

Brookfield & Elm Grove

THIS MONTH

OCTOBER 2020

Child recreation centers stay open by adjusting to new normal

Elm Grove's Bug & Goose Play Café opened in July

By Cara Spoto
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ELM GROVE — When Chicago-area native Lindsay Hill was planning to open Waukesha County's newest indoor play center for small children this spring, she never fathomed a global pandemic was just around the corner.

Hill had originally hoped to open Bug & Goose Play Café, 13448 Watertown Plank Road, in April as a drop-in play center where kids and parents could come and go as they pleased.

But after COVID-19 arrived, Hill and her investors hit the pause button.

When the business officially opened July 7, the center had shifted from a drop-in center approach to one based on reservations. Today kids and parents can play and relax at the café, but they must sign up to one of the café's open-play slots or join with friends to reserve the entire center for a play date or party.

It's a model many indoor child play centers throughout the county are now using as they prepare for the busy fall and winter months.

Safe space

For Hill it just made sense, especially given parents' concerns and the need to maintain a sanitary environment. Parents can sign up online to reserve a spot in one of the center's three-hour open play slots. Each open-play slot can accommodate 12 kids and their parents. The café, designed for children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years, is then thoroughly cleaned before the next session begins.

"We fully sanitize every toy and touch point in the café between every play session," Hill emphasized. "We have people who come here who don't even let their kids go to the grocery store. Knowing that people feel safe

coming here with their kids, who are the most important thing in their lives, that makes us feel just fantastic."

Not just for kids

While getting out of the house to burn off energy and socialize is pretty important for kids, Hill said she also recognizes how important it is for parents.

That's part of the reason why Hill, herself a parent and former nanny, opened the business. The café takes its name from her daughter's nickname, Goose, and the nickname of the last little boy she nannied for, Bug. The boy's family actually helped Hill come up with the money to start the operation.

"Taking care of children is twofold," she said. "It's the most important job people can have, but it's also very isolating. As much as I want to focus on the kids, I want to give stay-at-home moms and dads, and other caretakers, a chance to get out of the house and socialize."

Other centers

Although some of the area's indoor play centers for smaller kids remain closed, like Monkey Joe's, others have pivoted to using reduced capacity and/or reservations to help prevent the possible spread of the coronavirus.

At the Children's Play Gallery, 126 E. Wisconsin Ave. in Oconomowoc, which reopened Aug. 3, families can register online and reserve a spot during one of the museum's morning or afternoon open play sessions.

"We are doing our best to provide a safe, secure, welcoming environment," manager Marilyn Kaminski said. "Temperatures are taken at entry, shoes must be taken off, and all children over the age of 5 must wear a mask."

So far, the new system is working, Kaminski said.



Submitted photo

Caleb Scotto DiVetta cooks up some fun in the "kitchen area" at Bug & Goose Play Café, 13448 Watertown Plank Road. The café opened early this summer and is among several indoor child recreation centers in the area to adopt a reservation model amid the pandemic.

"When we had that rain (A few weeks) ago we were almost at capacity," she said.

Over in Muskego, The Lotza Fun Room, at Apollo and Mercury drives, is offering drop-in play from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. The other three days of the week are by appointment only.

Kids in Motion, 14135 W. Greenfield Ave., in New Berlin, no longer requires reservations, according to its website, but has reduced its hours to 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Attempts to confirm those hours were unsuccessful.

The Big Backyard, 2857 S. 160th St. in New Berlin, is also offering drop-in play, a staff person said.

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Will snow days be a thing of the past?

Schools' virtual capabilities spell change

By Jake Ekdahl
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WAUKESHA — Sudden adaptations brought on by an abrupt closing of schools in the spring have resulted in districts significantly ramping up their virtual infrastructure. That could have far-reaching implications, including for a somewhat nostalgic phenomenon for many: snow days.

With school districts being able to switch to virtual instruction more seamlessly now, students and staff being unable to physically get to class isn't the logistical hurdle it used to be. In fact, many districts are operating with in-person students and virtual students in the same class simultaneously on an ongoing basis.

