

# The Verona Press

March 2, 2023 • Vol. 58, No. 41 • Verona, WI • Hometown USA • VeronaPress.com • \$1.50



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## Gymnastics team returns to state

Photos by Mark Nesbitt

**Center, left:** Verona freshman Dominika Ziemba tied for second place on the floor exercise (9.075) in a WIAA D1 sectional on Feb. 25, at Sun Prairie West High School.

**Far left:** Verona senior Ella Crowley finished third place in the vault. Crowley scored a 9.350 on her vault to qualify for state.



**Center, right:** Verona/Madison Edgewood Denise Ta won a WIAA Division 1 sectional championship on the balance beam with a score of 9.3.

**Far right:** Senior Katie Ryan completes a jump on the balance beam. Ryan took second place on the balance beam (9.250) to qualify for state.

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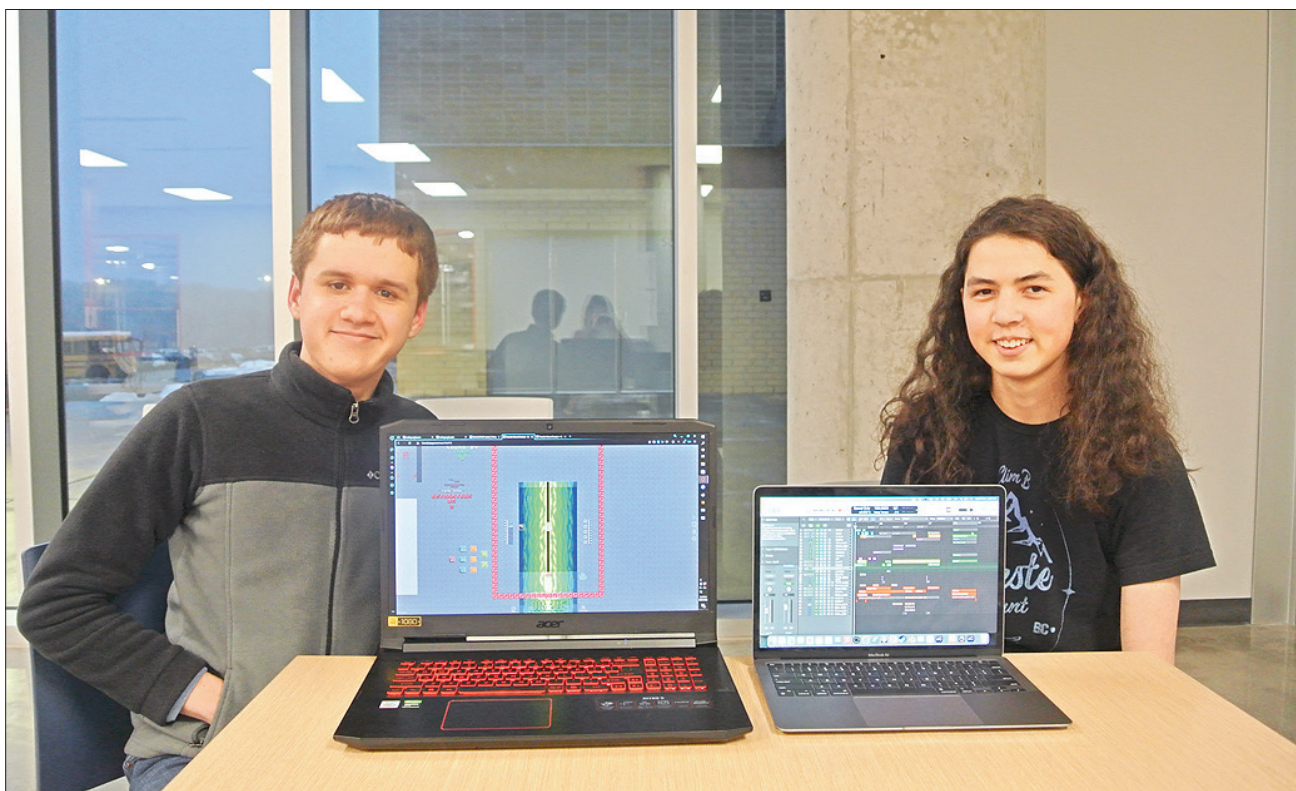


Photo by Maddie Bergstrom

From left, seniors Jackson Cartwright and Logan Kinoshita show off the editing software used to make their video games, The Novavis and Galacdrive.

