginning to go into strut, raising his tail feathers and dropping his wings

A male sandhill crane “dances” in front of a female bird

his shoulders and flares out his red epaulets margined in gold.

Spring comes quietly to some wildlife, but many birds get our attention after a long winter and drab spring beginning.

Contact Jerry Davis, a freelance writer, at sivadajam@mhtc.net or 608.924.1112.

BACK HOME BY CHRIS HARDIE

A tale of ice

While politicians and others way above my station and pay grade continue to debate, expound upon and expunge homospian influence on the stratosphere, one thing I know for sure. The winter weather has changed and we're seeing way more rain and ice.

Recently our farm was in the middle of the imaginary weather line, with more rain south of us and more snow to the north. Just a few days after we were on the snow end of the weather front with about 9 inches, we received freezing rain and a coating of ice.

Ice when you are doing outside chores - driving or even walking - is bad news. As my late engineer father turned farmer was fond of saying, the coefficient friction of ice is pretty much nil. In other words, you get more traction by walking on a linoleum floor with banana peels strapped to your feet.

One of Wisconsin's historically worst ice storms was Feb. 21-23, 1922 with ice accumulations of 1 to 2 inches and as much as 4 inches of ice buildup on trees and power poles. Power, telephone and telegraph service were knocked out for up to 15 days. The storm dropped 1 up to 4 inches of rain and northern parts of the state had up to 3 feet of snow. Property damage was \$10 million.

More recently - at least during my lifetime - was the ice storm on March 4 and 5, 1976 left up to 5 inches of ice in the southern parts of the state, knocked out power for up to 10 days and caused \$50.4 million in damage.

The National Weather Service says the most severe icing was from Grant County eastward to Washington and Ozaukee counties. Washington County was hard hit with 1,500 utility poles snapped off and roads closed by fallen trees, poles and wires.

Personally I remember an ice storm on Dec. 28, 1980. My folks were in Las Vegas and I was helping my cousin with the daily chores, but had the Sunday afternoon off. I was 17 and I picked up my girlfriend (now wife) Sherry and we went to La Crosse for the day to see a movie and do some shopping.

I could have cared less about the weather or even the weather forecast. I remember hearing the sound of rain on the roof of the movie theater and the streets were wet when the movie ended in the early evening. There was nothing that made me concerned, so we had supper and went to ShopKo. My car at the time was a 1978 Mustang II with rear-wheel drive and bias ply tires. A pretty steady drizzle was coming down as we headed through Holmen to her home outside of Mindoro.

It wasn't until we were a couple of miles out of Holmen (which now would be close to the village limits) and turned left to follow Hwy. D towards Mindoro that we realized how slippery it was. As soon as we turned, the car started to slide and fishtail. I slowed way up but a few hundred yards later we went straight into the ditch as I was helpless to

stop it.

In those pre-cell phone days you had to hike for help, which is what I started to do when I saw a farmer coming down the road with a tractor. I flagged him down and asked if he would pull us out. He replied that he would - after he took care of another car ahead of us that also had gone into the ditch.

Soon the farmer was back and he pulled us back to where we turned off. I slipped him some cash - probably the last of the slim pickings in my wallet - and we decided to continue down Hwy. M to try an alternative route to Mindoro. Another car passed us and went into the ditch. The farmer had a busy evening.

There is no way to get from Holmen to Mindoro without going over a big ridge. So to help us get some traction - any traction, really - I drove with the passenger side tires on the gravel shoulder. It was a white-knuckled ride, as much of the hill had no guard rail and we were only a few feet away from tumbling down a steep ravine.

Foot by foot, we slowly climbed the hill and I crept down the other side. When we reached Mindoro, we stopped at a friend's house and called Sherry's parents - who lived on the other side of another big hill. Using the same driving on the shoulder technique, we pulled into her yard late that night.

I called my cousin and said because of the terrible roads, I was going to stay at Sherry's house that night, so I wouldn't be there for the morning chores. He laughed and said that was a 'likely story,' but he knew the conditions were bad. There was no school the next day as it was the holiday break.

