



The Stoughton Courier Hub

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Syttende Mai 2023



Photo submitted

This year's royalty was announced at the Norse Afternoon of Fun on Sunday, Feb. 5 - long-time Stoughton residents and community leaders Cindy and Dan McGlynn.

Cindy and Dan McGlynn are royalty for Syttende Mai

Hazel Widerski is princess; 'Gus' Schafer is prince

Since 1969, Stoughton's Syttende Mai festival has elected a 'Festival King and Queen,' who serve as event ambassadors.

These "royal" ambassadors can be nominated by anyone in the community, based on community service and commitment to sharing their pride for the city's Norwegian heritage with Stoughton residents and visitors. And during the annual weekend of ceremonies in May, The king and queen visit the Capitol in Madison to declare Stoughton's Syttende Mai Festival weekend a state-wide celebration.

This year's royalty was announced at the Norse Afternoon of Fun on Sunday, Feb. 5 - long-time Stoughton residents and community leaders Cindy and Dan McGlynn. The 2023 Syttende Mai Princess is Hazel Widerski, and August Schafer is the 2023 Syttende Mai Prince.

The 2022 Syttende Mai royalty were Donna and Roger Strandlie.

Falling in love with Stoughton

According to biographical information provided to the Hub, Dan and Cindy McGlynn's very first trip to Stoughton was for him to interview with Mike

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Business



Photo by Scott DeLaruelle

Trailers on the move

Stoughton Trailers will be moving its corporate headquarters to 182 acres on the corner of Hwy. 51 and County B, as the company continues to modernize and grow.

New headquarters, park planned for Hwy. 51 development

SCOTT DE LARUELLE
Staff reporter

Considering how far most Stoughton Trailers travel, this move will be just a hop, skip and a jump. The company announced plans this week to move from their home office since 1961 on 416 S. Academy Street

to a new, state-of-the art corporate headquarters on 182 acres of company land at the corner of Hwy. 51 and County B; possibly by the end of next year.

But that's only part of the project. That vision also includes working with city, community and business leaders to develop a "gateway" community park on that roadside parcel that could incorporate city and county trail systems and other mixed uses, depending on what people are interested in.

The fourth-largest semi trailer manufacturer in the country (and ninth in the world), Stoughton Trailers employs more

than 1,800 team members - the city's largest employer - and is also the source of a significant community foundation. Founded in 1961 by Don and the late Carol Wahlin, these days it is run by the youngest of their eight children, who grew up in the company, starting as a seventh-grade janitor and working his way up to the top.

During an interview and tour of some of the Stoughton Trailers facilities last week, president and CEO Bob Wahlin talked with the Hub about plans for the new

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Park could attract employees, provide recreation

Stoughton Trailers holding open house Feb. 20 on plans

SCOTT DE LARUELLE
Staff reporter

When Stoughton Trailers builds its new corporate headquarters on 182 acres at the corner of Hwy. 51 and County B, it's intended to include a community park that could have quite a number of different

amenities. Much of that will be up to the public-community groups and businesses that the company is trying to partner with, along with the city, which would likely need to provide tax incremental financing.

To help sort all that out, the city has paid for a feasibility study with the parks committee which started last month and is set to wrap up in March, examining what the needs are in terms of trails and other potential features. The company is

hosting a "community conversation" at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 20 at Sandhill Elementary School to show the public the preliminary master plan and get public input before approaching the city with a concept.

"We have the land, we have ideas, and we're trying to make them a reality, but there's still a lot to figure out, and a lot of gaps to fill," said Stoughton Trailers president and CEO Bob

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If You Go

What: Stoughton Trailers 'community conversation' on Hwy. 51 park plans

When: 5--:30-7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 20

Where: Sandhill Elementary School, 1920 Lincoln Ave.

Info: Visit stoughtontrailers.com



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Opera House kicks off spring season Feb. 9

Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Iris DeMent, Hot Tuna scheduled for 2023

If you can't find a show you'd like this season, don't blame the Stoughton Opera House.

