

Brookfield & Elm Grove

THIS MONTH

AUGUST 2021

Appraiser, antique store owners describe industry trends

COVID-19 pandemic, generation trends lead to new antique preferences

By Nikki Brahm
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WAUKESHA — With the public spending more time at home over the last few months, many may have had the time to wipe the dust off some gems hiding in their basements and head out to learn exactly what their favorite vintage item is and whether it's valuable.

Antique store owners and an appraiser in Southeastern Wisconsin have noticed a few new trends over the years, whether related more recently to the pandemic or new generations.

Barbara Eash, certified appraiser in Waukesha County, said the pandemic allowed owners to sort through attics and storage units, placing items into the marketplace.

"This allowed buyers to become more savvy, demanding perfect condition items, and a cheaper price," she said.

Eash said when it comes to specific antique items, most recently, the contents of the official "dining room" have a small marketplace — including china, serving utensils, linens and even traditional dining room furniture.

Also less popular, Eash said, are figurines.

New trends, Eash said, are many 1950s, '60s and '70s items, including women's fashions. Overall, people are also interested in buying a variety of items that they've seen from their childhood, such as toys.

Eash said many buyers want items almost "pristine" and in working order; and at a cheaper price — a trend which Eash calls "buying up." One example of this is vintage toy cars, she said. The internet has changed the industry in this way, she said.

Antique stores

Charlie Solomon with the Pilgrim Antique Mall, W156-N11500 Pilgrim Road in Germantown, said she cannot narrow down what sells more than other items due to the large variety of them at the location. The business rents space for business owners to sell their antique items.

Solomon said she's noticed people have been buying like crazy recently, specifically with more dealer sales at the store. Solomon said she also noticed many of her renters had a large inventory, so they can continue to sell and make a profit.

Royal Oak Antiques, N168-W20828 Main St., Jackson, in Washington County has also noticed some new trends, such as in their antique restoration business. It has been open since 1996 and co-owned by brothers Tim and Bill Adams. The business specializes in furniture and antique pool tables.

"What's going on with us is it's all small restorations, we're finding people are sitting at home and staring at furniture (and they decide to fix it)," Tim said. "The restoration's really increased and the sale part (has) kind of dropped off."

Tim said a lot of younger people seem to be less interested in the furniture they offer while older people are moving and seem to be downsizing, getting rid of their old items. Newly popular over the last three years are outdoor items, tools and brewery items, he said.

True antiques

While antiques and collectables often merge, each should be defined differently, Eash said.

"Mass produced look-a-likes in the collectibles arena are cheaper (and) appear to be pretty, but made cheaply



Nikki Brahm/Freeman Staff

Barbara Eash, certified appraiser, shows a vintage map of Wisconsin from 1914 at the Waukesha Antique Shop, 1427 E. Racine Ave.

— be it furniture, toys, bottles, jewelry, textiles, lamps, porcelain ... These items are often appealing and nothing wrong if one knows it is not a true antique," she said.

Eash said a true antique is at least 75 or more years old. One such store which exclusively offers true antiques is Antiques at Gordons, 2275 N. Port Washington Road, Grafton, which has been in business for over 50 years.

Owner Gordon Kirsten said the pandemic has really negatively impacted their business, but they remained open. "Victorian stuff" is very, very much not in demand and there seems to be a strong impulse towards what's called "modernism," which is furniture and furnishings of the 1940s, '50s and, to some extent, into the '60s," he said.

Beyond this, collectable items including porcelain, pottery, art, glass and more have seen a very strong market, Kirsten said. Kirsten said people in the middle to lower



Nikki Brahm/Freeman Staff

Vintage toys are showcased in a display at the Waukesha Antique Shop, 1427 E. Racine Ave.

class who have less "free money" have been shopping less, likely due to employment impacts from the pandemic.

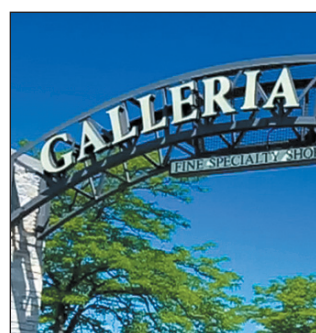
Most recently, Kirsten said the last couple of weeks have been the busiest days of the year and he hopes people are getting ready to spend again.

