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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022 | POSTCRESCENT.COM

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Fresh new voices

Joey Van Deurzen goes door to door looking for potential votes Aug. 29 in Kaukauna. Van Deurzen is the Democratic candidate for the 5th Assembly District. DAN POWERS/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

What we learned from Stock the Shelves fundraiser

Taima Kern
Appleton Post-Crescent
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Every year since 2012, reporters from the USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin have spent October collecting donations from readers to help support local food pantries via Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin.

As part of the campaign, those reporters spend some time shining a light on the local pantries, programs and volunteers who chip away at food insecurity year-round. This reporting serves two purposes: It gives those in need an idea of what services are available; and it gives those with the means an idea of where their dollars can best be spent.

Each year, network reporters learn new things about the complex web of hunger support systems, and the ramifications of life with food insecurity. Here are some of the things we found most interesting this year.

See FUNDRAISER, Page 10A

Two Gen Z candidates enter Wisconsin races seeking to flip deep red districts

Sophia Voight Appleton Post-Crescent | USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN



Hannah Beauchamp-Pope, center, is running for Assembly District 88. PROVIDED BY HANNAH BEAUCHAMP-POPE

Hannah Beauchamp-Pope has lived in Green Bay her whole life, but it was only the last three years that she became engaged in local politics. • The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay student said she became more involved through protests for social and racial justice in the summer of 2020 and with student government.

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“I hope that other people in marginalized communities like myself can push themselves beyond that label that society puts us in and become someone greater than that.”

Hannah Beauchamp-Pope
Candidate for Wisconsin Assembly's 88th District

Menasha schools referendum to be on ballot

AnnMarie Hilton
Appleton Post-Crescent
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Voters in the Menasha Joint School District will see a referendum question on the Nov. 8 ballot about middle school building needs.

The question will ask voters whether they want to allow the school district to borrow money to build a new school on the Maplewood Middle School campus for grades five through eight and demolish the existing building after the new school is built.

This referendum is the second part of the district's three-part plan to address building needs. The first phase occurred in 2015 with a Menasha High School renovation. If all goes to plan, the district anticipates the third phase, which will address needs at the elementary level, to take place in the next five to 10 years.

See REFERENDUM, Page 2A

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Gen Z

Continued from Page 1A

“I’ve always had this dilemma of, do I leave Wisconsin because as a Black woman, I haven’t had the greatest experiences? Or do I stay and put in the effort to make it a better place?” she said.

With plans to attend law school after graduation, Beauchamp-Pope had no plan to run for office until this spring when her Assembly district lacked a Democratic challenger.

Beauchamp-Pope, 22, is running for the state Assembly’s 88th District — a Green Bay-area district with a strong Republican lean. She faces Republican incumbent Rep. John Macco on the ballot in the Nov. 8 election, with absentee voting already underway.

In the nearby 5th Assembly District, college student Joey Van Deurzen is running for former Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke’s now-open seat. Van Deurzen, a 20-year-old Democrat, is opposing Republican Joy Goeben in the race.

The two candidates are part of Generation Z — which the Pew Research Center defines as anyone born between the years 1997 and 2012 — and, if elected, they would be the some of the first members in the Wisconsin Legislature in that age group.

The two college students with little political experience entered their races to change the state Legislature and flip their deep red districts blue by running grassroots campaigns. But in both districts, they face long odds.

Only three state Legislature districts are considered competitive

Wisconsin’s latest redistricting cycle left the state Legislature with very few competitive districts, where the race is tight enough that either candidate has a credible chance to win the election.

By one measure there are only three such races — and they aren’t in north-east Wisconsin.

The Republican-drawn legislative maps adopted by the state Supreme Court in April were billed by GOP leaders as a “least changes” map.

The map was based on the GOP’s 2011 redistricting plan, which helped preserve Republican majorities in the Legislature even in years when Democratic candidates performed well statewide.

The 2022 maps further strengthened those majorities, changing lines in strategic ways that benefit Republicans.

Marquette University research fellow and redistricting expert John Johnson’s analysis of the new legislative maps found only three districts have less than a 2% lean either way — making Assembly District 94, Assembly District 74 and Assembly District 73 the only competitive races in the state.

Van Deurzen’s Assembly District 5 was held by Steineke, an influential Republican who has represented the district for 11 years.

The district has a projected 16-point Republican lean and includes primarily rural parts of eastern Outagamie County and western Brown County.

District 5 had a 22-point Republican lean before the latest redistricting cycle, but 16 points is still a tough gap to close for a Democrat.

Assembly District 88, where Beauchamp-Pope is campaigning, gained a Republican stronghold in the latest redistricting cycle, going from a 4.8% Republican lean to now a 10% advantage.