With 50 shows scheduled from Feb. 9 through June 17, it's going to be busy over at 381 E. Main St. as the opera house's 2023 spring season is just around the corner.

Karla Bonoff, Peter Rowan Bluegrass Band, Buffalo Nichols, Iris DeMent, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, and Tuba Skinny are a few of the shows that were already had in their spring lineup before the opera house recently announced several more additions to the second half of the 2022-23 season. Here are some highlights:

It all starts Thursday night as Sarah Voss (Dead Horses) and Adam Gruel (Horseshoes & Hand Grenades) return, leading a great Rucksack Revolution through the mountains of their minds. It's all harmony and good times heading down that road.

On March 1, Chicago lends a dab of "twisted sunshine pop" in the form of The Flat Five—Chicago's beloved band of in-demand music biz touring and recording ringers - Kelly Hogan and Nora O'Connor (Neko Case, Mavis Staples, The Decemberists, The New Pornographers) Scott Ligon and Casey McDonough (NRBQ, Brian Wilson) and Alex Hall (J.D. McPherson, The

Cactus Blossoms.)

Sierra Ferrell, hailed as "One of the brightest up-and-coming country stars" by OffBeat Magazine, will perform on March 7. Ferrell's Long Time Coming Tour was put on hold while the West Virginia vagabond traversed the country, opening for Ray LaMontagne, and collecting the kind of popularity that only comes with a notable talent like her own.

On April 18, Hot Tuna (acoustic duo) will perform. To some, Hot Tuna is a reminder of some wild and happy times. To others, that name will forever be linked to their own discovery of the power and depth of American blues and roots music. To newer fans, Hot Tuna is a tight, masterful duo that is on the cutting edge of great music.

Illinois will make a strong showing with Rockford's Miles Nielsen & the Rusted Hearts, who are set to appear May 5. Said the Chicago Sun Times, "There are rock n' roll gigs like the Hollywood Bowl and 'Live at Budokan.' Then there's the homespun itinerary of Miles Nielsen, son of Cheap Trick guitarist-vocalist Rick Nielsen. He plays an ethereal mix of pop and folk-rock that travels well."

Tickets for spring 2023 shows are on sale now at stoughtonoperahouse.com. For more information, email boxoffice@stoughtonoperahouse.com or call 608-877-4400 Tues. through Fri. from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact reporter Scott De Laruelle @sdelaruelle@ourkemediagroup.com



Photo by Scott De Laruelle

Stoughton Trailers president and CEO Bob Wahlin leads a tour through the facilities last week. The company plans to relocate its headquarters to the corner of Hwy. 51 and County B, a project that would include a community park.

Moving: Aim to promote collaboration

Continued from page 1

headquarters and park, and the company's continuing growth and shift toward 21st century technologies.

Home, sweet home

The company's administrative offices have been located in an increasingly cramped, aging South Academy Street facility since John Kennedy was President, and frankly, it was time to do something long ago, Wahlin said.

"We probably needed to upgrade our office building by about 1965," he chuckled. "(But) now was the right time, especially finding the right property. We looked for a long time, and went through a lot of different things. We felt it was a good fit and it all came together so far, but a lot of work to do."

In the end, the company chose a location just a few miles away, which will be convenient for current employees as well as a "refreshing change" from the old facility. Wahlin said only administrative operations will be moving in - neighbors don't need to worry about semis going in and out - but he does want to bring in employees in sales, accounting, and IT from the company's Brodhead and Evansville facilities, or those who have been working from home, to promote more collaboration.

Wahlin said a new office building "has always been in the back of our minds," but after surviving the "Great Recession" more than a decade ago, the company's first priority was investing in the plants and the equipment. He said the company's "aggressive timeline" is to start moving in by the end of next year.

