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The Birkie challenges Lake Country skiers

Annual event brought 362 athletes from Waukesha County

By Kelly Smith
Special to The Freeman

CABLE — At about 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, Elizabeth Loya, 46, of Pewaukee, stepped into the starting gate of the 44th annual American Birkebeiner with mixed emotions.

She anxiously waited for the gate to lift so she and scores of other skiers in her starting wave could race into the Chequamegon National Forest.

She dedicated herself to a rigorous fitness regime for two years, so she could navigate the serenely beautiful yet challenging 50-kilometer (about 32 miles) course with in her goal of six hours.

However, she was also grieving the death of her father, who died the week before from a virulent form of cancer.

“I figured my Dad was so strong for the last six weeks. I can find strength for six hours on Saturday,” she explained.

“I really had to keep my emotions in check,” she added.

“With about 5 kilometers left in the race, I was a bit nostalgic about my dad, since my parents bought me my first cross country skis when I was a pre-teen, and my first experiences on skis were with them,” Loya concluded.

She said nostalgia turned to exhilaration as she neared the finish line.

She skied up and over the 14-foot-high, makeshift wooden bridge that enables skiers to cross Highway 63 in downtown Hayward.

She glided down onto Main Street where thousands of

spectators were packed three to five deep on the sidewalks clanging cow bells and cheering on skiers.

She finished the race in 5 hours, 22 minutes.

A long journey

Almost 24 hours earlier, Jennifer Stuber, 31, of the Town of Genesee, stood in the starting gates for the Kortelopet.

“The Kortie” is a shorter race (29 kilometers) run on the lower half of “The Birkie” course on Friday, the day before the big race.

Since she was 17 weeks pregnant, Jennifer sought the approval of her doctor before competing.

She completed the approximately 18-mile course in 2 hours and 22 minutes.

“I wasn’t going to come all of the way up here and not ski,” she quipped.

Jennifer, her husband, Tom, and 2-year-old son Cameron, made the five-hour drive to Cable to ski and reunite with family members and friends.

“We talk about the Birkie all year as a reunion and weekend of fun and skiing,” Tom Stuber added.

“We use it as a chance to stay connected as a family and stay connected with friends,” he explained.

Stuber, 31, is an elite skier whose annual goal is to be among the top 50 finishers in the freestyle competition.

He finished 41st with a personal best of 2:14, five minutes faster than in 2016 when he skated 2:19 and finished 29th.

The times were faster this year because of an influx of



Special to The Freeman
Jennifer Stuber of the Town of Genesee shows her 2-year-old son, Cameron, and husband, Tom, the medal she received for completing the 29-kilometer Kortelopet race at the 44th annual Slumberland American Birkebeiner. Stuber, 17 weeks pregnant, completed the 18-mile course in 2:22.



Special to The Freeman
Skiers glide towards the half way mark of the 44th annual Slumberland American Birkebeiner between Cable and Hayward Wisconsin on Feb. 24.

See BIRKIE, PAGE 2A

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INSIDE



Going extra miles to help Guatemala

Page 4A

Friends, rivals share honors

Page 4B



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MARCH 2018

Sculpting a life: Hartland artist Bryan Berenson took circuitous route to find his calling

By Chris Bennett
Special to The Freeman

HARTLAND — If you didn't have a favorite sculptor, you do now. Bryan Berenson can be defined as a renaissance man in the truest sense of the word.

Berenson, who is based in Hartland, recently spent time in Nevada, where he carved his father's tombstone.

"It was good to have sun," Berenson said. "Carving your parents' tombstone — it's nice to give back to them. It's a gift I have, and I was happy to give back."

Berenson said his father passed on a few years ago. His mother is still alive and lives in Nevada.

Carving a headstone seems exceptional for those who lack the gift of thinking of art in three dimensions. Such thinking and execution forms the backbone of Berenson's life.

It wasn't always that way. His route to sculpting and a life in art was both obvious and circuitous. His route to becoming a master sculptor included time in the Army, and also as a diesel mechanic.

Berenson graduated from Waukesha North High School in 1982. He came from a military family and enlisted in the Army following high school.

The Army trained Berenson as a diesel mechanic, and he served in Germany. He toured castles and cathedrals while overseas, and said he wonders if that's where his passion for sculpting got its first spark.

Berenson's body betrayed him during his time in the Army. He was diagnosed with reactive arthritis, and

"The biggest thrill is when the client receives what they asked me to sculpt for them and I see their face or hear a reaction."

— Bryan Berenson, master sculptor

his condition grew progressively worse.

He left the military, returned to Wisconsin and worked locally as a diesel mechanic. Eventually, the work became too much for his body, and he moved on.