"With the need to turn the entire district to virtual learning last spring, we are much more prepared to address snow days moving forward," said Kettle Moraine School District Superintendent Pat Deklotz. "(They) should not have an impact on our calendar year going forward."

At the School District of Waukesha, Superintendent Jim Sebert said although the prospect of snow days mostly or entirely disappear-

ing is "kind of sad to think about in a way," there could be other benefits. Districts create their calendars with built-in makeup days in mind, anticipating a certain number of snow days per year. Without snow days, students and staff could potentially get that time back and see a longer summer vacation.

New Berlin School District Superintendent Joe Garza said the district has had early conversations about snow days.

"We've certainly set ourselves up to provide virtual instruction to all students across the district on any given day, both through our pandemic response planning over the summer and as a result of expanding our 1:1 technology program to our youngest students," he said. "This school year, all of our students have devices and we've made it a practice to have staff remind them to take them home nightly."

Potentially, snow days could be in for more of a reduction than elimination. Denise Dorn Lindberg, Hamilton School District public information and volunteer program coordinator, said if something were to occur without much notice, the district would likely still use a snow day.

"It really kind of depends," she said. "We might know in advance (and) have time to prepare students and staff." But without that notice, switching to virtual may prove too difficult on a one-day timeline.

Garza said one concern would be



Snow days have typically been inconvenient for schools but sources of unexpected fun for kids, as evidenced by this photo of Seth Schroeder enjoying some time on his sled on the front page of the Dec. 2, 2006 Freeman. However, for the 2020-21 school year and beyond, virtual learning capabilities may be set to make them much less common.

maintaining equitable access to resources and devices. Not all students have reliable internet access at home or are guaranteed to be in an environment suitable to learning at certain times of the day.

Sebert said ensuring access for all students could prove to be a barrier, but the district is better equipped now than it's ever been. Waukesha provides every student

with an iPad.

As is the case with so much about operating schools this year, it's hard to know definitively what comes next for snow days. "Thankfully, we have a few months to continue to have discussions about how to treat snow days this school year, and to plan and communicate with parents and staff," Garza said.

BelAir Cantina opens expanded restaurant in The Corners

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD — BelAir Cantina patrons now have 3,000 additional square feet to spread out and enjoy a taco and margarita.

The restaurant's location in The Corners of Brookfield opened its addition to the public recently. The former restaurant space will temporarily close for additional renovations, with a grand reopening of the entire restaurant planned for October.

BelAir was the first dining establishment to join The Corners, on Bluemound Road near Barker Road, and has seen tremendous success since its April 2017 opening at the town center, according to a news release.

The expansion, a joint investment between BelAir and Brookfield Corners, LLC, will increase the restaurant's total size to 8,150 square feet, allowing for more patrons to be seated while adhering to social distance requirements and helping to decrease wait times.

"We've been thrilled to be a part of The Corners since its beginning and love serving the Town of Brookfield and Waukesha County communities," said Matt Roman Lopez, BelAir Cantina director of operations. "We thank all of our patrons for their patience during construction over the past several months and we can't wait to debut our state-of-the-art new space to our guests."

Highlights of the expanded restaurant space include a massive new 85-foot indoor/outdoor bar, fun décor including a living garden wall and mural, a private room optimal for a socially distanced celebrations and expanded seating on Market Square.

Brooks Brothers opens in The Corners

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD — Despite recently being bought out of bankruptcy, Brooks Brothers' new location in The Corners of Brookfield has opened.

The storefront of America's oldest retailer will offer classic American styles for men and women at the retail, restaurant and living center on Bluemound Road in the Town of Brookfield.

Brooks Brothers is located in a 3,800-square-foot space on the southwest corner of High and Union streets across from Goddess & The Baker and L.L. Bean in The Corners.

About a month ago, a venture backed by Authentic Brands Group LLC and mall owner Simon Property Group Inc. agreed to buy Brooks Brothers Inc. for \$325 million. That agreement included a commitment to keep 125 Brooks Brothers stores open of the approximately 200 stores in North



Submitted photo

Brooks Brothers sells clothing for men and women in The Corners of Brookfield.

America.

In July, the upscale Brooks Brothers filed for bankruptcy, citing financial strains from the coronavirus pandemic.