"Especially with the skills gap and the employment shortage, we do need this as well to bring in those team members to the area," he said.

Focus on modernization

Things are changing around the company's series of Stoughton plants, as it continues to move toward automation, and shifting worker responsibilities more from making and moving parts to actually constructing the trailers.

"(It's) kind of a culture change," Wahlin said. "Cleaner, more organized, greater discipline."

A new robotic sheet metal operating system is integrated into several pieces of equipment, all done with the push of a button or two. Laser cutters and robotic arms move from step to step, from just typing in a combination.

"All those bigger, heavier parts that used to be lugged around by a couple people, those heavy components, now it's done robotically," he explained. "It knows how to stand it and space it."

Or when it's time to change out die sets, for instance.

"An arm will reach out and remove each section, and it will scan it for wear," Wahlin said. "If it's worn, it will automatically order its replacement. If it's not worn, it will put it into storage and put the new one out."

Stoughton Trailers worked for years with a German company to finally install last year a separate zinc facility that galvanizes

Wahlin Foundation charity

Started by Don and Carol Wahlin, The Wahlin Foundation is well-known for its generous support of area causes, such as the Mandt Community Center, Youth Center, and school scholarships, something Don Wahlin said the company is happy to continue. Recently, the company donated \$600,000 toward the completion of the renovated Collins Field at Stoughton High School, which opened in September.

Wahlin said in the last year, the company and its employees have put at least \$100 million back in the south central Wisconsin area.

"Wages, donations, taxes ... it may be coming through the pay of the welder who's spending it at the local diner," he said. "We're proud of how that has helped support and maybe help grow not just Stoughton but Evansville and Brodhead."

For more information, visit wahlinfoundation.org.



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steel parts, which offers better corrosion protection, but is also more environmentally friendly, as it eliminates the use of paints, and also frees up room inside the plant.

"We were able to shut down the old paint area and remove old equipment to make room for more automation," he said.

Wahlin said the next phase of similar equipment is expected in April - two more robotic press brakes - as the company continues to automate and grow.

We're moving from one generation to another - right now, we have a mix of the old and the new as we're expanding, but eventually it will all be this type," he said. "We feel we've got the plant infrastructure to support our growth needs, so it's not going to be as much investment in plant growth and additions but still a significant investment in automation."

All that new technology helps Stoughton Trailers keep ahead of the competition, as it's able to build a variety of fixtures, depending on design and customer needs. UPS trailers, for instance, require different interior specifications - last year, the company produced its 50,000th trailers for UPS.

"We are one of their key suppliers," he said. "We're partnering with the biggest companies in the world - Schneider, Amazon, UPS, FedEx, Walmart - they all have different dock environments and loading strategies, so there will be a lot of differences, particularly on the inside, as to how they are set up."

Company-wide, Stoughton Trailers builds nine different lines of chassis and builds around 900 trailers a week. Last year, the company built 24,750 dry van, chassis, grain and refrigerated trailers.

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Moving: Company hopes to transition operations to new space in 2024

Continued from page 2

Wahlin said with the new automated systems, it takes about three or four days to take the product from sheet steel to a finished trailer.

"It moves along pretty fast," he said.

Looking to the future

Wahlin said as the company continues to grow he wants to do more to "open up to the community."

"We feel like there's a lot of good things going on at the plant that we'd like to share what we're doing, and kind of invite people in to see those types of things," he said. "I think people are curious and we'd like to show a little more about who we are and what we do."

And what they are doing right now is winning, growing, and turning a healthy profit. Wahlin said Stoughton Trailers had a record setting year for revenue last year, and he looks for that to continue.

"Our significant investment in automation and technology has greatly increased our production efficiency and operating performance," he said. "We've been executing our growth plan, and with some of the expansions and the new partnerships, that's been growing, and we've had a very positive environment in the trailer industry as well, so that's been good wind at our backs."