Monday morning I waited several hours for the sand and salt trucks to do their job and headed for home - which was still about 20 miles away. The roads were fine until I got past Melrose and turned on Hwy. N - about 9 miles from home. That road had not been sanded and I slid into the ditch about a mile down the road.

Miraculously, I was able to get myself unstuck and I proceeded down the road. But a small incline was too much to overcome - no gravel shoulders - and I slid into the ditch again. I walked about a mile to a local farmer I knew and he came to pull me out - just as the highway department came by with sand.

I arrived home about 2 p.m. and almost immediately had to turn around and drive 15 miles back the same direction that I just came to go to wrestling practice.

No damage to the car. No one was hurt. A lesson learned.

Oh, to be young and foolish again.

Chris Hardie spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and publisher. He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and won dozens of state and national journalism awards. He is a former president of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. Contact him at chardie1963@gmail.com.

Quality health care is Wisconsin asset, but it can't be taken for granted

MADISON - Most people rank the quality of the health care they receive in a hyper-personal way. If a doctor, nurse or clinician fix what ails them, people tend to give good marks. If health problems persist without a good explanation as to why, the bill for payment can look a lot bigger and a more critical view emerges. Right or wrong, that's human nature.

Health care quality and value can also be assessed in data-driven ways that look across larger populations, examine relative differences between states and consider other measurable factors.

The latter is what the Wisconsin Technology Council recently did in a report, "Taking the Pulse: How Quality Health Care Builds a Better Economy." The conclusions are worth noting in an age when competing for workforce talent is a 50-state game. Here are examples:

Wisconsin is consistently among the top states for quality health care, as measured by metrics compiled by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. In its 2022 "National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report," the AHRQ ranked Wisconsin and 11 other states in the nation's top quartile through 2021. In the region surrounding or within a day's drive of Wisconsin, only three other states (Iowa, Minnesota and North Dakota) ranked in the top quartile.

With some key indicators - such as mortality tied to health care, Medicare 30-day readmissions, penalized hospitals and average hospital length of stay - Wisconsin performance was well above average.

Mean inpatient charges in Wisconsin were in the middle of the seven-state region in the latest year on record and leveling off, according to AHRQ. In contrast, the U.S. average was much higher and trending up.



BY TOM STILL

That cost-related finding was reinforced in a 2022 report by Forbes Advisor, which analyzed data from the Kaiser Family Foundation comparing all 50 states and the District of Columbia on average health care costs per person. The U.S. average was more than \$10,000; Wisconsin was the 8th least expensive state with a per capita rate of \$9,626. That same Forbes study found that Wisconsin's health care cost increases over the past five years were sixth-lowest in the nation.

Most single and family health insurance premiums in Wisconsin were competitive with regional and U.S. averages in 2021. The exception was average premiums for family coverage paid by employers. That figure was \$15,676, or second-highest in the region and higher than the U.S. average of \$15,207.

Those findings may not comfort people who had a bad experience in a Wisconsin clinic or hospital, or who think the entire health-care system should be turned on its head. However, it's one argument for Wisconsin's competitiveness as a place to live and work.

Top-quartile rankings for health-care quality and cost figures roughly in line with regional and national figures give Wisconsin workers and companies an edge for now - but workforce shortages that began even before COVID-19 and the need to stay abreast of technology make continued progress a challenge.

For example, Wisconsin hasn't seen a rural hospital close since 2011

but pressures are mounting. Much like good broadband and housing, quality and available health delivery systems are essential to sustaining the rural economy. While Wisconsin ranks low on one "immediate risk of closure" list for rural hospitals, those hospitals face daily challenges.

The latest example came when the Marshfield Clinic Health System announced it will lay off 346 workers in Wisconsin. Its hospitals and clinic serve an almost entirely rural population. Rising labor costs, more expensive supplies and lower reimbursements were cited as reasons, but regulatory and other pressures facing health care nationally in the wake of the pandemic are also at work. State policymakers may be able to help in some ways:

They can encourage teaching institutions to efficiently produce health care workers. An example is a Mayo Clinic partnership with UW-Eau Claire.