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Young shooting champion aims to cure Type 1 diabetes

Advice to others: ‘Diabetes doesn’t control you’

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — A Brookfield East graduate and All-Scholastic shooting sports team member is using his skills to raise funds for a cause close to his heart: curing Type 1 diabetes.

Jack Gerstmeier was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at 10 years old. “Not only was my life turned upside down, but so was our family’s,” he said.

Soon after the diagnosis, Gerstmeier’s parents reached out to the JDRF, formerly known as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. He said the JDRF gave him a place to connect with other affected children and their families, as well as offer hope there will be a cure.

On Sept. 19, Gerstmeier participated in the second annual Ammo and Insulin Charity Shoot at Boxhorn Gun Club in Muskego. “I had such a great time last year and am excited to share my love of shooting with others, rookies to experts, while raising money for JDRF and thanking them for helping me on my diabetes journey,”



Submitted photo

Jack Gerstmeier smiles while out shooting trap.

he said.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, nonprofits have had increased difficulty raising funds. Gerstmeier emphasized the need to ensure Type 1 diabetes research doesn’t stop; it’s benefited his own daily experience already, he said.

“This research has eased my daily burden on Type 1 by allowing me access to artificial pancreas technology in the form of a closed loop pump,” he said.

Gerstmeier graduated from Brookfield East this spring and began taking classes at Waukesha County Technical College in August. He’s studying criminal justice and hopes to become a police officer someday.

Gerstmeier’s advice to others with Type 1 diabetes is

straightforward: “You control diabetes, diabetes doesn’t control you. This is a motto that has allowed me to become a national ranked pistol and rifle shooter, a state swimmer and to pursue becoming a police officer.”

“Our Ammo and Insulin Charity Shoot combine my love of shooting sports with my need to help the community that has been with me for the last eight years, JDRF,” Gerstmeier said. “Motivated and supported by people like you, we will stop at nothing until Type One becomes Type None, and your continued support moves us closer to achieving our vision. On behalf of JDRF and the millions of people living with T1D, thank you today and every day.”

Study: Brookfield among best for retirees

By Joe VanDeLaarschot
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WAUKESHA — Even if you feel you’ve done your best to prepare yourself financially for retirement you can always use an “edge” — knowing where to retire where your money will go the farthest.

Six of the highest-ranked communities in the state to retire to, according to one recent study, are in Waukesha County: Pewaukee, Delafield, Hartland, Brookfield, Oconomowoc and Muskego.

In its sixth annual study, financial technology company SmartAsset has listed the most tax-friendly places for retirees in Wisconsin. The study measures income, property, sales and fuel taxes for a prospective retiree.

According to SmartAsset, the tax burden you face in retirement could impact where you decide to spend your golden years.

To find the best places to retire, SmartAsset gathered data for its study on three separate regional factors that affect the quality of life for retirees, including tax-

friendliness, medical care and social opportunities.

“First, we looked at state and local tax rates, considering two types of taxes: income and sales. We calculated effective rates based on a retiree earning \$35,000 annually (from retirement savings, Social Security and part-time employment),” said Steve Sabato of SmartAsset. “We subtracted income taxes paid from the gross income to determine disposable income. Sales taxes paid were calculated based on the disposable income being spent on taxable goods.”

Next, SmartAsset determined the number of doctors’ offices, recreation centers and retirement centers per thousand residents in each location. Finally, they measured the number of seniors in each city as a percentage of the total population.

“In our final analysis, we ranked each location on these three factors. Then we calculated an average ranking for each area and weighted the three factors equally,” Sabato said. “The areas with the highest average ranking were determined to be the best places

to retire.”

Wisconsin does not tax Social Security retirement benefits, even those taxed at the federal level. Income from retirement accounts, including an IRA or a 401(k), is fully taxable at rates ranging from 3.86% to 7.65%. Income from a government pension is not taxed.