'The light bulb went on'

Carving and artistry were always in his blood — dating back to his time in high school — but it took a trip overseas with his wife, Jennifer, to change everything.

"I didn't know for sure until my wife and I went overseas and visited that school in Austria," Berenson said. "We went over for two weeks, and I took a course.

"When I was in that course, the light bulb went on. This was the career I wanted to follow."

Berenson and his wife ventured overseas in 1999. He served a five-year-long apprenticeship at the Geisler-Moroder Woodcarving School in Elbigenalp, Austria, in the state of Tyrol in western Austria.

According to his website — <http://btbsculptor.com> — Berenson became certified as a wood and stone sculptor upon passing an eight-hour-long examination in

2004.

Berenson took master examination preparation courses at the Geisler Moroder Woodcarving School in 2013 and 2014 and, in 2015, passed the rigorous master sculptor's examination and earned the title of master sculptor. The certified title is honored throughout Europe.

"I have a passion for what I am doing," Berenson said. "I love the whole process. The biggest thrill is when the client receives what they asked me to sculpt for them and I see their face or hear a reaction.

"That gives me the greatest satisfaction."

Berenson said he loves the smell of both wood and stone as he carves. He also enjoys the process of coming up with a design.

He said his favorite medium is wood, but he also enjoys marble, and his work is done with mallet and chisel.

"The process hasn't changed too much over the years," Berenson said. "I don't do anything mass-produced. I don't use CNC machining.

"Other than that, the process has pretty been the same since Michelangelo."

Berenson said he derives his livelihood from doing work for a church supply company that hires him to restore statues, and also through private commissions.

It took Berenson several years and a different career before he found his calling. He does not intend to quit what he is doing anytime soon.

"I'll do this until the day I die, if I can," Berenson said. "Until I no longer can."

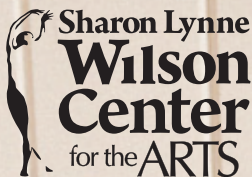


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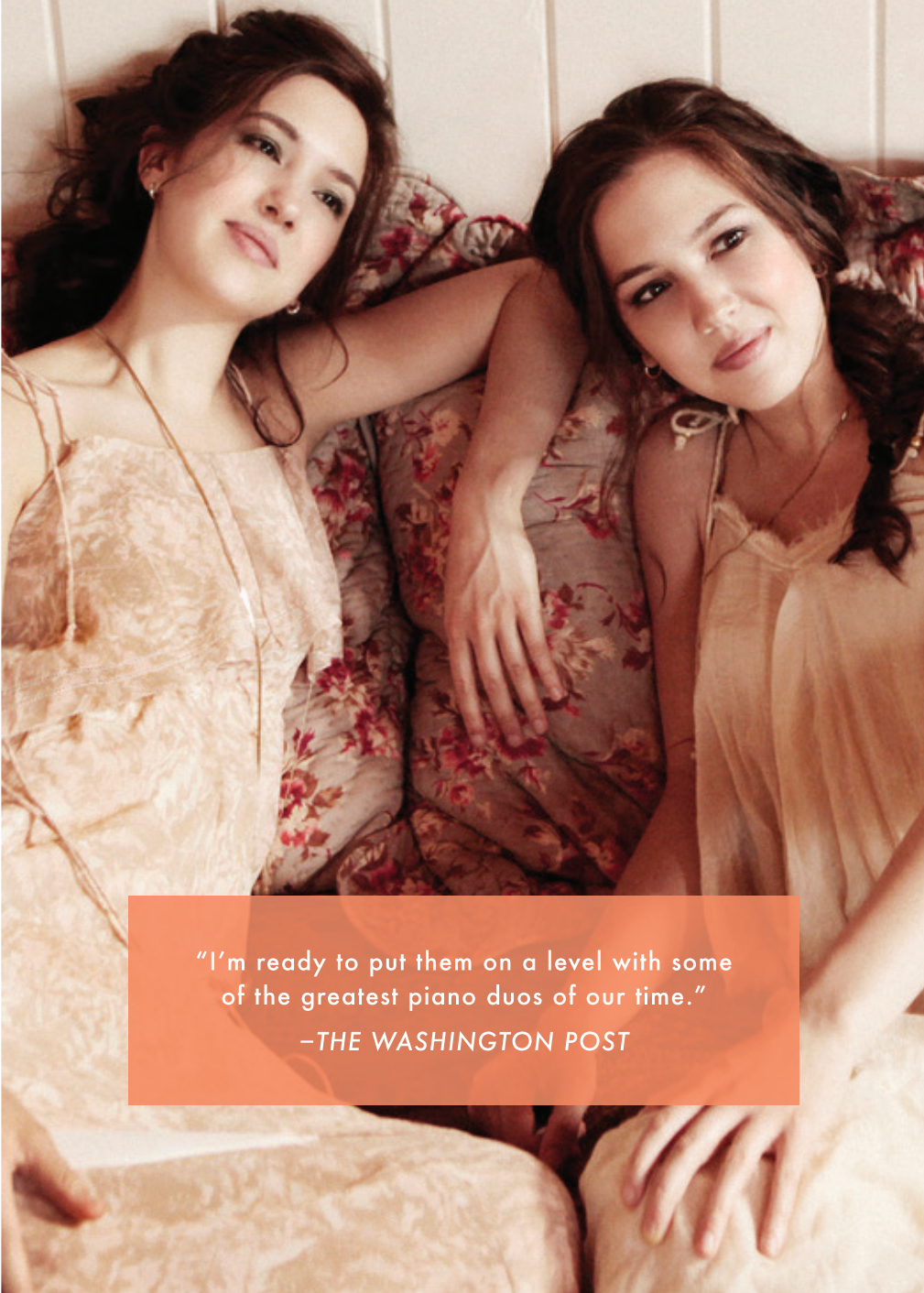
Master Sculptor Bryan Berenson is at home working with both stone and wood.



