

# Lake Country

## THIS MONTH

Chenequa • Delafield • Hartland • Merton • Nashotah • Okauchee • Pewaukee

# Local boating, RV businesses see increased demand

Boat stores cite 20% increase in sales compared to summer 2019

By Nikki Brahm  
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WAUKESHA — As people have been finding new ways to entertain themselves this summer with COVID-19 present in communities, companies in the boat and recreational vehicle industries are trying to keep up with increased sales.

Tinus Marine in Oconomowoc and Cedar Lake Sales in West Bend both told the Enterprise they have seen about a 20% increase in sales at their boat dealing stores this summer compared to last summer — with increased interest in pontoon and fishing boats.

Tinus Marine Manager Erik Tinus said families in the Lake Country area have been planning to recreate at home together.

“Boating’s just one of the best things you can do with your families,” Tinus said. “You can go out, take your kid tubing, it really gives them basically a water park out on the water. You take them tubing, skiing, hang out and swim ... and I’ve seen that, people keep bringing it up, what else are we going to do? Everything’s canceled so it’s kind of crazy.”

Tinus said sales could increase even more this summer; however, it mostly depends on what inventory they can get hold of.

Alan Bell, co-owner of Cedar Lake Sales in West Bend, said the supply chain has impacted vendors and manufacturers, which has trickled down to the entire industry.

“There’s no question that the majority of these manufacturers are out of state and Michigan was



Submitted photo  
James Scandrett stands in front of boats that were sold recently at Tinus Marine in Oconomowoc.

shut down for so long, so was Indiana, so was Minnesota, three very large states with boat building manufacturers in them, and they are still trying to catch up with sales prior to shutdown in March,” Bell said.

Bell said the store has sold out of its new inventory of 2020 pontoons.

He said Crestliner boats, or aluminum fishing boats, have been more popular at his store this summer.

“I look at our Crestliner ... we’re

into September already for production, it’s kind of mindboggling to me, normally this time of the year it’s four to six weeks (and) we’ll get you a boat pretty quick,” Bell said. “Now it’s going to be fall.”

Not only have the sales departments been impacted, but the service departments at both dealers have taken a hit.

Bell said their service department has a three-week backlog due to difficulty getting parts from manufacturers.



Submitted photo  
Olivia, Sarah and Colton Molitor went rafting at Castle Rock Lake near Mauston recently. Tinus Marine Manager Erik Tinus said he’s noticed an increased interest in tubing, water skiing and swimming this summer.

Long-term, Bell said he is expecting a busy 2021 as the pandemic continues to impact how people interact with each other.

### RVs & motor homes

RVs and motor homes have seen demand that’s been “off the charts,” according to Advance Camping Sales Manager David Draeger in Greenfield.

“I haven’t experienced this much demand ever,” he said. “Granted, it

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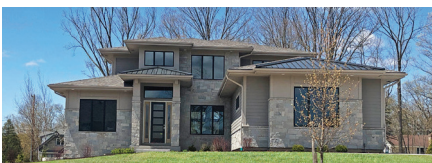
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# Splashin’ around on a summer day

Photos by Alex Nemec • Freeman Staff

HARTLAND — With summer in full swing, families made their way to the Lake Country Rotary Splash Pad on June 30 to cool off from the heat and humidity.



Pierson Chuckel, 6, swipes his hand through a water jet.



Bree Dieringer, 5, runs through the mist.



Isaac Martin, 5, sprays water at the splash pad in Hartland Tuesday.

## New home construction back on track

Buyers eager to move as rates remain low

By Katherine Beck  
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During the height of the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting stay-at-home order, new home construction like most industries took a hit, but area home-building company leaders are saying that the market is getting back on track.

David Belman, president of Belman Homes, Inc., said in the past month the market “has really heated up” after following a period of uncertainty with the pandemic and the stock market taking a downturn. Now that buyers are feeling more confident again, Belman Homes has reopened its models, as well as continuing to offer virtual tours.

“During the safer-at-home, there was definitely a drop in inquiries and it was a lot more challenging to do business,” Belman said. “As soon as that has lifted, it’s been like night and day. People are serious; people who are coming through are sale-qualified leads.”

Scott Thistle, president of Harbor Homes, which is based in Waukesha County, but has building projects in Waukesha, as well as Washington County, said both

sales numbers and traffic have been good for his company, in fact, “surprisingly good.”