## Verona native Bryant Switzky releases new album

'On the Edge of Something' features 14 acoustic-driven songs

MADDIE BERGSTROM  
Staff Reporter

Bryant Switzky has been drawn to music for as long as he can remember.

"I started playing music as a little kid – you know, six years old I started playing violin," he said. "And I inherited a guitar – my older brother died when I was in middle school – and I started playing that and writing songs, and found that it was really a powerful tool for me to help sort of process my feelings. I have really been into writing music since then."

Switzky grew up in Verona, attending high school at what is now Badger Ridge Middle School. At the age of 16, he began performing around the Madison area – mainly as part of a duo – booking gigs on State Street and at local coffee shops.

Switzky spent his time in high school as an active member of the music and theater departments. Just before he graduated from Verona in 1997, he finished his first album – a collection of songs he made right on the school grounds in a recording studio.

After graduation, Switzky left Wisconsin to study music at New York University. He did well there, but left after a year for financial reasons.

"I came back to the Madison area and went to Madison



Photo provided by Bryant Switzky

Switzky's new album is his first studio album in over 20 years.

Media Institute," he said. "[I] studied some audio engineering stuff there, played with a Latin band for a while and then recorded another album of original music that came out in 2001."

Switzky then moved to the Twin Cities and spent a few years trying to make a living as a singer-songwriter. In 2006, he stopped writing music and transitioned to a 9-5 writing job as a news reporter, eventually moving to Washington D.C. and becoming a federal government analyst – a position he still holds to this day.

Despite working full-time, Switzky found his way back to songwriting in 2018 and began making music for joy. Recently, he returned to his

Turn to **Switzky**/Page 3

# Dream team

Jackson Cartwright and Logan Kinoshita's video game receives nationwide recognition

MADDIE BERGSTROM  
Staff Reporter

Jackson Cartwright first moved to Verona the summer between second and third grade. While attending school as a new third grader at Glacier Edge Elementary, he came across another student – Logan Kinoshita – in one of his classes.

After some encouragement from his mother, Cartwright made the

“It kind of gives me a sense of purpose. I've been an artistic person my whole life. I find when I'm not doing anything, my days get kind of boring and it just feels really dull. So this feels like adding spice onto life.”

Jackson Cartwright, VAHS student

decision to go to his classmate's house and hangout after school. Ever since that moment, Cartwright and Kinoshita have remained good friends.

"Logan's actually the longest friend I've known since I've lived here," Cartwright said.

When the two students reached eighth grade, they were tasked with creating a digital product during the second semester of a technology class. Cartwright began designing a video game and asked Kinoshita

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The Verona Press



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## Switzky: Return to singing, songwriting

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hometown of Verona and released a new studio album on Feb. 17, 2023 – his first in over 20 years.

The album – “On the Edge of Something” – features a collection of 14 acoustic-driven songs that broadly fall in the Americana or folk categories. Switzky played all the instruments, with a couple exceptions, and sang all the songs – six of which have won 11 songwriting awards over the past two years.

“I try to write in a way that is both specific and universal, and I think that’s the power of stories,” he said. “Even if it’s fiction, fiction has a great power to move you by sort of feeding your humanity. And that’s really what I’m hoping this music will do is that it will feed the listener’s humanity and make people feel something. . . It’s like real life stuff – I want people to feel like it’s writing about real life and that they can find something in it that strikes them.”

And while Switzky isn’t making music as a career, he still finds the time to make it work – often recording in his home studio between the early morning hours of four and six when the house is quiet.

“Kind of funny, I have three kids,” he said. “And I love them dearly, and we have a really busy life. Basically, the time that I have to work on music really overlaps with putting them to bed. So, from when they were kids, at bedtime I would play music for them. And I started using that time to work on new songs and my kids would sort of get to observe that process and sometimes give me feedback along the way which is fun.”