While Wisconsin care rankings are better than most states, mental-health treatment can still be hard to access - especially when opioids, fentanyl and other abused substances are killing far too many people. Some previously public mental-health programs have been taken on by hospitals and health systems, but not without cost.

Encourage more partnerships between Wisconsin health systems and tech-based providers. Wisconsin has world-class resources in health information, diagnostics, imaging and therapeutics. However, some hospitals can still be slow to innovate.

In an era when health care can attract people and companies looking to expand, state agencies and private associations with the ability to promote Wisconsin's health care quality should do so.

Still is president of the Wisconsin Technology Council. He can be reached at tstill@wisconsinstechnologycouncil.com.



Commentary FROM PAGE 1A

Instead, the response I got was "What is your business going to do?"

Our business is not a taxpayer funded institution whose main purpose is the welfare and education of our community's youth.

Our business is awareness, which is why I have been ranting and ranting about this crisis for more than a year.

The Lancaster Community School District through tax payer funds is in charge of the community's youth. They are in charge of ages 4-18 from 7:45 am until 3:15 p.m. 180 days of the year.

What is the difference between that and ages 0-4? What is the difference between that and 3-5 pm?

I was told it's not their job to deal with that.

And it is not in the current definition of the school's responsibility, but guess what? Those definitions changed.

When I started school, the youngest kids that would attend were five years old. Now, with early childhood, we can see as early as three.

The school has also been given the one kind-of silver bullet when it comes to funding childcare - Fund 80. Fund 80 is meant for the 'community good' and is a taxing authority the city does not have, the county does not have.

School districts from across the state use that authority to run senior centers, to offer wellness centers, and to operate childcare facilities.

I wish it was available for other

entities, but it's not.

Lancaster's Fund 80? When I started here 19 years ago, it was about \$5,000 going from the school to the city to help cover summer recreation programs.

Today, it does not exist - the school district pulled back because they didn't think the taxpayers should fund that program.

Now, I don't think childcare is solely the school district's responsibility - I only point the above out because they should be involved in any solution.

Also who should be involved is the business community.

I told you I did two surveys with the chamber on childcare. The one filled out by the parents - great turnout. The one for businesses? A failure with five responses.

Unlike some other communities, we simply do not have an employer who is big enough to start a program on their own, but all of you who employ people, you need to get involved, because if you do not, you are at risk of losing employees.

Getting back to the newspaper, we have one employee who has children who would attend early childhood daycare, and that has been a problem from time to time. That person has had to stay home because their provider had an illness or some other issue.

We have four employees who have children who could utilize after-school childcare. Instead, I believe for most it has been juggling around with grandparents to make sure those last two hours of the day are covered, or they have reconfigured their schedules.

We have another four people in our office who have grandchildren who either are in need of early childhood care, or after school care.

One of those people, if their grandchildren were closer, would likely have left us to take care of them.

And this is why every company should get involved in dealing with childcare, because you may not be able to cover jobs, cover shifts in this tight labor market.

You certainly are not going to recruit anyone with children, or thinking about children. Why would they come here, and struggle taking care of their children, when they can go some place else?

How many working families are going to move into those apartments being built in Arrow Ridge if they don't have a place for their children to go?

I will say this, the city is trying, trying to get another childcare provider into the community (and I was told one did look at buildings within the past week) but we really do not have any 'move-in-ready' spaces here, and if you are talking about remodeling or outright building, it is cost prohibitive.

Look at Maple Street Kids as an example. I hope they can make progress, but their task looks nearly impossible.

Based on their statements about their matching grant, and ability to work with their bank, they need to raise \$600,000 this year to keep their ambitious timeline. That is \$50,000 a month, in order to raise enough money to kick in their \$400,000 matching grant, and get to \$1 million, in the hopes they can borrow the

remaining \$800,000 to build next year.

In the first two months of this year, they have raised \$20,000, less than half of what they need to raise every month.

During my time here, there has been three very large fundraising projects - the Potosi Brewery, Grant Regional Health Center expansion project, and Schreiner Memorial Library expansion. Each one of those took years to raise sufficient sums, employed professional fundraising groups, and built up whole ecosystems to raise money.