“April was very slow. We made a pretty quick comeback,” Thistle said.

Harbor Homes is starting construction on a new home about every two-and-a-half days. He thinks what has helped the home building industry is that people who had homes on the market took them off during the safe-at-home order, which caused people to look for new construction.

Belman said home construction was deemed an essential service so home building never stopped, but he thinks there could be a lag in late summer and early fall as 2019 projects are wrapped up and new orders start.

Kathy Raab, executive director of the Metropolitan Builders Association, said sales are “off the charts.”

“People are anxious to buy, anxious to remodel,” she said. “We just finished up our spring tour and the attendance was good. People are booking appointments as fast as they can.”

So this year, Raab said, building permits are on par with last year. Mortgage

rates remain low, helping people to make that home purchase. Even though the pandemic caused concerns among Americans, Raab said she thinks people are starting to feel more secure in the economy once again.

### Building difficulties

Some of the main obstacles to new home building pre-pandemic remain, such as finding affordable lots for development, as well as hiring skilled labor.

Raab said it remains hard to find new home construction for around \$250,000, partly because of lot prices which remain higher because many communities require less density in new developments. Also, building products are more expensive.

Belman agrees that affordability is the number one challenge for the industry.

He said during the COVID-19 emergency, lumber yards reduced production, which brought up costs, and there are some supply chain issues. That in turn also creates time delays.

Belman Homes, which has developments in the Waukesha area, has about a

### By the numbers

- 1,345 building permits for residential units in Wisconsin in April 2020
- 31.6% decline in building permits from April 2020 to April 2019
- 170 lots in Washington County in 2019, compared to 451 in 2000
- 379 lots in Waukesha County in 2019, compared to 1,372 in 2000

Source: David Belman, president of Belman Homes, and New Residential Construction Report

dozen homes fully under construction, with about 20 being the normal amount.

Pebble Brook Hollow in the Village of Waukesha off Oakdale Drive is a Belman Homes project under construction. He said people are seeing earth movers on the land, which is generating a lot of interest.

Harbor Homes has home sites in Germantown, Grafton and Sussex.

“The market is in pretty good shape. The inventory is still at an all-time low,” Thistle said.

When COVID-19 struck southeastern Wisconsin, credit tightened, Thistle said, which is also causing would-be buyers to be more price conscious.

To help buyers find the right home for them, Harbor Homes has focused on improving its online platform and creating more video content and doing vir-

tual tours. They also rolled out a website virtualizer, which can change colors like those of counter tops.

“We have been focused since the end of Match on the technology side so we can continue to have customers interact with our business and our products so that’s not diminished in any way,” Thistle said.

Belman said they have also taken steps to offer services as people want them during the pandemic.

He said Belman Homes limits the number of people in a model home at one time, asks that people don’t come if they have symptoms and have hand sanitizer for use. They also offer virtual tours of their homes.

“For home building and the market, we are going to see a surge in the next couple of months,” Belman said.

## Tie Up Bar and Grill opening in Okauchee

By Alex Nemec  
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OKAUCHEE — A new bar named Tie Up Bar and Grill is coming onto the scene in Okauchee and will be making its grand opening on the same day as the annual Okauchee Tie Up on July 25.

Tie Up, N50-W34959 Wisconsin

Ave., is replacing the old Between the Lakes restaurant that closed in May.

Tie Up owner Reece Block — who also owns the Sorrento House in Wales and recently purchased Sweet Dreams in Hartland — said he hopes to bring a fun atmosphere to the bar and restaurant.

Included in that is garage doors

that will be on the front of the building and look out toward Wisconsin Avenue.

Block said Okauchee is growing fast which is part of what drew him to opening the bar.

“What wouldn’t draw you to Okauchee? It’s hot for the lack of a better term,” Block said. “I love the atmosphere of Okauchee, obvi-

ously with the lake, and it has a lot of activities, events and places where people can hop from bar to bar.

“I think we have a great opportunity to get in on that. It’s the perfect place really to walk around downtown.”

Block said the bar will have food, as well, including appetizers, sand-

wiches, burgers and wraps. In addition, the bar is exploring some tropical menu items.

Come July 25 on their grand opening, Block said the bar will have a limited menu.

“We plan to slowly unveil menu items as we just get our feet on the ground and think it’s time,” he said.

## Sales

From Page 1

is peak season for RVs but it’s been way more than normal.”

Draeger said with the uncertainty of the pandem-

ic, he is expecting the increased sales will continue to impact the RV industry for a couple years.

“I think it was on an upward trend anyway as baby boomers were retiring and embracing the RV lifestyle, even families, but

now it’s kind of pushed a whole bunch of people that didn’t even think about it in the past into the industry and the lifestyle,” Draeger said.

Draeger said while the business’ lot is normally packed full at this time of the

year with inventory, it’s been taking a while to get inventory to the store due to impacts on the supply chain.

Lake Country Rentals owner Ben Prescher said there’s been increased interest this summer as well.

“I’m getting calls all the

time, it’s overwhelming,” Prescher said. “(It was) ... two to five a week and now I’m getting 20 (calls) a day, yeah it’s a little overwhelming,” he said.

Overall, Draeger said the “unprecedented demand” is because of a growing appre-

ciation for these recreational activities.

“I think people are enjoying the simpler things in life at this moment too, which leads to camping, traveling and being with their family,” he said.



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# Tobin’s closing after 106 years of business

## COVID-19 final blow for Oconomowoc staple

By Alex Nemec  
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OCONOMOWOC — After over 100 years in business, Tobin’s in Oconomowoc will be closing its doors this fall due to “multiple reasons,” with COVID-19 being the final blow to the iconic Lake Country pharmacy.

Owner Dave Schultz said the biggest reason behind the closing is the lack of reimbursement for its pharmacy services — which represents over 50% of Tobin’s business.

“We’re currently being paid below the actual cost of the medication on 24% of the prescriptions we fill,” Dave said.

Schultz said Tobin’s final day of business will be Oct. 14, at which point Thirst Church will move in. Thirst announced the move on its Facebook page on July 6.

To help try and alleviate the loss in revenue from the pharmaceutical companies, both Dave and his brother Doug Schultz went to Madison last year to testify before the state Legislature about how the practices in place were killing indepen-

dent pharmacies.

“There need to be laws in place to prevent this manipulative, monopolistic practices going on because it’s literally shutting down all of the independent family-owned pharmacies,” Doug said.

When their testimony fell flat with the state leaders, no change was brought and their last chance to keep their business failed, Doug said, they began looking at selling the business in January.

As part of closing, Dave said Tobin’s will continue to service its pharmacy and hearing aid customers until September.

“I know some people are going to be concerned, but that will be taken care of,” Dave said.

### Tough to say goodbye

Dave and Doug have owned the business since 1981 and Dave said Tobin’s has been their life the last 39 years.

“The toughest part about closing is going to be missing the relationships we’ve had with our employees, our customers and our patients,” Dave said.

Doug said the brothers thought about closing the pharmacy portion of the business and just operating it as a retail store, but decided against it.

“We would’ve lost the foot traffic that the pharmacy brings in,” Doug said. “So I don’t think it would’ve been a good idea. The whole gamut of natural products, over the counter products and pharmacy products, it all goes together.”

Doug said the process has been an emotional roller coaster for him because Tobin’s has been such an iconic part of the community since 1973. That’s when Dave and Doug’s father Don bought the business.

“From ’73 to now is a long time. We’ve had an impact on the community because people love to come somewhere where they get great service, great people to talk to,” Doug said. “We’ve always driven to give people the best possible service we can give them and the most knowledgeable people working here.”

In comments on a Facebook post about Tobin’s closing, customers and residents expressed their sad-



Alex Nemec/Enterprise Staff

Dave Schultz, middle left, and his brother Doug Schultz, middle right, stand with their wives Shirley, left, and Ruth, right, Tuesday afternoon. Dave and Doug announced they would be closing Tobin’s on Oct. 14.

ness.

Dave said the staff at Tobin’s greatly appreciates the support the store has received from the commu-

nity for the last 40-plus years.

“That’s what meant the most, that’s what makes you go the extra yard when

people send you thank you cards for doing what we consider routine things for them,” Dave said. “That means a lot.”

# Ben Franklin Crafts closing after 47 years of business

By Alex Nemec  
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OCONOMOWOC — The Ben Franklin Crafts store announced on Facebook July 6 that it would not be renewing its lease and will close its doors on Oct. 3 — but not without sadness.

“We are sad for our Ben Franklin family, for our customers and the community,” the post states. “But after watching the trends of brick and mortar retailing and exhausting other options, renewing our expiring lease was just not the right choice.”