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Schools receive
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has new tenants

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East off state
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Elmbrook Schools set for state funding increase of 152.56%

Some may receive tax relief

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — With state aid estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released, Elmbrook is one of the Waukesha County school districts anticipated to see a large increase.

Although several districts in the county are anticipated to lose a little more than 13% in state aid, Elmbrook is set to receive a 152.56% increase compared to last year, according to state data. In raw dollars, however, state aid makes up a relatively small share of the district's funding.

Elmbrook Assistant Business Superintendent Kristin Sobocinski said with a budget of about \$100 million, state aid has previously been about \$3 million — it's anticipated to rise to about \$8 million next year.

With the two main revenue streams for schools being property taxes and state aid, the high property values in Elmbrook's area have been sufficient to fund most of the district's needs. The DPI emphasizes state aid for districts with lower property value per pupil.

Two-thirds of the state's 421 districts will receive more general aid for the 2021-22 school year than last year. Estimated values are subject to change. The DPI will certify the amounts Oct. 15.

"A district's general aids can increase or decrease due to changes in any of the three local factors comprising Wisconsin's general equalization aid formula — property valuation, enrollment and shared costs — as well as a difference in fund available from the state," the DPI said in a news release.

Sobocinski said one trend that has affected the coming year's state aid figures is a drop in enrollment for districts across the state, includ-

ing Elmbrook. "Enrollment dropped significantly and it's likely due to COVID-19-related reasons," she said.

For Elmbrook, enrollment dropped by just 0.8% or 62 students, but districts across the state on average lost 3.6% of their students, likely due to families opting for private or homeschool options during the pandemic.

The projected rise in state aid is not additional funding, but rather relative to the property tax levy. For some property owners in the Elmbrook area, that could mean lower taxes associated with the district, but factors such as how recently a property was assessed will influence the outcome.

The last year saw COVID-19 impose new and significant expenses on schools, including Elmbrook's. Sobocinski said a deficit of about \$1.8-1.9 million has been budgeted for this year, though that's likely not as large as other districts have experienced.

Federal funds are anticipated, but there's uncertainty regarding how the funds can be used or what Elmbrook will get specifically. Sobocinski said a sum of \$1.4 million, and an estimated sum of about \$7.7 million, are likely coming, which could offset \$2.6 million in COVID-19-related expenditures.

How the surplus funds could be used is still not determined by federal and state rules.

"We just haven't received any definitive guidance," Sobocinski said. One particular question is whether funds aimed at learning loss could be allocated to summer school programming.

The current DPI aid estimates are subject to change. "A lot of things to happen before that number is certified," Sobocinski said.



Photo courtesy of the Waukesha County Historical Society and Museum
From the Freeman archives, a June 22, 1976 photo of when a man became stuck in a cave-in during work along Lone Tree Lane in Elm Grove.

Brookfield Academy hosting drone class

Class open to non-BA students too

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — Some local school-aged children are spending part of their summer learning a very specific skill: piloting a drone.

Drone instructor Mike Burckle, who has also taught chess for Brookfield Academy, said "the main objective of the class is to prepare for the FAA Part 107 remote pilot exams."

Becoming a licensed drone pilot allows the license holder to operate a drone for commercial purposes. Those purposes can include roof inspections, real estate, agriculture, wedding photography and more.

Recently, a drone operator was out at the Deer District during the Milwaukee Bucks game on July 20, filming shots of the crowd as the team won their first NBA championship in 50 years.

"I wanted to be able to learn how to fly a drone and make money with a drone while also having fun," said Jack Nolde, one of the students in the class.

The class is hosted at Brookfield Academy, but participants do not



Jake Ekdahl / Freeman Staff

have be enrolled in the school. For Athena Anderson, the goal is to learn how to fly a drone legally, but also get a better understanding of "what the constraints would be if I were to try and manufacture my own drone," a personal aspiration.

Burckle said a drone can also simply save labor. He said if a person were surveying a 50-acre property, it could be done with much less effort using a drone rather than on foot.

After classroom learning, students go to a nearby outdoor space for hands-on training operating a drone themselves. "This is a very unique class," Burckle said.

This is the first year Brookfield Academy is offering the drone piloting class. For those seeking to learn more about how to prepare for certification on their own, Burckle said there are resources online.



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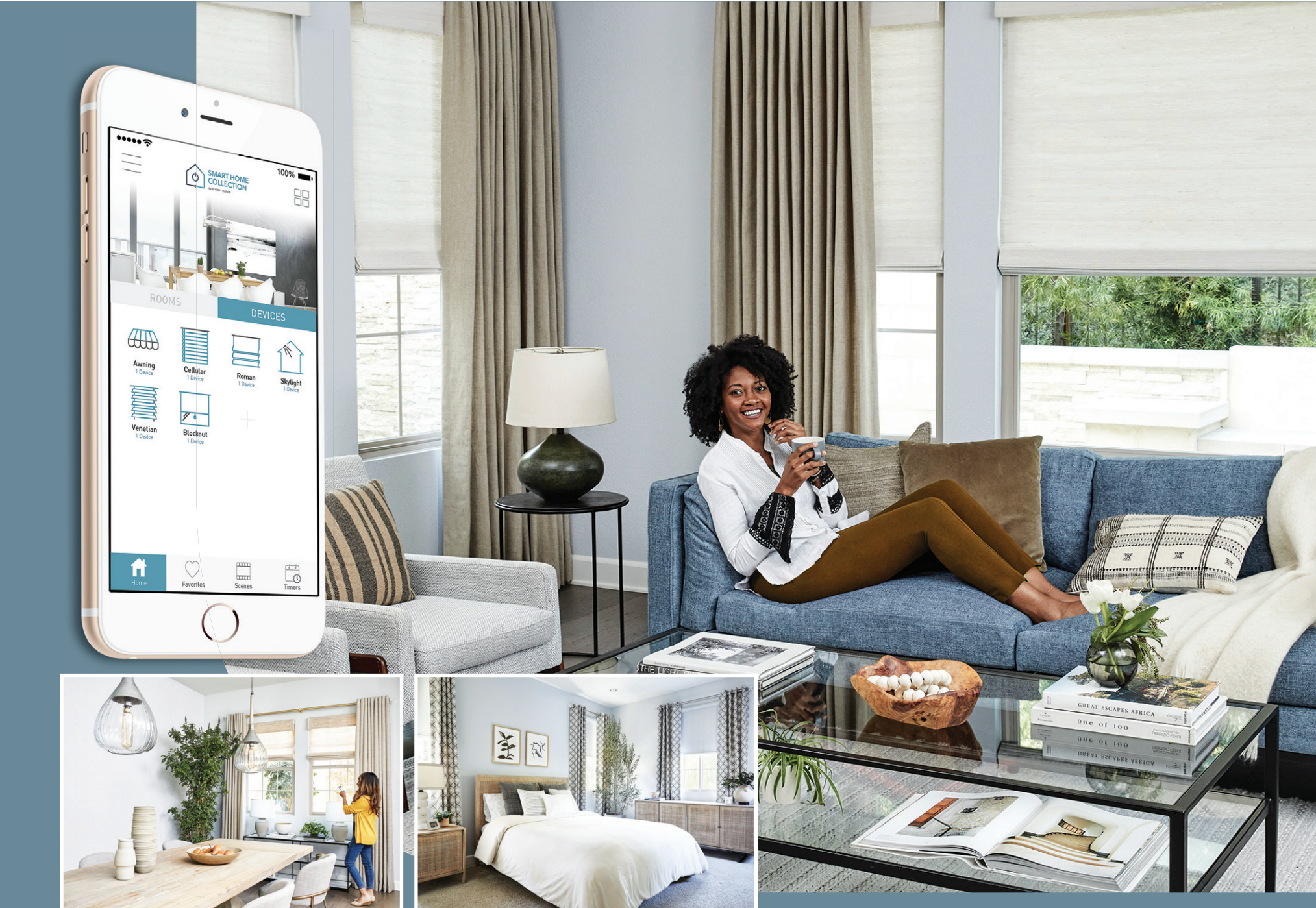
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Brookfield’s Galleria West adds three tenants

Health and beauty businesses moving into strip mall

BROOKFIELD — Three new businesses are preparing to open in Galleria West, a strip mall along Bluemound Road in Brookfield, as one of its original tenants moves out.

Studio 890, a full-service hair, nail, and skin salon, is leaving the Galleria West Atrium space it has occupied since 1988. All services will now be offered at its Elm Grove location.

The former second-floor Studio 890 space is being remodeled to make room for two new tenants, Third Coast Aesthetics and Aljud Nail, which will both open this summer. The first-floor space is being remodeled for Picardy Shoe Parlour, a purveyor of fine women’s clothing, accessories, and shoes, which will relocate from its current Galleria West location.

Another new tenant, CryoKinetics, opened its Galleria West location earlier this year in a ground-floor space east of the Atrium.

According to a news release, even with these changes, Galleria West continues its longtime focus on women’s fashion, health, wellness and beauty.

Aljud Nails and Spa, opening this month, offers a full range of manicures and pedicures. Third Coast Aesthetics, opening in August, is a collection of estheticians who specialize in a wide range of services, including facials, lash extensions, body waxing, advanced brow services, and more for men and women. CryoKinetics focuses on cryotherapy — the application of cold for therapeutic treatment of pain and other conditions — and also offers corrective exercise therapy, kinesiology, and personal training.

“Each of these tenants will continue our commitment to providing top-notch services,” said Galleria West Managing Partner Bill Bode. “We’re thrilled to welcome our newest partners and see Picardy move into its new Atrium location.”



Submitted photo

Galleria West, 18900 W. Bluemound Road, Brookfield, is a collection of independent merchants providing customers with shopping, eating and service experiences. For more information, visit www.shopgalleriawest.com.

Depot move still in works

Timeline, tenant remain in flux

By Cara Spoto
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BROOKFIELD — Plans to repurpose the Brookfield Junction Depot building as a trailhead for the for Waukesha County’s Fox River bike trail and its connection with the city’s Greenway Corridor trail system, at 2825 N. Brookfield Road, remain in place, an official said recently.

Just when the move might happen and who the new tenant for the historic building may be remains to be seen, however.

Redevelopment officials in the city have been working for years on the project, which calls for moving the building from its spot along the Canadian National Railroad tracks at 2844 N. Brookfield Road.

Discussing the project recently, Brookfield Economic Development Coordinator Todd Willis said the city and a developer are still work-

ing with the railroad on the move’s logistics, which include complicated discussions regarding insurance policies.

“Things are progressing. Just not as fast as I would like them to,” Willis said.

The move

In addition to settling on insurance policies, the railroad needs to know that everything, including various safety measures are in place, before it can order a shutdown along the tracks where the depot sits.

“Once the insurance is signed and the building is prepped, it can be moved, but it takes two weeks’ notice to schedule train blocks,” Willis said.

Once that’s done, the building will be moved, likely in the middle of the night.

“We are still living by the timeline set,” he added. “Right now it is all hands on deck with the move. This is definitely one of the most complex

projects we have ever worked on.”

Tenant?

Most recently, plans had called for Fiddleheads Coffee Roasters to operate from the depot, adding onto the building to create a 2,950-square-foot structure.

Fiddleheads could very well still be interested in opening a shop in the repurposed building, but attempts to confirm the company involvement in the project were ultimately unsuccessful this week.

According to the city, the developer for the project is Ram Subedi. Subedi has already purchased the property at the trailhead where the depot is expected to be placed, Willis said.

Reached this week, Subedi declined to comment on any negotiations with Fiddleheads, stating: “I am open to working with anyone.”



Freeman file photo

The Brookfield Junction Depot structure is expected to move to a new location sometime this summer, where it will ultimately be preserved while housing a new kind of commercial activity and also serve as a trailhead for Waukesha County’s Fox River bike trail and its connection with the city’s Greenway Corridor trail system, at 2825 N. Brookfield Road.

WaterStone Bank announces VP, regional manager

WAUWATOSA — WaterStone Bank has announced Kanini McDaniel as its new vice president, regional manager.

McDaniel comes to WaterStone Bank with over 20 years of banking experience. She has served in various retail banking roles including teller, financial specialist, branch manager, senior branch manager, and most recent-

ly as a business relationship manager II, where she was able to assist small businesses with their lending needs. Her most meaningful accomplishment during her banking career has been to be in a position to coach, grow and pro-

mote employees, according to the announcement.

“Their success is my success,” said McDaniel, who is passionate about community service, financial literacy initiatives, and diversity & inclusion. She looks forward

to the opportunity to develop, grow and support WaterStone Bank’s branches by applying her experience and leading by example.



McDaniel

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Flashy fireworks on the Fourth

ELM GROVE — Fireworks light up the sky above Elm Grove Village Park on July 3.

Mary Catanese/Special to The Freeman

Giannis celebrates Finals win at Brookfield Chick-fil-A

Orders 50 nuggets for his 50-point game, amid fan crowd

By Jake Ekdahl
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262-513-2657

BROOKFIELD — On July 21, Milwaukee Bucks star and newly minted NBA Champion Giannis Antetokounmpo ordered a chicken nugget for every point he scored in Game Six of the NBA Finals — which happens to be 50.

The provider of that special order was the Brookfield Chick-fil-A on Capitol Drive.

“He comes through a lot so we know what he drives,” said Jonah Scott, director of operations for the Brookfield Chick-fil-A. “We see him a lot here, but this was different because he announced on Instagram Live he was coming through.”

Shortly after that announcement, a crowd descended upon the fast-food restaurant while the NBA Finals MVP was in the drive thru — and the Larry O’Brien Trophy and Bill Russell Finals MVP award were in the vehicle with him.

“These trophies are not leaving my side,” Antetokounmpo said on Instagram Live. “What if, all of a sudden, I wake up and this is all a dream?”

Scott praised Antetokounmpo’s creativity for ordering specifically 50 nuggets, and said for the athlete’s mere presence to have resulted in “one of the busiest days we’ve ever had” is ultimately “pretty special.”

Fifty also happens to be the number of years it’s been since Milwaukee won an NBA championship, last taking that title in 1971 with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, then known as Lew Alcindor. On July 20, the Bucks finished the Finals series at home with a 105-98 win against the Phoenix Suns.

At one point during his stop in Brookfield, Antetokounmpo started a “Bucks in 6” chant, which fans wasted no time echoing.



Submitted photo

Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo ordered 50 chicken nuggets at the Brookfield Chick-fil-A on July 21 while clutching the NBA’s Larry O’Brien Championship Trophy. Antetokounmpo posted 50 points against the Phoenix Suns on July 20 to help secure the clinching win for the Bucks.

Local golf professional introducing sport to veterans

Part of PGA HOPE

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — Rob Elliott has been golfing since he was six years old and knew he wanted to pursue the sport professionally shortly afterward.

With decades of experience as a PGA professional, Elliott has worked as a golf instructor for several different clubs and most recently his own Rob Elliott Golf Academy. Now, Elliott seeks to bring golf to a very specific demographic: U.S. veterans, especially those with disabilities or PTSD.

Elliott is offering free lessons from 5-6:30 p.m. at Storm’s Golf Range in Brookfield on July 30, and Aug. 13.

The courses are part of an ongoing project called PGA HOPE, which stands for Helping Our Patriots Everywhere.

“It was an opportunity for the golf community to give back to those who have given so much for us,” Elliott said. “There’s no charge at all to the veterans.”

He said about six other golf locations are participating across Wisconsin, including Milwaukee County and Tomah.

Elliott has received specialized training to accommodate specific needs some veterans who previously sustained injuries may have, such as learning how to swing with only one hand, while sitting down or with



Submitted photo

From left, Mike Rhodes prepares to swing his club at Brandybrook Golf Course while Instructor Rob Elliott offers feedback.

impaired vision.

“What I’ve seen across the country is the fact that this has really helped out a lot of veterans,” he said.

Elliott said just getting the group together can be helpful for participants, who become more comfortable over time and begin establishing relationships with one another.

“The banter goes back and forth and that’s what I’m hoping I can get out of my program,” he said. “You hear the statistics — 22 is the big word right now — every 22 seconds someone somewhere is committing suicide... We just want to help out. We want them all, men and women, to just find something that gives them a little bit of happiness.”

Those interested still have

time to sign up or get involved. They can reach Elliott at relliott@pga.com.

One person has already donated a set of golf clubs, a bag and other equipment to accommodate the lessons. “It’s been pretty cool how people are reaching out,” Elliott said. “This is probably going to be the most rewarding lessons I give all year long.”