The higher the tax-friendliness index, the higher the community is ranked for retirement. The rankings, the tax rate and the retirement tax-friendliness index for the top 10 in Wisconsin are:

1. Mequon: 1.44%, 42.15.
2. Richfield: 1.32, 41.81.
3. Pewaukee: 1.40%, 41.70.
4. Delafield: 1.46%, 41.56.
5. Hartland: 1.46%, 40.76.
6. Brookfield: 1.54%, 40.33
7. Hudson: 1.50%, 40.12
8. Oconomowoc: 1.59%, 39.49
9. Wind Lake: 1.50%, 39.46.
10. Muskego: 1.54%, 39.44.

You can find more details on the study results, methodology and interactive map at <https://smartasset.com/retirement/wisconsin-retirement-taxes#wisconsin>.

Beware of phony political robocalls asking for money

MILWAUKEE — As if getting inundated with political calls isn’t energy-draining enough, the Better Business Bureau is seeing an increase in political robocalls seeking to drain people’s checking accounts.

According to recent BBB Scam Tracker reports, scammers are using phony political fundraising calls to trick Americans into “donating” to a favorite candidate.

The robocall scam calls often include a recorded voice, perhaps even one that sounds like a presidential candidate. The BBB says that according to the recording, “rivals have

been raising a lot of money. In order to see your favorite candidate elected, you need to donate ... immediately.”

If a person offers to give money, they will be transferred to a live person and asked for their credit card information. But instead of the money going to a candidate, the phony caller will make off with the person’s money and/or personal information that can be used for identity theft.

The BBB recommends that people screen their calls.

“If a call comes in from a number you don’t recognize, don’t answer. Even if the number looks familiar,

be wary,” advises the BBB.

Check the number on Whitepages.com to see if it’s been flagged with a fraud alert.

Also, don’t respond to unsolicited robocalls. Scammers can fake the caller ID results, and businesses are only allowed to call you via robocall with your written permission.

The BBB also advises not to “press 1 to be removed from our list,” which could just confirm to the scammer that your number is valid.

Register with the Do Not Call Registry by calling 888-382-1222 or register online at Donotcall.gov.

Man crashes virtual class at Brookfield Central

BROOKFIELD — A Brookfield Central High School class with both in-person and virtual students had an uninvited attendee Sept. 10.

The man was able to attend via Zoom, and wore a mask. Elmbrook School District officials said he pretended to be one of the actual students in order to be allowed into the meeting from the virtual waiting room.

“After a short time, this impostor proceeded to reveal

his backside to the class and then brandished a handgun before being removed from the Zoom meeting,” the district said, in a statement.

Elmbrook’s administration and a school resource officer were immediately alerted and “it was quickly determined that the imposter did not reside in our community.” The district said no students or staff were at risk of harm.

After an internal technolo-

gy review, the district determined all appropriate security measures were in place with Zoom. All Brookfield Central families were notified of the incident.

Brookfield police are investigating. Elmbrook is also conducting an investigation into “any possible connection to students at Brookfield Central who could have shared course-specific information with an outside contact.”



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Jerry Mellone, City of Brookfield Alderman - District 6

"I am proud to endorse Rob Hutton. He is a man of integrity who has consistently worked hard on behalf of the residents of the 13th Assembly District. As a small business owner, he understands the challenges facing our businesses and this perspective will allow him to lead as Wisconsin faces budgetary challenges in the next session."



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PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEW: GREATER METRO CONFERENCE

Can Falls get past East, Central in GMC?

Spartans lost 20 seniors from state title team

By Dave Radcliffe
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BROOKFIELD — Between Brookfield East, Brookfield Central and Hamilton, there are a total of six returning players with all-conference recognition.

That's four fewer than Menomonee Falls alone, a team that shared the Greater Metro Conference title with the Lancers and reached Round 3 of the WIAA Division 2 playoffs last season.

It's the team Falls fell to in that third-round matchup that went on to win its second state title in four years — Brookfield East.

The Spartans lost an enormously talented senior class from that squad, most notably quarterback Sam McGath, running back Donovan Hunt, GMC Offensive Lineman of the Year John Champe and linebacker Nick Pluemer.

Not only that, but all-conference defensive back Hayden Doyle has opted to concentrate on basketball during his senior year.

"We lost about 20 seniors or so from that championship team, so there are a lot of holes," East coach Ben Farley said. "But we're also just stressing to the guys what an incredible opportunity this is to win playing time. From the outside it doesn't seem like expectations might be high, and that's really motivating for our guys. We want to put together a great season."