The store, which has been in Oconomowoc for the last 47 years according to the Facebook post, wanted to thank its customers.

“So many of you have become our friends,” the post reads. “We will dearly miss talking with you; laughing with you and being a part of your creative lives.

“Please continue to shop local. It’s important to support the businesses that support the community.”

In 1973, former owner John Ray left his 25-year career with J.C. Penney to open the Ben Franklin Family Center — taking a huge risk to invest the family’s life savings to pursue their dream of owning their own business, a statement from the current owners Shirley Ray, Stephanie Rose and Thomas Ray states.

“John was innovative, focused, and hard-working and was present at the store nearly every day in the early years,” the statement

reads. “John actively managed the business for many years and was behind the store’s shift from general merchandising to the then-emerging interest in crafts.”

### Community responds

In a Facebook post about Ben Franklin announcing its closing, Oconomowoc resident Jill Persick said her mom was into crafting including carving, crocheting and knitting. However, she said she didn’t get that gene.

“But to keep her memory close after she passed, I took a class at Ben Franklin to learn how to crochet a dishcloth,” Persick said. “I could imagine her laughing from the afterlife, but pleased by my sweet attempts.

“I will miss that store.”

Terri Ullman said the Ben Franklin store closing will be a huge loss to the community.

“Our favorite memories have been taking my daughter in to buy her crafts for our trips to northern Wisconsin,” Ullman said. “I have also always just loved walking (through) the store. Rarely left empty-handed.”

The statement from the Rays says it was no secret that it had become challenging to sustain thriving brick-and-mortar, family-owned businesses and that John’s children were not as drawn toward retail as he was.

“The prospect for continued success consistent with the founding philosophy dimmed substantially



Alex Nemec/Enterprise Staff

Mary Poppens looks at different colors of string at Ben Franklin Crafts on July 7.

in recent years leading to this decision to close the store,” the statement reads.

The post states that the store will be “forever grateful” for its dedicated associates because of their creativity and knowledge — an important part of the store’s growth.

“It hurts to think that this creative outlet will no longer be a part of their lives,” the post states.

The Ben Franklin post had almost 400 comments

as of 8 p.m. Monday night with almost all of the commentators expressing their sadness and tagging their friends to let them know the news.

As the store puts the final touches on its closing sale, the post asks patrons to stop in to take advantage of the marked-down products.

“We look forward to seeing you a few more times before we move on to our next great adventure,” the post states.

## Ride to the Barns fundraiser shifts to do-it-yourself event

NASHOTAH — Tall Pines Conservancy has announced that the 12th Annual Ride to the Barns, a popular fundraising cycling ride through Lake Country and rolling farmland in Waukesha, Washington and Dodge counties, will transition to a do-it-yourself rider experience.

This unique twist on a virtual event allows participants to ride a 30-, 45- or 60-mile route at their leisure between Saturday, Aug. 8 and Sunday, Aug. 16, 2020.

Registrants will receive printed maps as well as digital route links and will be able to park their vehicles at the traditional start and finish location of Camp/Quad in Hartford.

“Our entire team spent considerable time researching and evaluating strategies to possibly host an in-person event,” said Tall Pines Conservancy Executive Director Susan Buchanan. “The resultant changes would significantly reduce the high-quality rider experience and would result in a 50% reduction in registration capacity. Most importantly, ensuring the safety for our hosts, sponsors, volunteers, riders and staff was critical to our decision.”

Also new this year are discounts for teams of six or more and a scavenger hunt contest. Both teams and individual riders will be challenged to locate features in the landscape that highlight TPC’s mission and protected farms. Each team member will be entered into a drawing to win a personalized team party in 2021 at Serenity Farm or Folk Song Farm featuring food and music. Individual riders will be entered into a separate drawing to win a guided bicycle trip of Napa Valley. Other rider benefits include a swag bag with coupons and other goodies featuring local farms and local food from Tall Pines Conservancy sponsors and other supporters.

To register for this year’s ride, visit [tallpinesconservancy.org/ride-to-the-barns](http://tallpinesconservancy.org/ride-to-the-barns).

### IN BRIEF

#### COVID-19 risks prompt cancelation of Beach Party

PEWAUKEE — The Kiwanis Club of Pewaukee has announced the cancellation of the its annual Beach Party event.

In a press release issued July 7, the organization said the risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic ultimately prompted the decision.