When it comes to writing music, Switzky said he is very easily inspired, often observing life and telling peoples’ stories.

“Sometimes they are the stories of real people – or even my own story – and other times it’s sort of like things that I imagine,” he said. “You know, I see somebody who strikes me – and I don’t know them, it’s a stranger – and I watch them for a couple minutes and I might make up a story about them and write a song

### If You Go

**What:** House Concert / Album Release Party

**When:** 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 11. Doors open at 6 p.m., with a party following the concert until 9:30 p.m.

**Where:** Verona – address will be sent after registration

**Info:** bryantwitzky.com

about that in way that hopefully is sort of capturing something about what it means to be human.”

One track on Switzky’s new album – called “I Remember” – really stands out to him. He wrote the song for his older brother Saul who passed away at 17 in a car crash.

“It was the first song that I’ve written for him, and it was one of the first songs that I wrote when I got back into songwriting,” he said. “It means a lot to me, and I know it means a lot to other people who knew him also. Hopefully it just has some appeal to anybody who has lost someone close to them. That’s a track that I feel really great about, and there are many others too, I’m really proud of the whole album.”

With the release of his new album, Switzky plans to perform frequently around the Madison area. His first event – an intimate album release house concert – will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 11 in Verona.

Switzky will also perform on Saturday, April 8 at Cargo Coffee, Friday, April 28 at Hop Haus Brewing Company and Saturday, June 17 at The Cider Farm Tasting Room. To purchase tickets and find the most up-to-date list of performances, head to bryantwitzky.com.

Contact reporter Maddie Bergstrom at mbergstrom@wisconsinmediagroup.com

## Verona Area School District

### VASD offers strategic framework update

Strategic framework will serve as a guide for 2023-2028

MADDIE BERGSTROM

Staff Reporter

On Tuesday, Feb. 21, Verona Area School District Superintendent Tremayne Clardy, along with Assistant Superintendent Dr. Angela Hawkins, provided an update to the community regarding the strategic framework – or roadmap – that will guide the district from 2023 until 2028.

“Today is an important day for our community as we think about our progress as a district for the next five years,” Clardy said during the Facebook livestream.

The strategic framework functions to bring the district’s new mission statement to life – that “each student will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their personal goals, thrive in a diverse global society and lead a healthy self-fulfilling life.”

Planning for the framework began in July, 2022, and is currently in the design phase. This process involves gathering input, designing and developing.

Leading the work is a steering team reflective of the entire school community with staff, school board members, community members and – most importantly – student voices, Hawkins said. Several students – from both middle and high school – have, and will continue to, work on the steering team.

The goal of the team is to take information from the community, synthesize it and then make decisions based on what the community desires. The district has hosted 28 focus groups, heard from nearly

300 constituents, surveyed over 3,000 individuals and held engagement events, such as student and adult empathy interviews.

All of these events were designed with the intention to create spaces for everyone to feel comfortable, Hawkins explained.

“We were able to lift up and reflect on the voices that we don’t always hear from,” she said.

One of the most informative ways the team has gathered feedback was through shadowing a day in the life of a student, Hawkins said. Individuals followed students around from the very beginning of the day – attending classes and even lunch.

“How can we create a strategic framework that’s for our students if we really can’t speak to what our students are experiencing,” Hawkins proposed.

The strategic framework consists of seven components, three of which Hawkins explained further during the livestream – key priorities, journey of a lifelong learner and values.

Key priorities were identified based on feedback and include student agency, community collaboration, value and belonging, inclusive teaching and learning, along with wellness and mental health.

Another component – journey of a lifelong learner – helps to identify specific skills that learners will need to be successful and thrive, as identified in the mission statement. Learning, Hawkins said, is a continuous process – a journey – that never ends.

“A learner is you, a learner is me, a learner is our students,” she said.

Lastly, Hawkins discussed the district’s values, sharing that students recently received a list of values for a chance to weigh-in and offer opinions.