"We're in better shape now with some of the diversification that we have on different products and in parts of the country, and stronger customers, all of those things. We're in better shape now to handle those tougher times."

Contact reporter Scott De Laruelle @ sdelaruelle@ourorkemediagroup.com

More information on Stoughton Trailers

Stoughton Trailers designs, manufactures, and markets a wide range of semi-truck trailers used for over-the-road trucking, intermodal chassis as well as agricultural trailers and other specialty transportation equipment, with manufacturing facilities in Stoughton, Brodhead, Evansville, and Waco, Texas, and builds trailers in West Point, Mississippi. For more information, visit StoughtonTrailers.com.

Women in the workforce

Take a look around the various Stoughton Trailers work stations, and you'll see about the same number of women as men. That's changed in the industry in recent years, and the company is leading the way, sponsoring "Welding for Women" classes to help get high schoolers involved. Wahlin said the assembly operations comprise nearly 40 percent women.

"It's definitely a mix," he said. "We're showing them how to weld and develop skills in the trades and it's really been a successful program for us."

One of the company's trailblazers is Kelly Calabrese, who has worked for Stoughton Trailers since she graduated from SHS in 1999. She started building flatbeds, moved to sheet metal in 2001, then worked as a machine operator, then started training new employees on sheet metal, then worked her way up to the team lead in sheet metal, and is now programming and operating some of the company's most expensive equipment.

"Starting 23 years back and as we evolve and get all the new equipment, it's nice to be a part of that," she said. "I like working with robotics; I do programming for it, I'm the main operator and I also do some of the maintenance to the machine."

Wahlin said skill requirements are very different for employees than they used to be, and much more technical.

"Where before it was basic welding and basic machine operation, now it's robotic programming, it's more sophisticated maintenance programs and control system management," he explained. "It's a very different skill set and most of that, you couldn't just go and get."

"That's where people like Kelly, who graduated from Stoughton High School, came to Stoughton Trailers, and just kept on having different jobs and learned more and more every time, and now she's programming and running a \$20 million dollar piece of automated equipment."

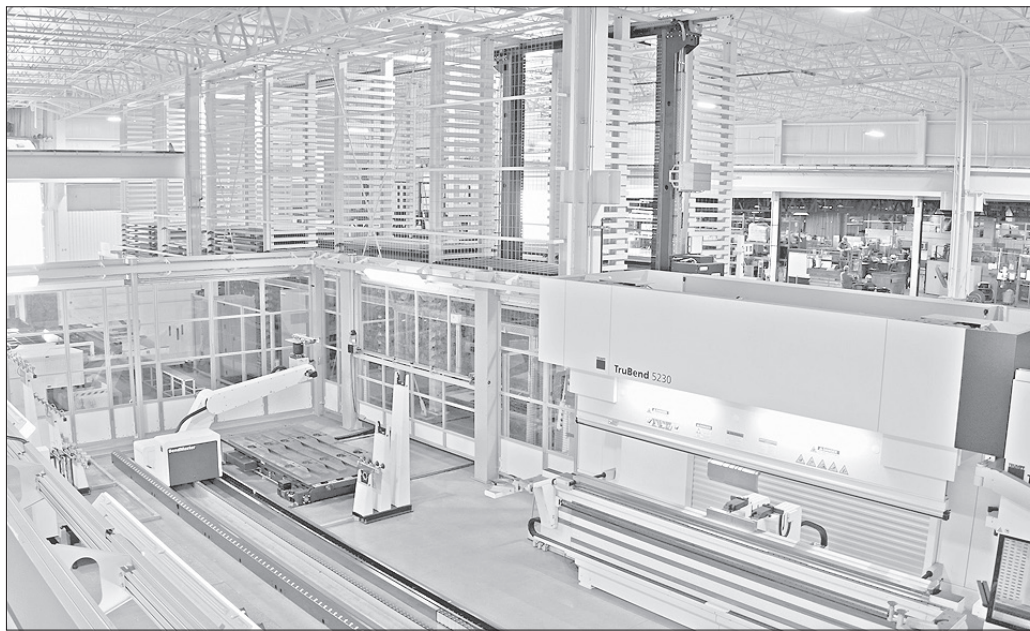
Wahlin said for some employees, the automated equipment can be a little intimidating at first, but it doesn't take long to get acclimated.