Beauchamp-Pope faces not only long



Joey Van Deurzen, right, shares information and a conversation with Joe Plein while going door to door Aug. 29, 2022, in Kaukauna, Wis. Van Deurzen is the Democratic candidate for the 5th Assembly District. DAN POWERS/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

odds in a right-leaning district, but also the power of incumbency and name recognition that Macco has gained from over seven years in office and as a local businessman.

Macco and Goeben did not respond this week to requests for interviews about their opponents.

Progressive Gen Z candidates tackle state Legislature races

Van Deurzen studies computer science at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and Beauchamp-Pope is a senior at UW-Green Bay studying criminal justice and psychology with plans to attend law school next year.

Despite similarities, the two are approaching their young ages differently.

Van Deurzen, 20, is focusing more on what he has in common with a lot of older voters as someone who grew up in the rural district working on his grandparents’ dairy farm.

Beauchamp-Pope, 21, is owning her youth, her ethnicity and her gender.

The Green Bay candidate said she’s bringing a different face to the Assembly district as a young Black woman still in college. While that has surprised some voters who are used to seeing older white men in politics, Beauchamp-Pope said some people are excited to see her running for office.

“A lot of people are energized by the fact that someone that looks like them is out there,” she said.

Beauchamp-Pope said she wants to bring young women of color representation in politics.

“I hope that other people in marginalized communities like myself can push themselves beyond that label that society puts us in and become someone greater than that,” she said.

Just weeks before candidacy papers and signatures were due on June 1, Beauchamp-Pope said a fellow UWGB student persuaded her to run against Macco in the midterms.

She didn’t have a challenger in the August partisan primary so without her last-minute decision to run, Macco would have been guaranteed reelection in November.

In recent years she has become increasingly involved in politics and activism, but ultimately it was a lack of a challenge for Macco that drove her decision to file for the ballot.

“That was really alarming to me,” she said.

Van Deurzen also was compelled to run in the 5th Assembly District at the

last minute when he saw there was no other Democrat running for the seat.

“It wasn’t anything I expected to do, but I just couldn’t sit back,” he said.

Three Republicans ran for Steineke’s open seat in the August primary, but Van Deurzen faced no Democratic challenger. He will face Republican Joy Goeben, who also is a political newcomer, in the November election.

Van Deurzen said there was initial hesitation among some voters given his younger age, but after talking to community members, he said he’s been able to ease fears by appealing to rural voters.

“Some people when I’m at doors say they really appreciate young people getting out and caring (about politics),” he said.

A grassroots approach to flipping districts blue

As two younger candidates without any experience in political office, Beauchamp-Pope and Van Deurzen know the odds are against them.

With less funding and experience to help their campaigns, the two are taking a grassroots approach of daily door-knocking and meeting voters to gain support in their districts.

Van Deurzen said he gained knowledge of campaigns through interning for Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson’s unsuccessful campaign for U.S. Senate.

Nelson was the last Democrat to represent the 5th Assembly District when he took over the seat in 2005. He was also the youngest member of the state Assembly then at age 25.

From working on Nelson’s campaign, Van Deurzen said he learned he wanted to take a grassroots approach to his campaign, skipping the attack ads and mailers, and going straight to voters’ doors.

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“The only way we can win a race like this is really just getting out and knocking (on) doors. It’s returning to the roots of what politics should be — not some big money game, but just for people by people.”

Joey Van Deurzen
Candidate for Wisconsin Assembly’s 5th District

ing (on) doors,” Van Deurzen said. “It’s returning to the roots of what politics should be — not some big money game, but just for people by people.”

Part of his approach is due to a lack of money. Van Deurzen’s opponent Goeben has raised over \$17,000 in funds between March and July, compared to his nearly \$6,000, according to official fundraising statements.

But Van Deurzen said he wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I just feel like if I’m not putting in the work, why should people trust me to represent them in the Legislature,” he said.

Likewise, Macco has raised over \$10,000 more than Beauchamp-Pope’s campaign between March and July, according to state campaign finance reports.

With less money, Beauchamp-Pope is emphasizing door-knocking and talking to voters at public events to gain name recognition.

She said she gained a lot of her political knowledge and experience through her involvement with Black Lives Matter rallies in 2020 and her role on the board of Leaders Igniting Transformation, a grassroots political organization led by people of color.

Beauchamp-Pope acknowledges that District 88 is notoriously unwinnable for Democrats because of partisan district maps and that she’s going against a household name.

“I know the expectations for me to lose are very high,” she said. “I know no one really expects me to win.”

But, she said, “I’m excited to go up against someone who has had real experience, because I know he’s only going to push me to be a better candidate.”

She wants to show people in her district, especially less familiar faces in politics such as people of color and women, that the status quo should be challenged and it’s possible to overcome it.

“The most important thing is that all the people in Green Bay who are watching can see that even though the circumstances might not be in their favor, they can still try and do things they usually wouldn’t,” Beauchamp-Pope said.

“I hope that’s what people realize as we get closer to this election.”

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