After the participating veterans graduate from the program Aug. 20, they’ll be invited to play in golf leagues. Elliott said the goal is to ultimately take those he’s working with now, currently 12, and get them comfortable enough to move on to the next level.

Learn more about PGA HOPE at pgareach.org/services/military.



Photo courtesy of Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce

Podcast Town joins Brookfield chamber

BROOKFIELD — The Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 19, for Elzie Flenard, owner of Podcast Town.

Flenard’s ribbon-cutting ceremony was scheduled for March of 2020 and was canceled due to COVID-19. Podcast Town is a full-service, podcast agency dedicated to helping their partners grow their podcast show, grow their audience, and make podcasting easier.

They help subject matter experts broadcast their message to attract quality clients and increase their revenue. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are: Judi Murphy/owner of Murphy Associates; Carol White/president & CEO of The Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce; Elzie Flenard/owner of Podcast Town; Suzanne Singh/podcast producer at Podcast Town; Melisa Maroo/investor relations manager at The Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce; and Pat Miller/owner of The Idea Collective. Podcast Town is located in Wauwatosa. For more information, visit www.podcasttown.net.

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Lumber prices decline from peak, remain high

Demand, supply, transportation challenges create ‘perfect storm’

By Jake Ekdahl
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WAUKESHA — As with many commodities in the last year, the price of lumber has risen since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Prices for some products remain high, but others have begun to decline from their peak five weeks ago.

Bliffert Lumber and Hardware Waukesha Store Manager Dave Diermeier said the decline from a little over a month ago is spurred by moves made by big box home supply stores such as Home Depot, Menards and Lowe's. Dropping sales prompted those stores to cancel supply contracts with sawmills, which in turn lowered their prices.

"The consumers have been helped by these large box stores' order cancellations with the mills," Diermeier said. The price drop has been carried down to smaller businesses and ultimately consumers.

Currently, prices have fallen to about where they were a year ago, but that's still high. Lumber and sheet goods are at about triple previous prices and engineered and imported products are at double. Diermeier said in 2004, an eight-foot two-by-four piece of lumber was \$4.29. Five weeks ago it was \$12.19 and it's now \$7.79. A sheet good used for roof decking could be purchased for \$28 per sheet in 2004, and that's now \$62.14 as of July 13.

Waukesha County Technical College Supply Chain Instructor Molly Barndt said the lumber market has

had challenges predating the pandemic, in 2018 and 2019. She said a lull in the lumber market during that period made saw mills especially unprepared for the sudden boom in demand that came last year, with homeowners suddenly taking up renovation projects as they moved to remote work, DIY hobbyists coming out in full force and the housing market spurring new construction.

"It's really difficult for companies to go from such a lull to a boom and then play constant catch up," she said, adding that labor shortages complicate matters. "The foot hasn't been taken off the gas pedal."

Diermeier said challenges with supply, demand and transportation "created a trifecta, a perfect storm if you will, to pushing to pricing where it's been."

Despite the costs associated with construction, Diermeier said commercial builders are currently working as fast as possible because low interest rates on loans offset high prices for materials.

Barndt cited an estimate from the National Association of Homebuilders that found a new home would currently cost \$35,800 extra due to lumber prices. Mills can't simply scale up production by investing new equipment either, because it's unclear how long the demand will stay at its current level.

David Belman, owner of Belman Homes in Waukesha, said he wanted to create awareness of just how dire the situation was for

lumber prices. He put together a visual display for social media of how much \$1,000 bought in October, 2020 versus May, 2021 — the more recently priced stack is dwarfed by the earlier one.

It will take time for falling prices to fully take effect. Belman said he's heard from the National Association of Homebuilders it could be up to 21 weeks until the full impact of pricing will be felt.

Both Diermeier and Barndt said it may be advisable to hold off on smaller home projects until prices come down to more reasonable levels. Barndt said she and her husband had been planning a sauna for their home, but have postponed that due to costs.

"There's a lot of prudent folks out there waiting to see it drop to a little more normal, whatever that new normal is going to be, I guess," Diermeier said. "As a consumer myself, my advice would be to kind of hold off a bit."

Belman said he would actually advise not waiting, because interest rates are so low currently. He said while lumber prices may improve, other materials may indeed get more expensive; he offered screws and paint as two specific examples.