Bryan Berenson works with a church supply company to restore statues, as well as on private commissions.



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Across from the Waukesha WOODMAN'S



Special to The Freeman
Tom "Doc" Klein of the Town of Ottawa prepares his skis for the 55-kilometer classic race at 44th annual Slumberland American Birkebeiner between Cable and Hayward. He completed his 32nd Birkie with a time of 4:12.



Special to The Freeman
Thomas Stuber of the Town of Genesee prepares to start in the elite wave of the 44th Slumberland American Birkebeiner in Cable. He finished 49th with a personal best of 2:14.

Birkie

From Page 1A

international skiers, he later explained.

Difficult conditions

Some skiers were challenged by the nearly foot of snow that fell on Thursday night and Saturday morning temperatures that went from near zero to 34 degrees in about two hours.

"I quickly noticed that the snow was challenging for me. It was deep. I also realized my wax was set too warm, and I had a disappointing glide throughout the race," explained John Heimsch, 49, of Pewaukee, who finished in 5:07 in his 21st Birkie competition.

The starting gate, about the size of a football field, is adjacent to an air strip about four miles east of Cable, population 825, a southern Bayfield county hamlet settled in the late 1850s by railroad crews and lumberjacks.

More than 5,000 classic and freestyle competitors are divided into about 20 groups, called waves.

Each wave, some with more than 100 skiers, begins at the first pen, proceeds to the second pin, and moves into the third pen as the wave in front leaves the starting line.

The course winds its way through hilly forests and fields, across Lake Hayward and into downtown Hayward, a Sawyer County town (pop. 2,318) settled by a lumber baron in the 1870s.

"Gorgeous" was a word often used by skiers describing the beauty of the sun shining down on the trail lined with conifers covered in freshly fallen snow.

After about 13 miles, the trail crossed Highway OO, where hundreds of fans stood along the trail shouting encouragement, clanging cow bells, and blasting air horns, as skiers whizzed past.

"It is a long day in the woods," explained Jerry Kania, 61, of Pewaukee, a veteran of 20 Birkies.

A fall during the race made the day longer. "I was instantly covered in snow and knew immediately I did something bad to my right shoulder," Kania explained.

"If I bore down too hard on my right pole there was twangy sensation in my shoulder. I fine tuned my motions to prevent that, so the pain was manageable," he added.

Kania finished in 5:53.

A family event

About a dozen skiers acknowledged to The Freeman that Birkie Weekend is as much a family-friendly winter festival as a ski competition.

"After you get past the first wave of skiers, there really isn't much competition," observed Mary Braunsdorf of St. Francis, a veteran of four Birkies and a Kortie.

Each of the approximately 8,000 adult skiers is accompanied by an average of 2.5 family members or friends, according to tourism studies, which means there are 25,000 to 30,000 people on the streets of Hayward from Friday through Sunday.

Most of the available motel and resort accommodations within an hour's drive are booked months in advance.

Bars and restaurants are jammed with patrons who may have to wait for an hour and a half for a table.

Personal vehicles are not allowed to be parked in downtown, which means cars are parked bumper to bumper on both sides of narrow residential streets.

School buses are used to shuttle spectators and skiers from giant parking lots on the edge of town to various venues along the course.

"Most of us are not competitors. We are participants. We are here for the fun," said John Nowak of Glendale.