"They are well-trained, they are smart, they're great workers and it all works out," he said. "A lot of our training is taking place right here, in house. A lot of our competitors, they won't do this themselves, they'll just assemble the trailers. This gives us flexibility, it gives us speed, it drives out inefficiencies, reduces material handling and gives us a competitive edge."

Growing a business

1,123 Stoughton Trailers facilities employees (all Dane County locations) at the start of 2023

767 Stoughton Trailers facilities employees (all Dane County locations) at the start of 2022



Photos by Stoughton Trailers and Scott De Laruelle

Stoughton Trailers facilities are getting automated upgrades that are allowing more workers to focus on trailer assembly, though some still focus on skills like welding.



Obituaries

Sean Kelly Hendrickson



Hendrickson

Sean Kelly Hendrickson, age 34, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2023, at his home in Madison, Wisconsin. He was born on Oct. 5, 1988, to parents Peggy and Jerry Hendrickson at Prince Georges Hospital in Cheverly, M.D. At 14 months, Sean moved with his parents to the Madison area and grew up in Stoughton, Wisconsin. He attended St. Ann's School and graduated from Stoughton High School in 2007.

Growing up, Sean was involved in Boy Scouts, played in the Lacrosse Club, and participated in Stoughton High School Theatre. He worked for Culvers, and later Stoughton Cable TV, filming City Council meetings and Sytende Mai events. Later his skill sets led him

to pursue carpentry work specializing in remodeling, drywall, and painting. His hobbies included being an avid and exceptional disc golfer, and Badgers, Brewers, and Packers fan for many years. As an adult, Sean struggled from time to time with personal demons, but loved family and friends, and lived life to its fullest.

Thank you to all who offered and provided support to Sean and his family through the years. Sean is survived by his parents,

Peggy and Jerry; his sister and brother-in-law, Molly and Kyle Quam; and nephew, Connor. He is further survived by grandparents, Bob and Nancy Butler; aunts and uncles, Cathy and Jeff Witt, Clare Butler, Jeff and Kae Verhey, Matt and Patty Verhey and Jerry Verhey; and cousins, Kevin Nixon, Steve and Avery Nixon and Dayna Verhey.

A private memorial service for the family will occur at a later date.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Online condolences may be made at www.gundersonfh.com.

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Mimi K. Brush

Mimi Brush, 57, of Stoughton, Wisconsin, died on Monday, Jan. 23, 2023, after decades of struggle against Multiple Sclerosis and other health problems which she endured with stoic determination. Before her health made it too difficult to work, Mimi was employed by Demco Inc., for many years and was admired for her energy and work ethic. Mimi made many lasting friendships among her co-workers.

Mimi was preceded in death by her parents, William B. and Marcela C. (Hauser) Brush; and her brother, Peter P. Brush. She is survived by her brothers, William D. (Susan) Brush, Jeffrey P.

(Martha Hagen) Brush and Steven T. (Tammie Schleif) Brush; her sister-in-law, Jeanne Brush; her uncle, Peter J. Hauser; and many nieces and nephews.

The family would like to acknowledge the staff of SSM Health who worked to help Mimi manage her health issues. Special thanks also to dear friends, Kerry, Dave, Tracy and June.

At Mimi's request there will be no service. A celebration of life will be held at a later date. Online condolences may be made at www.gundersonfh.com.

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Joseph G. "Jay" Hatheway

Joseph G. "Jay" Hatheway, Jr., age 73, passed away on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023. Online condolences may be made at www.gundersonfh.com.

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