“Conditions are such that we felt we could not deliver the Beach Party experience our community has come to expect,” club leaders state in the release, while thanking sponsors and volunteers for their commitment this year’s event.

While canceling the event will have its impact on the club, the group has activated its contingency plan in order to continue its financial support for community organizations over the next year, the release states.

Those interested in donating to the Kiwanis Club of Pewaukee community support efforts can do so by sending checks to: Pewaukee Kiwanis Foundation, PO Box 131, Pewaukee, WI 53072.

Those interested in joining the nonprofit should contact Pat Gallagher at 262-695-1492.

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# Improve your game with Trackman Range

## High-tech radar system gives golfers instant feedback through smartphone app

By Chuck Delsman  
Daily News Correspondent

NEW BERLIN — If you're a golfer, you've been to the driving range a bunch of times. That's what golfers do.

But the product you've gotten at the local range has been poor. You know what I'm talking about. Long grass on the tees, distance markers that are not close to being accurate and bad range balls.

However, area golfers who love to pound balls at the range in hopes of improving their games no longer have to worry about those terrible conditions and uncertainties because the most high-tech and respected golf tracking system in the world can now be found at The Practice Station in New Berlin.

Located on Sunnyslope Road just north of New Berlin Eisenhower High School at Cold Spring Road, The Practice Station, celebrating its one-year anniversary this month, has purchased the most sophisticated and technical-savvy system in the world when they installed Trackman Range about two weeks ago.

How good is the Trackman Range radar system? It's the best in the world. There are only 17 in the United States and The Practice Station is the only range in the state to have the system. The next closest Trackman Range system is in Michigan.

"The best thing about Trackman Range is it's good for all golfers, from the scratch players to the high-handicappers and beginners," said John Bauer, the owner and teaching professional at The Practice Station. "It's the best golf technology in the world. It's the same thing you see on television at the PGA Tour events. Tracking the shots with the shot-tracers and showing you the distance, carry and accuracy of shots. Where else can you go, with your phone or tablet in hand, and see how far you hit the ball and how accurate the shot was? I think once a golfer comes out, they'll be hooked."

Set up on the huge, bent-grass tee, there are three



Submitted photos

**TOP:** A driving range at The Practice Station in New Berlin. **BOTTOM LEFT:** A golfer takes a swing at the driving range. **BOTTOM CENTER:** A screen shot of the Trackman Range smartphone app. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A Trackman Range camera installed on a pole.

radar towers than supply each golfer with all the data. One tower is located behind the tee and two others can be found on each side of the range. As soon as you hit your shot, whether it's a driver, wedge or any club in between, you can turn to your phone or tablet and see your shot travel in the air and the direction its going, just like you see on the PGA Tour.

Instantly, Trackman Range will show all the information, including ball carry, total yardage of the shot, ball speed, height of the shot, launch angle, launch

direction, how far each was from the desired pin location.

There's no guessing how far you hit the ball or how far you carried the ball in the air like you have to do at a normal range. Trackman Range gives you 100% accurate distances. There are 10 target greens on the range and each is marked with an exact distance from where they hit.

"With all of the technology that Trackman Range offers, there's no question that golfers can improve their games with this system," Bauer said. "The instant

feedback and live-ball data allows each player to figure out right away what they need to work on."

And one of the best things about Trackman Range at The Practice Station is that it's affordable to everyone. After downloading the free Trackman Range app, the only cost is a bucket of balls — small (\$8), medium (\$10) or large (\$12) bucket of brand new Titlelists.

Trackman Range also offers several side-games that golfers can play against each other. Two of the more popular ones are Bull's-eye or Hit It. Bull's-eye is a game

that is a closest to the pin competition and Hit It is a long-drive competition.

Once you have an account, Trackman Range registers all of your practice sessions. You can go back into your history and see how your game has improved or how much your distance has increased from your first visit to your most recent.

The Practice Station has two Trackman simulators inside the totally remodeled clubhouse for league play and open play all year long. Memberships for the range and its six on-course practice holes are also available

along with two putting greens that are open to the public.

If things go as planned, The Practice Station also hopes to build a covered area behind the current practice tee with heated stalls so golfers can hit balls all winter long, no matter how much snow or how cold it is outside. Professional individual and group instruction is also available.

"I know once a golfer comes out there and gives this a try, they'll be blown away," Bauer said. "There's nothing like it in Wisconsin."



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