Anders Gloersen of Oslo, Norway, had the fastest time with 2:02:29 in the men's freestyle. Kyle Bratrud of Verona finished third with 2:02:33.

Caitlin Gregg of Minneapolis won the women's freestyle for a fifth time with 2:23:30.

There were 362 skiers from Waukesha County, according to registration figures, and most of them were from the Lake Country region.

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Ephemera often carries minimal value

Vintage paper items fall into the category of “ephemera,” one of the most misunderstood group of collectibles. Most paper-based items were discarded after a brief use and were never intended to have lasting value. Some examples could include magazine inserts, holiday decorations, greeting cards, diaries, invitations, menus, letters, photographs, sheet music, and events or sports tickets to name a few. The past habit of gluing paper items into albums has been a detriment in many cases. Along with that, ephemera is perceived to still have no value and is tossed into dumpsters.

The higher-value ephemera collectibles are closely linked to items with a historical significance, personality connection, disastrous event or are cross-collectible, (desirable to more than one collecting group). Note that many old postcards have little or no value, however, the stamp might carry a collecting value. Postal markings from short-term post office branches, like gold-mining or logging camps, are very collectible, with additional value if it is a photo postcard.

Q.: I purchased an old four-drawer chest in 1970 and have used it for storage. Recently I wanted to refinish it and found these two paper calendars under the drawer liners. Do they have any value?
— M.M., Hartland

A.: In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, using paper calendars as a promotional gift was big business. With no TV or radio advertising, print was the No. 1 method to sell most anything. Both text and graphics were more about product promotion with a small attached calendar appearing to be an afterthought. The first calendar was given to customers for free but most additional copies could be purchased for 6 cents. Colorful illustrations helped sell business endeavors,



BARBARA EASH

Antiques Appraised

sewing thread, tractors, food items, medicine, chicken feed, cook stoves and many other consumer-driven products. Wall calendars with lavish decorations were designed to hang in prominent places and were more desirable than table-style that often got lost on cluttered desktops. More than a trifle gift, some customers felt entitled to their free annual calendar and some would become disgruntled if business practices changed.

Your 1895, heart-shaped calendar with the “Warm & Cold Weather Girls” was part of the mega-advertising campaign from the Charles Ira Hood Co. of Lowell, Mass. He was a pharmacist who perfected his own ailment formulas in an era when medicines were unregulated. From 1891 to 1920, he owned the largest medicine companies and claimed to have the most patents in the U.S. In addition, he operated 20 printing presses, generating over 6 million promotional items per year. Sarsaparilla was a sweet drink claiming to “help in all blood disorders.” Among other ingredients, his formula had 18 percent alcohol.

This calendar needs to be in perfect condition to have a value of **\$16.00**

Your charming 1904 bird calendar advertises the Fox Lake Hotel in Dodge County. The printing firm of Dunker & Williams in Chicago designed and marketed this heavy card-stock style. When calendar pages were torn off, the birdseed cups became more visible and the hotel logo advertisement remained. There is minor damage to the ribbon edges but colors are brilliant and most impor-

tantly, the complete 12-month pad is intact. Having a regional value from a notable hotel, the feathered friends calendar is worth **\$38.00**.

A good example of cross-collectible ephemera is this vintage Marquette vs. Kansas State official football program. On Friday, Oct. 6, 1939, fans shelled out an extra 25 cents for a paper program of the night game held at the Milwaukee University Stadium. The Marquette Golden Avalanche team was inter-collegiate and later renamed the “Warriors” in 1954. Sports memorabilia will always have a following, so don’t discard — your kids or grandkids might thank you. This mint condition, official game program has a regional value of **\$50.00**.

(Barbara Eash is a member of the Certified Appraisers Guild of America, specializing in appraisals of antiques and collectibles and has extensive experience writing and speaking about antiques.)

Submit an item for consideration

Do you have an item or collection of items that could be shared in a future newspaper column? Let Barbara Eash hear about it!

To have your item or collection considered send the following information: up to three, sharp, well-lit photos of front & back of the item(s), measurements as well as any history or hearsay, length of ownership and your full name, address and daytime phone number. Mail: Waukesha Antique Shop, ATTN: Barbara Eash, 1427 E. Racine, Ave. Unit E-2, Waukesha, WI 53186 or email: beappraisals@gmail.com. If your item(s) are considered for a future column, we will contact you. No photos can be returned and no purchase of items will occur.