And for at least two of those projects, they had to borrow large portions to get the project done ahead of time, which means years later they are still paying debt.

And to be honest, they all had it easier. When I think about the library project, which was not that long ago (opened in 2015) and a bunch of the largest donors to that project are no longer here. Many of them have since passed away, and others moved away.

We just don't have the deep pockets we used to have in this community.

And what we do have is already being asked to contribute to other projects. The Fire Department is launching a \$300,000 campaign to help cover updates to the firehouse. The library still has \$500,000 of debt to retire. St. Clements is still dealing with changing out its HVAC systems.

And there is always some school program or project fundraising.

If you are part of Maple Street, how do you to compete with all of those? Especially, considering almost all of them is some public entity which

has a transparent setup of what it is, and how their project is put together?

It would be nice if our three biggest daycare providers could work on a project together - having that many people working on the same goal would bring in a bunch of motivated people, and also seem like we are not pitting one provider over another.

Look, I do not have children, but it is one of the biggest issue we are facing as a community. The lack of childcare literally puts the future of Lancaster as a growing community into question.

Without adequate childcare, it doesn't matter how many flashy brochures Lancaster has or how many fancy videos touting how great it is to work and live here, it's going to be hard to get a new generation of people looking to move here.

I talked to one younger Lancaster resident, someone who grew up here, and came back to work here for their career. I asked them if they would have considered Lancaster if they hadn't been from here, they said no.

They said due to the lack of childcare, they would have more likely looked at another community to work and live if they didn't have that connection to this community.

That person is an employee of the Lancaster Community School District.

We will retain some of the people who grew up here, and this community will continue to shrink.

Let us know if you think this needs to be tackled by the community, or if you think it is just up to the families who need it.

We need an answer.

JOHN INGEBRITSEN PUBLISHER JINGE@TDS.NET DAVID TIMMERMAN EDITOR NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET A.J. GATES SPORTS EDITOR HISPORTS@TDS.NET KEVIN KELLY DIRECTOR OF SALES KKAADS@TDS.NET JODI WHITE ADVERTISING SALES REP JWWHITE@NEWS4U.COM GLORIA LANDON BILLING CLERK MNCBILLING@YAHOO.COM JESSICA BROWNELL AD DESIGN HERALDADS@TDS.NET EMILY KOCH AD DESIGN/LEGALS LANNEWS@TDS.NET TYRA SADDORIS AD DESIGN TYRA@MORRISWI.COM AMY LAUFENBERG AD DESIGN DESIGN@SVNEWS4U.COM SANDY TAYLOR CIRCULATION MNCIRCULATION@YAHOO.COM PRODUCTION EARL MCLEAN, SHAWN SISLEY, COLE WEHRLI, JIM MUENCH, MIKE MCCARTNEY, KRISTIN WINKLER, MARSHA SISLEY, JENNIFER ROESCH, DENNIS LYCHT, JEFF FAUST, GREG FISCHER, TINA JACOBS & ERIC WEPKING

GRANT COUNTY Herald Independent USPS 226-380 WISCONSIN'S OLDEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER MORRIS NEWSPAPERS OF WISCONSIN PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY MORRIS NEWSPAPER CORPORATION OF WISCONSIN, 208 W. CHERRY STREET, LANCASTER, WI 53813. TELEPHONE (608) 723-2151. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT LANCASTER, WI. CONTENTS © MMVIII BY MORRIS NEWSPAPER CORPORATION OF WISCONSIN. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Volume 180 - Issue 10 MORRIS NEWSPAPERS OF WISCONSIN

SUBSCRIPTION RATES IN GRANT COUNTY \$47 (2 YRS. \$86.50) IN WISCONSIN \$50 (2 YRS. \$91.50) OUT-OF-STATE \$63.50 (2 YRS. \$119) POSTMASTER SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: CIRCULATION DEPT. GRANT COUNTY HERALD INDEPENDENT P.O. BOX 310, LANCASTER, WI 53813-0310. WNA RECOGNIZED ANNUALLY BY THE WISCONSIN NEWSPAPER AND INLAND PRESS ASSOCIATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE