

Brookfield & Elm Grove

THIS MONTH

SEPTEMBER 2020

Art purchases on the rise as locals stay home

People putting finishing touches on redecorating

By Jake Ekdahl
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WAUKESHA — Home projects may have been popular in the spring while many Wisconsinites were quarantining at home, but as summer comes to a close and with many of those projects reaching completion, locals are snapping up that finishing touch: Art.

At River's End Gallery in Waukesha, owner Joan Skimmons said she's sold 11 paintings this month so far. "We've had quite a number of people who are redecorating," she said. "A lot of them have said 'Well, what am I going to spend my money on, I'm not going on vacation.'" She said selling one or two paintings per month would typically be considered doing well.

The trend isn't just taking place among longtime art lovers either. Skimmons said more than 85% of the purchases were made by first-time customers. Paintings have been particularly popular.

At Almont Gallery just down the street, owner Lynn Gaffey said she's been seeing new faces as well. "Younger people too," she said. "They're starting to see the value (and) this time that we're going through has changed peoples' interest (and) made different things important."

Gaffey said consumers may be seeking a connection with the artist, which is usually possible at the

local level. She noted Almont has artists in-house all the time.

Skimmons said many of her new customers said they'd just bought new furniture and were looking for a piece to match. The prices of the paintings she's sold recently vary widely, from \$50 to \$950. The sizes varied too, but she noted the 30" by 40" paintings have been popular.

Skimmons said her customers have ranged from first-time homebuyers to couples in their 50s doing remodeling.

Mary Loeffel, who said she's been coming to River's End for at least five years, just bought a new piece by Oconomowoc artist Kristy Goggio. The 12" by 12" painting turned out to be just what she was looking for.

"I was tired of looking at what I had in my home and I decided to go out and purchase something," she said. "It was really something to give that room a different look."

Loeffel said she's glad to support a local business and to hear others are doing the same.

Skimmons said it's possible that because some galleries have closed, those that remain are seeing more customers. "Around the state, there are fewer places," she said. "Plus there aren't the art fairs."

Gallery 1 Manager Chris Audley said the Waukesha-based business has seen an uptick of interest in frames. "We have done a considerable amount for framing over the last few weeks," he said. "People have been at home, looking around, they're now getting to the projects they've been putting off because there wasn't enough time."



Almont Gallery Owner Lynn Gaffey points to a bead mosaic by Rose Lange.



Almont Gallery Clothing Artist Karen Vanderlinden points at a painting by Gerta Zinda.

Related: Performing arts organizations feeling pinch in pandemic. / 3A

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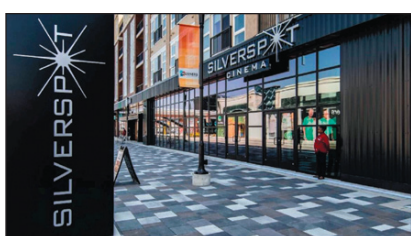
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File photo

Film fans missing the experience of going to a movie can book a private rental at Silverspot Cinema for \$99.

Silverspot Cinema launches private rental program

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD — Film fans missing the experience of going to a movie can book a private rental at Silverspot Cinema for \$99.

Silverspot Private allows families and friends to watch their favorite films on the big screen, while enjoying full-service dining and cocktails safely.

For \$99, guests can reserve an entire theater to play their own content through a personal streaming account. The \$99 fee will be credited toward food and beverages purchased during the showing, effectively eliminating the charge, according to the announcement.

"We're very excited to launch Silverspot Private," said Silverspot Managing Partner Gonzalo Ulivi. "Guests can enjoy a film on the big screen in a private setting. It's the ultimate movie-going experience. The large size of our auditoriums makes these gatherings safe, plus we have full-service food and bar. We think these will be very popular."

Silverspot began showing new films Aug. 21 with the release of "Unhinged." Newly released films will have a limited time reduced price of \$10 for adults and \$8.50 for seniors and children. Silverspot Cinema is in The Corners of Brookfield, which is located on Bluemound Road near Barker Road.

Elton named Advantage CEO

BROOKFIELD — Michael Elton has been named CEO of Advantage+. He previously was president of the Brookfield-based firm and retains the title. Advantage+ is a 28-year-old nationwide direct lender.

Elton received his BBA degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison. After college, he worked as a marketing analyst for Success Business Industries. Elton then left Success and joined his brother Keith to own and operate Mike's Ice, a wholesale ice manufacturer and distributor. They sold the company to its largest competitor, after which Mike joined Advantage+. Mike was vice president-sales for 10 years and was named president in 2015.

Local community groups still making impact felt

Lions Club, Rotary Club, Kiwanis finding ways to help despite pandemic

By Dave Radcliffe
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With more and more people in need, local community groups are being relied upon more than ever.

Just how they are able to offer support, however, is another challenge in itself.

That's what has faced local entities such as Elm Grove Kiwanis Golden K, the Waukesha Lions Club and the Waukesha Rotary Club dating back to mid-March. The way groups can convene has changed, as have planning and organizing events out of the need to stay safe

and healthy.

"The Waukesha Lions Club has been trying to conduct our business as usual, although that is impossible," said DeAnne Blazek of the Waukesha Lions Club. "We have gone to Zoom meeting calls for at least our board meetings and a couple regular meetings. We keep the

club informed through meetings and emails."

That has also been the case for the Rotary Club and Kiwanis Golden K, the latter of which has an average age of 80 years old.

"We're a senior Kiwanis club, so we have a lot of resources," said Jerry McCormick, the principal officer of Kiwanis Golden K in Elm Grove. "But what is missing is the camaraderie among senior groups that don't have the networking that we did 20 years ago maybe. We volunteer to transfer people if they need to see a doctor and can't drive, or need medicine delivered, and that's not new to us because we've had people in that category."

Even so, that hasn't stopped Kiwanis from having an impact throughout the pandemic. It sponsors Cub Scout Pack 156 and helped the pack with its Pinewood Derby, which was held outside for the first time ever at Wirth Park in Brookfield.

While that required additional planning, it still went off without a hitch with everyone wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

"We had 31 entries, which was a little bit lower than normal but we had good attendance from parents



Submitted photo

From left to right, Pete Bosch, Tammy Perez, Ann Marie Moss, Ken Genin, Karen Tredwell, Colleen Kalscheuer, and Amanda Medina-Roddy of the Waukesha Rotary Club deliver cleaning and sanitation supplies to Maureen Atwell, executive director of Hebron House, in Waukesha earlier this year.

and grandparents and of course the kids," McCormick said.

Scholarships, supporting food pantry, recycling

That's just the tip of the iceberg for Kiwanis Golden K, which also awarded five scholarships via Zoom to members of the Brookfield Central Key Club and has continued supporting the Waukesha Food Pantry, collecting over 1,000 boxes of cereal in the parking lot of St. Mary's Church. The group has also collected pill bottles for recycling and issued about \$4 million worth of pharmaceuticals for a fraction of the cost.

"We also present funds and iPads for kids on the autism spectrum," McCormick said. "We presented 50 iPads to children in school. We've had a tremendous response to that and great results."

"With the startup of school thing, we're concentrating on that. We don't know for sure what virtual learning will mean to iPads or children on autism spectrum and other special needs children."

Kiwanis Golden K also had to cancel its district convention planned for late June and early July and instead will hold it virtually at the end of August.

The pandemic has impacted local community groups in different ways.

"Our annual golf outing in June was canceled as well as our annual chicken barbecue in August of

this year," Blazek said. "This will hurt our fundraising efforts for sure and we are hoping to recoup some of those losses with our future Amish Candy Sales in November

of this year and our Daytona 500 Event in February of 2021."

The Rotary Club of Waukesha continues to hold weekly Zoom meetings. It remains committed to supporting the community and having fun while doing so.

"We held a donation drive in the month of April, during which almost 60% of the club donated time or treasure to a nonprofit or charitable cause in the fight against COVID-19," said Waukesha Rotary Club member Pete Bosch. "In June, responding to heightened needs at Hebron House here in Waukesha, we held a drive to gather cleaning supplies for them. We then were awarded a grant to create grab-and-go food and cleaning kits, also for Hebron House."

McCormick said the important message is that more help is always welcome — even if ways to help are limited.

"Membership growth and development is a big part of our mission, particularly youth leadership and camps," McCormick said. "We have the largest youth organization in the world and so there's a lot of work to be done to stimulate membership group and retention."



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Will the pandemic mean curtains for arts organizations?

Wisconsin congressman’s bill would provide some relief through tax credits for value of refunds

By Jake Ekdahl
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WAUKESHA — The coronavirus pandemic has proved painfully disruptive for many industries, but one in particular has been dramatically impacted: the arts.

Arts and culture, and the organizations that produce and support them, are reliant upon visits, events and performances. None of those things are particularly easy, nor sometimes even possible, under COVID-19 restrictions.

A new report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum digs into just how big of an impact that’s having.

“The loss of arts and cultural experiences not only has negatively impacted quality of life in Wisconsin communities, but it also has inflicted economic damage,” the report reads. “Ticket sales have largely vanished while thousands of individuals who work in arts and culture have joined the ranks of the unem-

ployed. Some arts and cultural organizations and venues that play unique and important roles in Wisconsin and nationally now face an existential threat.”

Wisconsin Policy Forum Senior Researcher Joe Peterangelo said it’s worth remembering arts and culture not only contribute to the state economy, they also provide the quality of life and education benefits that can make a place competitive in attracting businesses and talent. They’re also especially difficult to bring back once they’re gone. “It’s not like, if you lose your orchestra, you can replace it like any other business,” he said.

State support limited

Many arts organizations receive some level of public support but it varies widely. In this state, the Wisconsin Arts Board helps distribute state, federal and other funds to individual artists and organizations. But compared to other states, Wisconsin’s level of sup-

port is low.

“Compared with surrounding Midwestern states, Wisconsin provides the least amount of state aid in support of arts and cultural activities,” the Wisconsin Policy Forum found. “The state appropriated \$1.6 million to the Wisconsin Arts Board in 2020, comprised of general fund, federal, and smaller, miscellaneous revenues. Of that amount, the \$770,000 allocated from the general fund was the minimum state match required to qualify for federal NEA funds. The 2020 allocation is 58% less than the \$3.7 million allocated in 2010, without adjusting for inflation. In that year, \$2.4 million was appropriated from the state’s general fund, \$759,000 from the federal government, and \$546,000 from other sources.”

On a per-capita basis, Wisconsin provides less state support than every other U.S. state at 13 cents per capita. Just next door, Minnesota is the highest in the nation at \$7.37. “Both of



File photo

“Where’ve you been all my life?” Director Alexander Platt asks the appreciative audience during the Wisconsin Philharmonic’s concert at the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center’s Starry Night concert.

(them) really stand out in the extremes,” Peterangelo said.

He said that’s due to Minnesota passing a special fund for arts and culture via a successful 2008 referendum allowing for funding through sales tax.

Peterangelo noted that for many arts organizations, margins are thin and busi-

ness is tough already. “Some of them only have enough cash reserves to survive for a month or two without having income from their operations,” he said.

There may be more federal aid coming, however. One bill, introduced by Wisconsin U.S. Rep Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, would provide

smaller performing arts venues a 50% tax credit for the value of refunded tickets provided they offer vouchers to customers.

In Elm Grove, Sunset Playhouse has been grappling with challenging circumstances. Artistic Director Nancy Visintainer-Armstrong said they had to cancel the second half of the season, 14 productions.

Sunset has since reconfigured its theaters and reduced seating to about a third of what it was, but they’re still not able to offer shows. “We’ve done our best to remain optimistic,” Visintainer-Armstrong said.

With many of Sunset’s performers being volunteers who don’t rely on their artistic pursuits for income, navigating life in the coronavirus pandemic may not be as disruptive as for some other artists.

Visintainer-Armstrong said safety is the primary concern and everyone is eager to get back to offering shows, once it’s feasible. “Want to come back; they miss us (and) we miss them,” she said of Sunset’s patrons. “We just have to determine when it’s going to be safe.”

New-to-area Teriyaki Madness opening locations in Brookfield, Pewaukee

BROOKFIELD — Fast casual restaurant chain Teriyaki Madness is moving into the greater Milwaukee area with five new locations, including in Brookfield and Pewaukee.

The restaurant specializes in grilled, Asian-inspired dishes.

“We are committed to unconditionally satisfying guests by offering delicious, made-to-order teriyaki dishes prepared with fresh, all-natural ingredients served quickly and at a reasonable price,” said the company in an announcement. “We make customers feel like a million bucks and satisfy a craving.”

Teriyaki Madness offers a menu that allows customers to choose their protein, type of rice or noodles and fresh vegetables for a customizable bowl.

Dishes includes chicken, salmon or steak teriyaki and spicy tofu teriyaki. Appetizers offered are chicken egg rolls, chicken potstickers and crab rangoon.

The Brookfield location will be at 920 S. Moorland Road. The Pewaukee location is planned for 13900 Capital Drive.

Other Wisconsin locations in the



Submitted photo

The Spicy Chicken Bowl is a favorite at Teriyaki Madness.

works are Wauwatosa, Hales Corners and Germantown.

For more information, go to <https://teriyakimadness.com>.

ELMBROOK SCHOOLS

Woman banned from property sues alleging First Amendment violation

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — A mother has filed a lawsuit against the district over its response to comments she made at a recent School Board meeting.

Heidi Anderson alleges her First Amendment rights are violated by a district policy which, according to court documents, prohibits her from being present on district property unless given permission by the superintendent.

One of the exhibits filed in the 23-page complaint is a letter from Elmbrook Superintendent Mark Hansen to Anderson in which he informs her she

will not be allowed on district property unless he approves it beforehand. “It is truly unfortunate that your conduct has forced the district to establish these protocols,” the letter reads. “However, the district will not tolerate any further incidents of the types of behavior that you engaged in during the Aug. 11 board meeting.”

In a portion of Anderson’s comments allegedly removed from the district’s video of the meeting, she said she believed School Board member Dr. Mushir Hassan, M.D., should not have served as the board’s medical liaison for COVID-19 because of his political views and his status as “a leader in the Islamic com-

munity.” She also said wearing masks is a “pagan ritual of Satanic worshippers” which her Christian children should not be subject to.

Anderson’s attorney Brady Henderson said the ban infringes on Anderson’s ability to pick up or drop off her children at school, attend any event on school property and to vote in person during November.

“This is a textbook First Amendment case. It’s not really about anybody’s viewpoints,” Henderson said. “The superintendent unilaterally decided to affect a warning (that’s) a lifetime ban from my client being present on district property.”



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WIAA comes up with alternate to fall season

Winter, spring seasons shortened

WAUKESHA — The WIAA athletic calendar took shape at the board of control meeting Aug. 14. The WIAA gave schools a one-year alternative season in the spring for fall sports and reduced the number of weeks for winter and spring sports.

The board established the parameters and context of the alternate fall season with seven weeks of competition in the spring. Football programs unable to start or complete 50 percent of the fall season, including games and practices, are eligible for a prorated alternate season. Other fall sports unable to start or complete 50 percent of the fall season, including games and practices, are eligible for a complete alternate season. Fall sports programs exceeding 50 percent of their seasons will be considered a completed season.

For planning and scheduling purposes, schools will be required to initially declare if they plan to participate in the traditional fall season or the alternate fall season in the spring by Sept. 1. Athletic directors at member schools will receive an email with a link to the online form to declare their intentions.

The revised sports calendar replaces the existing 2020-21 season calendars and identifies — in addition to an alternate fall season in the spring with seven weeks of competition — a period of no coaching contact prior to the start of the respective sport seasons; an acclimatization or practice period before the first allowed competition; and the designated number of weeks for the winter and spring seasons, including any culminating event. The board acknowledges all schedules are subject to change if conditions warrant in accordance with local, state and national health guidelines.

The revised calendar emphasizes the board's position to accommodate all the sport seasons in 2020-21 with the knowledge a number of member schools having already determined interscholastic activities are not able to be conducted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rules modified

The board also addressed a number of other rules and regulations to be modified or suspended in 2020-21 to provide flexibility to members and licensed officials during the pandemic.

■ If tournament series are conducted, regional groupings will be implemented (four teams in football).

■ All minimum number of contests requirement for tournament eligibility will be suspended in 2020-21.

■ All tournament series seeding will be conducted virtually in 2020-21.

■ All nonborder out-of-state competitions or practices are strongly discouraged.

■ All multiple-team events from outside a host's region is strongly discouraged.

■ Co-op programs that include schools that are unable to participate in activities during 2020-21 may seek

At a glance

2020-21 Fall Sports Season Start and End Dates
Cross Country-Boys & Girls (Monday, Aug. 17 - Week of Oct. 26*)
Football (Monday, Sept. 7 - Week of Nov. 16*) - Earliest first game is Wednesday, Sept. 23
Golf-Girls (Monday, Aug. 17 - Week of Oct. 12*)
Soccer-Boys (Monday, Sept. 7 - Week of Nov. 2*)
Swimming & Diving-Girls (Monday, Aug. 17 - Week of Nov. 9*)
Tennis-Girls (Monday, Aug. 17 - Week of Oct. 19*)
Volleyball - Boys & Girls (Monday, Sept. 7 - Week of Nov. 2*)

2020-21 Winter Sports Season Start and End Dates
Basketball-Boys (Monday, Nov. 23 - Week of March 1*)
Basketball-Girls (Monday, Nov. 16 - Week of Feb. 22*)
Gymnastics (Monday, Nov. 16 - Week of Feb. 22*)
Hockey- Boys & Girls (Monday, Nov. 16 - Week of Feb. 15*)
Swimming & Diving-Boys (Monday, Nov. 23 - Week of Feb. 1*)
Wrestling (Monday, Nov. 23 - Week of Feb. 15*)

2020-21 Alternate Fall Sports Season Start and End Dates
Cross Country-Boys & Girls (Monday, March 15 - Week of May 3*)
Football (Monday, March 8 - Week of May 3*) - Earliest first game is Wednesday, March 24
Golf-Girls (Monday, March 29 - Week of May 17*)
Soccer-Boys (Monday, March 22 - Week of May 10*)
Swimming & Diving-Girls (Monday, Feb. 15 - Week of April 5*)
Tennis-Girls (Monday, March 8 - Week of April 26*)
Volleyball - Boys & Girls (Monday, Feb. 22 - Week of April 12*)

2020-21 Spring Sports Season Start and End Dates
Baseball (Monday, April 19 - Week of June 28*)
Golf-Boys (Monday, April 19 - Week of June 14*)
Softball (Monday, April 19 - Week of June 28*)
Soccer-Girls (Monday, April 26 - Week of June 28*)
Tennis-Boys (Monday, May 3 - Week of June 21*)
Track & Field - Boys & Girls (Monday, April 19 - Week of June 28*)
(* End dates to be determined)

other co-op partners to provide opportunities for participation.

■ With conference approval, schools whose conference has canceled sports in 2020-21 may seek schedule relief with other conferences as an independent without sanctions or going through the prescribed conference realignment process.

■ For 2020-21, programs may schedule contests after they are eliminated from the WIAA tournament or culminating event respective sport's revised season.

■ Schools that were unable to conduct their five unrestricted coaching contact days during the 2020 summer may schedule those days during the 2020-21 calendar provided there is one week of no contact prior to the start of the respective season. However, during the closed-session meeting, the board directed staff to have discussions on coaching contact during 2020-21 placed on the agenda of the September meeting.

■ Licensed officials will not drop in classification in 2021-22 if they choose not to renew licensure or are unable to fill a varsity schedule. in 2020-21.

The board also determined student-athletes may compete in no more than two non-school events with school approval during each regular sports season in 2020-21 only, which adopts the middle-level regulation. An "event" will be defined as a game or tournament.

— Freeman Staff



Submitted rendering

The field at Brookfield Central High School will be renamed the Harrison-Thomas Stadium to honor alumni Olympic gold medal triple jumper Kenny Harrison (class of 1983) and future NFL Hall of Fame offensive lineman Joe Thomas (class of 2003).

Brookfield Central legends Harrison, Thomas immortalized

School renames stadium after Olympic gold medalist, NFL great

By Steven L. Tietz
Special to The Freeman

Coaches have a saying for athletes with special, over-the-top abilities.

They call them "once-in-a-generation talents." History-rich Brookfield Central is lucky enough to have had two of them and sometime this fall (date pending), Central will rename its stadium after Olympic gold medal triple jumper Kenny Harrison (class of 1983) and future NFL Hall of Fame offensive lineman Joe Thomas (class of 2003).

The \$7,600 plan to put the name "Harrison-Thomas Stadium" across the top of the new ticket gate was approved by the Elmbrook School Board on Aug. 11 as an emotional coda to the wide series of improvements made at both Central and East.

For Central Athletic Director Don Kurth, it's about honoring the past and looking to the future.

"We've been fortunate in recent years to get several new facilities built," he said. "To create opportunities for kids. We rebuilt the trophy cases and have a lot more on display for the kids to see, so they understand their heritage."

"And once we thought about this, it seemed to be the right thing to do to honor them. Most schools are fortunate to have just one person like this. We have two."

Off and running

Harrison and Thomas are famous, but the idea to name the stadium after them didn't take root until this spring when Harrison dropped into Kurth's office.

He had moved back to Brookfield from California to take care of his aging parents. His family were some of the first African-Americans to move into Brookfield in 1972 when he was seven, the second youngest of four children, all of whom would graduate college.