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The cute store

Décor Adore Boutique owner loves design, customers

By Chris Bennett
Special to The Freeman

HARTLAND — The word that seems to best define Sarah Fitch’s life is emblazoned on a wall in her store. Fitch runs Décor Adore Boutique, which is located at 139 E. Capitol Drive, Suite 2, in downtown Hartland. Knowing the name of her store, her favorite word should come as no surprise — adore. The definition that accompanies the word says that to adore is to regard with loving admiration and devotion. Fitch does this with everyone she meets, and transfers that love to helping them live in interior spaces that are beautiful and inviting. “I’m probably one of the nicest people you’ll ever meet,” Fitch said. “I care deeply about every person I meet.” Fitch freely admits her store is known as “The Cute Store” in downtown Hartland, and it’s a moniker she embraces. The nickname is the result of not knowing what else to write on the sandwich board outside her store. “A few years ago, I wrote ‘Cute Shop,’” Fitch said. “I was so tired, and the board you have to have something every day to write on it. “Now, people say, ‘I was driving by, and I had to see if it was cute.’ I don’t ever redo the sandwich board. I just leave it. It’s cute. It works. It’s funny.” Fitch started her business in 2009, at the height of the Great Recession. She grew up in Hartford, near Beaver Lake, and said opening a store in downtown Hartland was a dream come true. Décor Adore Boutique sells fine furnishings, unique gifts and customized décor. “It was do or die for me,” Fitch said. “I just had an idea — that I wanted to have a store. I wanted to create something of my own.” Fitch is going on 25 years in the interior design and décor industry, and previously studied and worked in Chicago. She studied at Chicago’s Loyola Universi-



Submitted photo
Décor Adore Boutique owner Sarah Fitch stands in front of her business, which sells furnishings, gifts and customized decor in downtown Hartland.

ty, and also at the Milwaukee School of Floral Design. Fitch said she opened her boutique out of a desire for people to know her passion. Fitch knows what she loves. “I love beauty,” Fitch said. “I have a passion for creating beautiful environments. When I have a customer that wants me in their home, or comes into the store, I have not only myself but my employees that are passionate and very qualified.” Fitch said those among us who do not specialize in design get held up on bare walls. What is a nightmare for some is a canvas for Fitch. “Many times, you just know when it’s right,” Fitch said. “You order a sofa and a rug and a table and it all clicks, and it creates a space where people are going to live and love and laugh.” Accents and color are among Fitch’s best attributes. She said she also pays keen attention to the scale of a room and works to ensure something is not comically oversized or undersized for the space in which her customer — her friend — lives and breathes. All of Fitch’s expertise comes with an added benefit. Fitch spends a lot of time immersed in beauty and being good to people, but she also knows how to run a business. Her prices are affordable and competitive. Fitch said she can order or find just about anything a customer desires, and she and her staff bring to attention to every situation — something the internet lacks. “I offer personal attention the minute you walk in the door,” Fitch said. “You’re going to get all the attention and help you need. “Everyone who works at my store is gracious and accommodating, and superb. Any of them can help you with your situation.” Learn more about Décor Adore Boutique at decoradoreboutique.com.

CITY OF PEWAUKEE

City willing to match up to \$15,000 in donations for fireworks

By Kelly Smith
Special to The Freeman

CITY OF PEWAUKEE — Summer must be just around the corner, despite an early March snowstorm, because there is at least one Lake Country local government that is beginning to plan for the Fourth of July. The Common Council has unanimously agreed to offer up to \$15,000 in matching funds to pay for fireworks on the Fourth. The city will match any amount of money up to \$15,000 raised through either private donations, or perhaps a donation from the village of Pewaukee, to fund the fireworks. City officials are hoping that a private donation fund drive, coordinated by Parks Director Kelley Woldanski, can repeat its previous accomplishment of raising about \$13,000. Most of that money came from corporate contributions, according to Mayor Steve Bierce. City administrator and former Mayor Scott Klein

cautioned that some of those private donations may not be made in the future if the city is going to use public funds for the fireworks. Bierce reviewed with the council the history of fireworks funding. He explained that the city, the village, and the convention and tourism bureau in the past helped fund the fireworks. However, he added, for a combination of reasons the tourism bureau and the municipalities have discontinued public funding. He said organizers of the fireworks display, which is held in the village, now must rely on privately raised funds. The council agreed with him that fireworks were an appropriate part of the community’s Fourth of July celebration and perhaps there should be public funds in an effort to upgrade the fireworks display. Initially the discussion revolved around a plan where the city would contribute \$5,000, the village might chip in another \$5,000, and \$5,000 might be raised privately. “I have no problem spending money on this. It makes Pewaukee a better community,” said Alderman Jeff Kara, who suggested the ante be raised to \$10,000. “The impact on the taxpayers will be minuscule. This is something that can bring the community together,” he added. The city’s annual budget is about \$25.7 million and its tax levy of about \$9 million produces a tax rate of about \$3.19 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Aldermen Ray Groesch and Brandon Bergman added the local fireworks display needed improvement and it is been shorter and of lower quality than fireworks in surrounding communities. “It is embarrassing,” said Groesch. The council concurred with Bergman’s recommendation that the city be willing to match up to \$15,000 private donations or donations from the village.