## Dream: VAHS students making a name for themselves in video game design

Continued from page 1

to help out in making the audio.

Now, Cartwright and Kinoshita are both seniors at Verona Area High School, designing video games together entirely from scratch that have received recognition from nationwide design contests.

To create the games, Cartwright uses a website called Flowlab, which he described as a visual logic program.

“Basically, you mostly program by just snapping blocks together,” he said. “It can get pretty complicated because you can do so much with what there is – it’s actually a lot more powerful than what people think.”

Kinoshita, on the other hand, creates audio soundtracks for the games.

In Jan. 2023, Cartwright and Kinoshita participated in Flowlab’s seventh Flowjam, a competition that takes place over two weeks and requires competitors to create an original game surrounding a single theme. At the same time, the students were attending school and maintaining their grades.

The criteria for judging submitted games consists of four main areas: theme, fun, art and creativity, according to the Flowlab website. All individuals who entered the competition have the chance to vote for the final winner.

Prior to entering the competition, Cartwright already had ideas for new games floating around

his head. After hearing the 2023 Winter Flowjam theme of “hidden worlds,” he decided to move forward with a plan that later became “The Novavis” – and won second place in the entire competition.

The game requires individuals to navigate through a supernova from inside a spaceship, Cartwright said. Players must find waypoints, chart them and bring them back to leadership to prove the ship works.

“The hidden world theme is connected to the fact that there’s no windows because you’re inside a supernova, which is super bright,” he said. “You have to just use your navigation tools to get around.”

### Working together as a team

Cartwright serves as the design part of the team – creating 94% of the game art, along with 98% of the logic and direction for The Novavis. His passion for game design amazed computer science teacher Pete Stremlow, who invited Cartwright to help teach game design classes at the high school.

“He came and did a couple demos for our class – kind of ‘how-to’s’ – for game development, and did a couple walkthroughs to help students get started in Flowlab,” Stremlow said. “I think Jackson is a really, really good example of how a student can take

advantage of our computer science classes and make the most of them.”

Kinoshita contributed 3% of the game art, all audio logic, 95% of audio sounds and helped provide assistive direction during The Novavis’s two-week design process.

In addition to developing the audio that helps bring the games to life, Kinoshita is quite an accomplished musician in the VAHS Music Department. Music teacher Eric Anderson said he is a percussionist in the Wind Ensemble, plays piano and percussion in Jazz Band, played percussion in the pit orchestra, serves as a teaching assistant for ninth grade band and composed an original piece of music for the school’s percussion ensemble.

“I get really bored if I’m not making something,” Kinoshita said. “I really like making things and being proud of the things I make.”

Along with The Novavis, Cartwright and Kinoshita have been working on another project – a mobile

game called “Galacdrive” – since March, 2022. This game requires players to dodge asteroids and battle different random bosses. They hope to release a final version of Galacdrive to the public before graduating from Verona Area High School in June, 2023.

For Cartwright, one of his favorite things about the game design experience has been getting help from the community. His first-ever Flowjam entry – a solo project called “Universal Crumble” – beat out 81 other designers to receive first place in the summer 2022 competition. This was a Flowjam with the most entries in the competition’s history, the website said.

“I stopped working on games for a few years after that eighth grade assignment, and then I got back into it my junior year,” he said. “It was a lot of fun to work together with other people – since I’ve had times where I’m kinda confused on how I’m supposed to implement something – and then people give me

help. It’s really fun to work together with other people and help each other in the community.”

In terms of the future, Cartwright plans on attending Michigan State University’s Game Design Program in the fall. He hopes to work professionally in the game industry as a designer.

“It kind of gives me a sense of purpose,” Cartwright said. “I’ve been an artistic person my whole life. I find when I’m not doing anything, my days get kind of boring and it

just feels really dull. So this feels like adding spice onto life.”

Kinoshita will attend the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to study Music Composition.

Cartwright and Kinoshita’s games are currently available for anyone to play online. The dynamic duo plans on making another appearance in Flowlab’s Summer 2023 Flowjam competition.

Contact reporter Maddie Bergstrom at mbergstrom@wisconsinmediagroup.com

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