"We were ground-breakers, but in this community everybody always treated me with the utmost respect," Harrison said, "We never let anyone treat us with disrespect and excellence was expected."

"That's what it meant for me to grow up here."

The 5-11 multi-talented Harrison picked track over basketball (he once dunked on Marquette star Doc Rivers) and although the WIAA didn't add the triple jump to state track until Harrison's senior year of

1983, he was aware of it.

"I loved it," he said. "I told my friends and coaches, 'I need to figure that out.'"

He did, winning state long jump titles in 1982 and 1983 and claiming the state triple title in 1983 with a record that stood for 22 years. He led BC to the state team title that year.

A few weeks later, Harrison set the all-time Wisconsin prep best of 52-4 1/2 at the Golden West Invitational and headed to Kansas State with high expectations.

He became a 15-time Big 8 Conference champion at KSU, earning 11 All-American honors, including two NCAA triple jump titles and one long jump crown.

In 1990, he was the U.S. champion and claimed the world title in 1991, but had Olympic dreams in 1992 dashed by knee surgery.

"I was so upset I thought I might give it up (track)," he said.

But he got healthy and motivated for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. His aim was to break the world record and beat its holder, Jonathan Edwards of Great Britain.

The record eluded him, but he claimed gold anyway.

July 27, 1996 was the day of both the Olympic triple jump finals and the tragic Centennial Park bombing in Atlanta. Harrison wondered whether the Games would be canceled.

"Then we got the call from the President (Bill Clinton) and we were able to go," he said.

Into a headwind, he had a record-setting evening including a 59-4 1/4 effort that still stands as the Olympic mark.

Harrison celebrated with a back flip and collected sand from the landing pit. During the medal ceremony he found in the crowd old Brookfield friends, including teammate Dave Sandstrom and happily waved to them. That moment, he said

"meant everything."

He won one more American title in 1997 and retired in 1998.

Harrison has been a spokesman, motivational speaker and coach. He also works with athletes helping them get to the next level.

'Amazing to be happening to us'

He is happy that his pride in Brookfield is being celebrated.

"Joe (Thomas) is a good guy and this (the naming) is so interesting and amazing to be happening to us," he said.

Thomas, like Harrison, is amazed at this honor.

"This was not something that was on my radar at all," he said. "For me to have my name on the stadium where I competed and to have it there with a hero like Kenny really made me sit down, blew me away."

The 6-6 Thomas was always big, even in ninth grade.

"One of my dad's friends told him I was big enough to play college sports and I thought, 'Wow, no way!'" Thomas said.

He made varsity football that year and was part of four straight BC state basketball teams.

In his senior football campaign in 2002, he was state defensive player of the year and second team all-state offensive line for the D2 state runner-up Lancers. He also claimed state track titles in the shot put and the discus.

Thomas was a coveted D1 football recruit.

"My eyes were wide open through the whole process and when Wisconsin offered, I thought I better sign before they figured me out (laughs)," he said.

Wisconsin quickly sized him up for the offensive line.

"I got ready to play left tackle," Thomas said. "I told them, 'I trust you guys. You know what's best (laughs).'"

They did. Thomas became

a premier tackle, earning consensus All-American after the Badgers 12-1 2006 season. He also became the first UW lineman to win the prestigious Outland Trophy.

And he is still a top 10 all-time shot putter for the Badger track team.

He was the third overall pick by Cleveland, signed a huge contract and became one of the greatest offensive linemen of all time, earning 10 straight trips to the Pro Bowl and being named All-Pro seven times.

A torn triceps and a balky left knee finally led to his retirement in 2018.

Thomas stayed loyal to the Browns despite a challenging 48-128 record in his tenure.

"I know they made a lot of missteps, but they always treated me incredibly well," he said. "I also fell in love with the passion of the Cleveland (football) community."

"It was a special time for me."

He has dropped more than 60 pounds from his NFL days and said his aching joints feel much better.

Thomas and his wife Annie and their four children moved back to Wisconsin where Thomas has numerous business interests, including popular car wash ads, NFL Network broadcasting and a highly regarded podcast.

He also loves being a dad.

"I didn't want to keep going until my knees fell off," Thomas said. "I wanted to be able to play with my kids."

Again, he is amazed to be in this position of honor with Harrison.

"Me? A kid from Brookfield, having this kind of career? That's just amazing," he said. "I've never met him (Harrison) in person but he's a legend here, too. This is very special for us."

Two special, once-in-a-generation athletes, making history together.



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