Pewaukee native sports a bikini while racing her snowmobile, all for charity



It was a balmy 10 degrees with snow falling when 19-year-old Chloe Krumenacher of Pewaukee, dressed in nothing more than a bikini, hopped on her snowmobile to race down the snowy race track in St. Germain on February 3. This was the fourth year she has participated in the St. Germain Bikini Radar Run, a fundraiser for Pink Ribbon Riders, which is a nonprofit organization that provides financial assistance to men and women battling breast cancer. As avid snowmobilers and having family members battle breast cancer it seems so natural for the Krumenach-

ers to combine their love of snowmobiling with efforts to help a worthy cause. Chloe and her family raised just over \$1,450 for Pink Ribbon Riders this year and over \$9,100 in the past four years. In Chloe’s radar run she hit 77 mph down the 660ft snow track. Her participation in the radar run was sponsored by Royal Roost in Pewaukee and Moon Shiners Snowmobile Club of Pewaukee.

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Area families going the extra miles to lift others up

Oconomowoc residents make world of difference through Guatemala Service Projects

By Rebecca Seymour
Special to The Freeman

OCONOMOWOC — Jennifer and John Demar of Oconomowoc adopted two children from Guatemala when they were toddlers — Maria in 2001 and Scott in 2002.

“When we went to Guatemala we saw so much poverty, but we also saw warmth and friendliness. We knew we wanted to return when our children were older so they could have a better understanding about their birth country,” said Jennifer Demar.

In 2015, the family, including their daughter, Sarah, travelled back to Guatemala to explore and learn about the culture. They also helped deliver school supplies and bunkbeds to homes within the community they were visiting.

“We had the opportunity to see how families live in this developing country and we were all moved to tears. As for me, my life was changed forever. I knew that service work and helping the people of Guatemala would be in the forefront for a very long time,” explained Demar.

Trent Faith of Oconomowoc also had a life-changing experience when he traveled to Guatemala on a 10-day transcultural health care trip he took with Waukesha County Technical College in 2016.

“We toured clinics and I saw firsthand the health care challenges these people are faced with. I was extremely touched by what I witnessed and I wanted to do more,” he said.

Faith started a GoFundMe site to raise funds to pursue his mission to support families in Guatemala. He and his teenage son, J.T., returned to Guatemala later that year to work with the nonprofit organization Mayan Families to help deliver and install efficient wood stoves and water filters in homes.

When the Demar and

Faith families discovered they shared the same passion to help the impoverished people of Guatemala, they decided to join forces and in October 2016, created a nonprofit corporation called Guatemala Service Projects Inc.

“Guatemala brought us together and now we are united as a force to try to lift these people out of the depths of poverty through projects that improve the health and education of Guatemalan children and families,” said Faith.

Building a future

The group's first project included building a library for an elementary school located in the small village Canton Rio Camanibal in rural Guatemala. The Demar and Faith families traveled to the village in August 2017 to help build the bookcases for the library.

They also brought nearly 20 suitcases filled with 700 Spanish-language books to stock the shelves, as well as 25 tablets and a connected RACHEL (Remote Area Community Hotspot for Education and Learning) server preloaded with educational software, games and learning activities.

“School supplies and consumables are very hard to come by and this was the first exposure to technology in this community,” said Demar.

Through fundraising efforts, the group also donated six stoves and three water filters to another community, San Jorge La Laguna. They also had the opportunity to deliver an ultrasound machine, which was donated by a Stone Bank Girl Scout troop to a local medical clinic.

“It meant a lot that I could go to the country where I was born and give back to the people who live there. Seeing the smiles of all the students we were helping made me feel really good,” said Scott Demar, 17.

“I learned that I should be

really grateful for what we have and it feels really good that we are helping other people,” added Sarah Demar, 10.

Faith traveled back to Guatemala with WCTC this last January to help facilitate a well child check-up clinic in the isolated town of San Jorge, which does not have a health clinic or pharmacy. Guatemala Service Projects co-sponsored the clinic with WCTC.

“It means a lot that I can help make a difference in people's lives. I feel compassionate toward this country and its beautiful people. It has had such a positive impact and has changed how I live my life,” said Faith.