Senior offensive lineman Michael Weismueller and senior defensive lineman Ryan Blomberg were each recognized in year-end GMC voting last fall. But Farley said it starts with senior Tyler Rhode, who will play both ways on the line for the Spartans this season.

"He's a young man getting Division II scholarships looks," Farley said. "He's a great young man and we're leaning on him heavily."

Senior defensive end/outside linebacker Harrison Kielar is another returning starter for Brookfield East.

"He had a great year for us last year and is getting a lot of different scholarship looks at the Division II level also," Farley said. "Ryan Blomberg plays opposite of him on the defensive line, and there's guys like Michael Weismuller who is

At a glance

RETURNING ALL-CONFERENCE PLAYERS
Brookfield Central: senior DL Hayden Nelson, senior RB Cam Devine
Brookfield East: senior OL Michael Weismueller, senior DL Ryan Blomberg
Hamilton: senior OL Connor Gordon
Menomonee Falls: senior OL Ben Janowski, senior OL Brian Fullerton, senior OL Connor Dortbudak, senior QB Nate McLean, senior WR/DB Quentin Redding, junior WR/DB Evan Redding, senior TE/LB Colin Heckman, senior DB Patrick Lynch, senior DB Connor Ceden, senior LB/P Billy Howard

PROMISING NEWCOMERS
Brookfield Central: junior QB Robert Bloom
Brookfield East: sophomore QB/RB/LB Matthew Schmainda, junior RB Simon Lupton
Hamilton: sophomore QB/ATH Nate Kollath, junior DL Colby Horn
Menomonee Falls: senior RB Tyler Olejniczak, junior DL Bryce Taylor, junior WR Michael Fischer, sophomore OL Cooper Lefebvre, junior OL Adam Beck, junior LB Ahman Brewah, junior K Aidian Martin

2019 RECORDS
Brookfield Central: 8-3 overall, 7-1 conference (T-1st)
Brookfield East: 12-2, 6-2 (T-3rd), WIAA Division 2 state champions
Hamilton: 3-6, 3-5 (6th)
Menomonee Falls: 9-3, 7-1 (T-1st)

a center. He's a three-year starter for us."

While the Spartans have several players they can rely on in the trenches, there is the tall task of replacing playmakers like McGath and Hunt. Farley is excited about sophomore Matthew Schmainda, who could line up at quarterback, running back or linebacker, along with junior running back Simon Lupton. Farley will turn to senior Luke Pluemer to start under center.

"Simon is a running back and linebacker for us as well," Farley said. "He's one of the fastest guys in the area. Another guy that is going to be getting his first starting opportunity is Luke Pluemer at the quarterback position. Luke has earned this opportunity to be our quarterback. I'm really excited about him. He's athletic, he's explosive and he's got a big arm."

The Spartans have just five games scheduled out of a possible seven weeks.

"I said to the guys on Day 1 there's no playbook for this," Farley said. "Our No. 1 concern is always going to be player safety, but we've adjusted how we practice, being smart. We just try to focus on football and have fun with each other and becoming the best football team we can be."

New faces for Lancers

The Lancers' graduating class of 2019 was no slouch, itself. Head coach Joel Nellis had to replace both quarterbacks with starting experience, Illinois State running back and GMC Offensive Back of the Year Rashad Lampkin, and six players on the defensive side of the ball who were all-conference, including Southern California defensive back Tommy Maurice.

But Nellis had no doubt who to turn to as leaders and captains entering his second year at the helm — senior defensive lineman and Syracuse recruit Hay-

den Nelson and senior running back Cam Devine.

"Those two guys are our captains and really they have been since last season ended," Nellis said. "I trust them. They're the embodiment of what we are as a team. I just have complete confidence in what they do. They've done a good job so far being leaders. They're poised to have great seasons. It's not a secret that they're going to play a big part in our success."

Senior linebackers Clyde Tinnen and Corey Calkins also played significant snaps last season for Central, who reached the Division 2 final in 2017 and 2018, as has senior defensive lineman Anthony Whitlow. Juniors Mike Hankinson and Jack Tinnen will be a couple of players to watch in the secondary for the Lancers.