New challenge

This year, the nonprofit organization is also focused on supporting the Nuevo Reto (Spanish for “New Challenge”) youth transition home located on the outskirts of Guatemala City. The home provides education, shelter, food and basic necessities for about 25 children between the ages of 5 and 20.

Guatemala Service Projects is committed to helping build and stock a library for Nuevo Reto, donating tools for the carpentry workshop, a stove and food service items for the community meal program and sponsoring a student to attend school this year.

The founder of Nuevo Reto, the Rev. Jacob Castillo, stayed with the Demar family in late February and had the opportunity to speak with local churches, organizations and the Oconomowoc High School Spanish Honor Society about his mission work in Guatemala.

“Guatemala Service Projects gives me another sense of purpose. It's a calling and a chance to help others who need us. It also honors Scott and Maria's heritage and is a way to give something back to a country that gave me two children,” added Jennifer Demar.

The organization is currently raising funds for this year's projects and will host a rummage sale this spring. For more information, visit www.guatstp.org.



Submitted photo

Andrea Brockman, surgical technology student at WCTC, and Trent Faith of Guatemala Service Projects helped facilitate a well child check-up clinic this last January in the isolated town of San Jorge. Guatemala Service Projects co-sponsored the clinic with WCTC.



Submitted photo

Officers for the Guatemala Service Projects nonprofit organization include Jennifer Demar and Trent Faith of Oconomowoc and Jen Scratch of Dodgeville. The three families posed for a group photo during an open house about their mission in 2016. Pictured front row, from left: Barret Faith, Sarah Demar, Julian Scratch, Jen Scratch and Ron Scratch; back row, from left: J.T. Faith, Cindi Faith, Trent Faith, Jennifer Demar, John Demar and Scott Demar.



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O'Toole wins second straight title

Otto also champ at 152 pounds

By Dave Radcliffe
dradcliffe@conley.net.com
262.513-2655

MADISON — On a night where all 14 — now 16 — Wisconsin high school four-time state champions were honored, Arrowhead sophomore Keegan O'Toole kept his hopes alive of one day joining them.

But for a few nervous moments, it looked like his quest for a second state title may have hit a significant snag.

Late in the first period, O'Toole laid near the outskirts of the circle grabbing at his left shoulder as injury time was called during the Division 1 132-pound final at the WIAA Individual Wrestling Championship Tournament Feb. 24.

The trainer came out to test O'Toole's range of motion, and it was determined he would be able to continue with his match against D.C. Everest senior Thomas Severson knotted at 1-1.

"Even if they told me I (couldn't keep wrestling) I would have just said, 'I'm going no matter what,'" O'Toole said. "It was just a little stinger. My shoulder just caught fire for that one second, I didn't want to go back out there with being in a lot of pain so I just made sure it was OK."

It was more than OK based on the end result.

O'Toole dominated the final four-plus minutes of the 132-pound final, rolling to a 16-3 major decision as he took control in the second period.

A takedown and near-fall put the sophomore ahead 9-2, and it was all but over from there.

"To be honest I felt perfect after I got that first takedown," O'Toole said. "Once you get the first takedown in a match, it makes you feel a lot more comfortable so I just knew if I kept the pace high, he wouldn't be able to hold up and he didn't."

O'Toole improved to 43-1, coming just a point shy in the first round of winning all four of his matches at the Kohl Center by major decision or pinfall.

Last year at 120 pounds, O'Toole was just as dominant up until the final when he had to grind out a 7-5 decision.

"I know it was my year and I still wanted to dominate, but I was a little young (as a freshman)," O'Toole said. "This year I had the experience and I just had no expectations less than domination."



Mary Langenfeld/Special to The Freeman

Arrowhead's Keegan O'Toole put D.C. Everest's Thomas Severson to the mat in the 132-pound final at the WIAA Division 1 Individual State Wrestling Tournament on Feb. 24 at the Kohl Center.

Dominance he did, and he already has his sights set on the future.

"Ready to get back to the training room," O'Toole said. "We've got team state next week and hopefully we can do some damage there."

O'Toole was emotionless the moments following his second consecutive state championship, as if he was merely taking care of business.

The same can't quite be said of Arrowhead's second gold medal-winning wrestler that Saturday evening, although it's hard to blame him.

Junior Joshua Otto turned in one of the most stunning victories of the night, rallying from a 2-0 deficit in the third period to defeat Kaukauna senior Zach Lee in the 152-pound final.

Otto's Granby roll and escape with just six seconds remaining in the third period coaxed some oohs and aahs from the Kohl Center crowd, giving him a thrilling 3-2 decision.

"I've never hit that before," Otto said.

From there, the final seconds ticked away and a flamboyant Otto gestured toward his opponent after the final whistle, emotionally charged for a number of reasons.

"I probably let my emotions get the best of me there," Otto said. "I was just fired up, man. This is every kid's dream being a state champ. When you reach the pinnacle of your state, it's awesome. I probably shouldn't have done that, but I was just fired up. I was really happy."

Otto (48-1) had reason to be fired up. Both of his points prior to his

escape were awarded due to stalling as the official determined that Lee wasn't making an effort to work over his opponent.

"Really not an ideal situation," Otto said. "You're down 2-0 against a guy like that who's very solid defensively. He kept bringing me down, coming back up like a cat. He got hit with stalling. You've got to make an effort to turn him and I think he held me in the air for 15 seconds. People can boo all they want. It was well-deserved stall calls."

Regardless, Lee put the referee in a difficult position, but rather than holding on for overtime, Otto executed the biggest maneuver of his wrestling career and, as the Arrowhead junior stated, "the rest is history."

Safe to say he doesn't mind playing the role of the villain.

"He's done," Otto said. "Low head, low hands, I won."

Otto would have loved to have senior Dominic Dentino and freshman Jack Ganos join him and O'Toole as state champions, but it wasn't in the cards for the two other Arrowhead finalists.

Dentino had to settle for his second runner-up finish in three years, dropping a 1-0 heartbreaker to Stoughton junior Hunter Lewis in the 120-pound final. Lewis' third-period escape was the only point of the match.

Dentino (41-4) finished second as a sophomore and fourth as a junior in his other two state appearances.

Ganos was also denied a gold medal, running into the buzzsaw that was Hortonville junior Eric Barnett at 113 pounds.

Best of friends, best of players

Harper, Andersen, Classic 8 Co-Players of the Year



CHUCK DELSMAN

They met for the first time about five years ago during the off-season. It was a little awkward at first.

In that first meeting, Caitlyn Harper and Natalie Andersen had never seen or heard of each other before. The only thing they had in common that day was that they were both members of the Milwaukee Prestige girls youth basketball team. Harper was an eighth grader and Andersen was a seventh grader.

"I remember the first time I met Natalie," Harper said, a senior at Arrowhead this season. "Our team that year was mostly girls from the Arrowhead program. Natalie was new to all of us. So I walked up to her and introduced myself and we clicked right away. And since then we've become great friends. We text all the time and also talk on the phone. We've had a great relationship the last five years."

While they've played on the same AAU and summer teams for the last five years, it's ironic how the two longtime teammates also are highly competitive rivals on their two high school teams. Harper is a 6-foot-1 post for Arrowhead and Andersen is a 6-foot-1 junior forward for Mukwonago.

And anybody that follows girls basketball in the Classic 8 Conference and throughout the state knows that Arrowhead and Mukwonago sport one of the most competitive and fiercest rivalries that can be found. So how does that work when the two clash on the hard-court either during the league season or in a pressure-packed WIAA tournament game?

"We talk or text the days leading up to the game but once it's time to play, we don't say much to each other," Andersen said. "Caitlyn knows that I'm going to play my best to try and beat her team and I know she feels the same way. We both really look forward to playing against each other. The Mukwonago-Arrowhead girls basketball rivalry is a big one."

Harper echoed those statements. "It's kind of funny what happens when we play them," she said. "We both start the game by jumping on the opening tip and Natalie always walks into the circle and simply says, it's nice seeing you again. I laugh a little bit and then we start playing. We don't talk again until after the game."

Not only are the two teammates and rivals, both they both happen to be two of the best players in southeastern Wisconsin. And they have the postseason honors to



Submitted photo

Mukwonago junior Natalie Andersen, left, and Arrowhead senior Caitlyn Harper shared the Classic 8 Conference Player of the Year honors. Both teams led their respective school to the state tournament

vouch for that.

In fact, this season, Mukwonago and Arrowhead shared the conference title with 15-1 records, beating each other on their home courts. Harper and Andersen also shared the league's top individual prize. How ironic is that? The two were named the Co-Players of the Year in the conference.

"When Coach Witte told me that I was named the Co-Player of the Year with Natalie I was so happy," Harper said. "I wouldn't want to share it with anybody else. I thought it was so cool that both of us won the award."

Both are having MVP seasons. Harper has put up incredible offensive numbers, the best in the conference. The California Baptist recruit is shooting 59 percent from the field, a brilliant 53 percent from 3-point range and 82 percent from the free-throw line. And Andersen is close behind. She's shooting 48 percent from the floor, 35 percent from the 3-point arc and 82 percent from the foul line.

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