"Anthony Whitlow on the defensive line, I think, is going to have a really big season," Nellis said. "He's one of the strongest kids we have in our program."

The only returning players on the offense that saw significant time aside from Devine are senior receiver Ben Peterson and junior offensive lineman Ethan Boxley.

"I think a lot of guys have a lot to prove," Nellis said. "We have a lot of seniors in the mix to start on the offensive line. It's one of those things where we're just trying to be as physical as we've been in the past, trying not to change what the formula has been for us to be successful."

Without Sawyer Carlson and Max Hawkins back under center, Nellis will look to either junior Robert Bloom or senior Brock Potter to fill that void.

"He's (Bloom) a kid who likes to throw the ball," Nellis said. "He works really hard. He's a multisport athlete, Brock Potter who is another returning contributor. He was a defensive player for us last year. He's



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Brookfield East junior Simon Lupton returns a kick during the WIAA Division 2 state championship game last season against Waunakee.

going to get some opportunities on offense as well. We feel good about both those guys and think they'll do a good job for us."

Familiar face shows up at Hamilton

For the first time in 16 years, Hamilton has someone not named John Damato manning the sidelines. It's a familiar name, however, as former Kettle Moraine coach Justin Gumm was hired back in January.

While it's a difficult time to take over a program, Gumm feels they've made the most of their condensed time together.

The Chargers lost quarterback Eric Erato, who's playing baseball at Northern Illinois, and defensive back Lucas Finnessy, now with Minnesota, among others. That leaves them with just one all-conference player on the roster, senior offensive lineman Connor Gordon.

However, Gordon is flanked by some talent up front.

"Offensively I think most people think our offensive

line is a strength and I think rightfully so," Gumm said. "We have a kid who signed with Mankato, (senior) Liam Wrench, (senior) Noah Strauss, Connor Gordon, so we have three big kids up front. I've been impressed with some of the kids that have competed for those other two spots."

Gumm has also been impressed by his defense, a unit that struggled mightily last season. But the Chargers return nearly their entire secondary and have speed to burn. Senior Charlie Kinowski will move from outside linebacker to safety, corner Dom Carini is back, and so is senior safety Brandon Hyche.

"And then we have some defensive linemen that rotated last year," Gumm said. "(Junior) Colby Horn I think is a kid that has an extremely high ceiling that I could see playing Division I football if he continues to work like he has. He's 6-5, 220 pounds, he's long, he's athletic, so he's been a kid that has been awesome and a really good leader on that side of the ball."

Hamilton ran the wing-T option gap scheme under Damato but will look to be more of an up-tempo offense with pro-style concepts moving forward. Senior Aidan Enneking, one of the top tight ends in the state, should be a weapon along with senior wingback Quantell Booker. Sophomore Nate Kollath or junior Alex Eichmann will assume quarterback duties.

"Nate Kollath ... is starting to mature," Gumm said. "I've been really happy with him. And probably the best athlete in our junior class, he's played wide receiver and defensive back, Alex Eichmann, he's still learning some of the reads and mechanical stuff but he's a smart kid. He really knows our offense, he's a great leader. We're kind of looking for that piece and to be honest whoever doesn't win the job, they're two of the better athletes in our program, so they'll play somewhere for us."

Falls returning several starters

Hamilton's top rival, Menomonee Falls, could very well be the favorite to bring home its second straight Greater Metro title.

Starters back on offense are senior quarterback Nate McLean, senior receiver Quentin Redding, junior receiver Evan Redding, and senior linemen Ben Janowski, Brian Fullerton and Connor Dortbudak. The Redding brothers also line up at defensive back along with seniors Patrick Lynch and Connor Ceden, while senior linebacker Colin Heckman also sees time at tight end for Falls and senior linebacker Billy Howard doubles as the team's punter.

All of those aforementioned players received all-conference recognition last season.

Menomonee Falls does have to replace first team running backs Tamir Thomas and Brett Boram, the latter also a first team linebacker, but has senior running back Tyler Olejniczak and several other newcomers to turn to.

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