Belman said for the first time in his company's history there's no finished home available as inventory because they keep getting better and better. "Usually we have between 15 and 20 properties in inventory for sale," he said.



Jake Ekdahl/Freeman Staff

Driver Brad Calton places a stack of lumber on the back of a truck at Bliffert Lumber and Hardware in Waukesha.



Submitted photo

From left, David Belman and Josh Brown hold a sign saying "tell your politicians to #fixlumber" while standing before visual displays of what \$1,000 could buy in lumber last year versus this year.



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Waukesha County ranked Wisconsin's best for median income

Ozaukee, Washington counties rank second, fourth respectively

By Jake Ekdahl
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262-513-2657

WAUKESHA — A survey of financial data ranking each of Wisconsin's 72 counties placed Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties in the state's top five for median income.

Smartasset, a financial technology and advising company, created a Median Income Index score based on metrics such as the median income and cost of living. The data analyzed came from the US Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey, MIT Living Wage Study and Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019 Consumer Expenditure Survey.

Statewide, Waukesha County ranked first, Ozaukee County ranked second and Washington County ranked fourth.

With a median income of \$87,277 and a cost of living at \$47,616, Waukesha County earned a Median Income Index score of 54.45. Ozaukee was found have a slightly lower cost of living than Waukesha at \$47,117 but fell short on median income at \$85,215, landing an index

score of 52.74. Saint Croix County took third with an index score of 52.36.

Washington County netted a fourth-place spot with a median income of \$77,663, cost of living of \$45,162 and a median income index score of 46.49. Calumet County came in fifth with an index score of 44.96.

Nationally, Waukesha County ranks 94th, Ozaukee ranks 112nd and Washington ranks 192nd.

Common cost of living expenses include housing, food, taxes, education and child care, transportation, health care and miscellaneous but necessary purchases.

The study identifies the places where average living expenses are most affordable for the people living there. To find these places, SmartAsset measured the cost of living relative to income to determine the median income index in each county.

SmartAsset calculated two different cost of living metrics for a household with one adult and no dependents. One reflected the baseline cost of living in each location and the other reflected expenditures typical to someone

making the county's median income. SmartAsset combined these two numbers using a weighted average based on how close each county's median income was to the minimum livable income in that area, then subtracted income taxes paid in that area.

Finally, SmartAsset calculated median income index in each county by determining the weighted cost of living as a percentage of median income. The top locations were those with the highest median income relative to the cost of living.

More than half of the top 10 states in Wisconsin are in the southern half of the state and nearly all are on the eastern half. St. Croix County and Pierce County stand out, being in the northwestern corner of the state and close to Minneapolis, which likely boosts income in the area.

Menominee County ranks lowest in the state, with a cost of living nearly as high as its median income, at \$34,378 and \$40,921, respectively.

See the full results of the study yourself by visiting <https://bit.ly/3uN7E3V>.



Submitted photo

The world's largest bounce house will be coming to Waukesha in August.

'World's Largest Bounce House' coming to Waukesha in August

WAUKESHA — A 13,000-square-foot bounce house certified by the "Guinness Book of World Records" as the largest in the world will be set up in Waukesha Aug. 13 through Aug. 15.

The Big Bounce America will bring to the Waukesha County Expo Center four inflatables that include the 13,000-square-foot World's Largest Bounce House; the newly added Sport Slam featuring a customized sports arena; the newly added incredible 900-plus-foot-long obstacle course named The Giant; and a unique, space-themed wonderland called airSPACE.

The World's Largest Bounce House stands 32 feet tall and contains giant slides, ball pits, climbing towers and basketball hoops alongside fun, friendly, oversized characters of various colors, shapes and sizes. At the center of the attraction is a

custom-built stage where the resident DJ hosts games, competitions and plays music tailored to each age group.

All-access tickets are available online and include a three-hour pass to the event, starting at \$19. For tickets and pricing go to <https://thebigbounceamerica.com/tickets/>

Everyone from tiny tots to adult-only events will be held.

"We need more fun in the world! After the year we've all had, it's time to just kick those shoes off and let loose for a while. We have the perfect event to allow kids and adults alike to get out of the house and enjoy an outdoor event like they've never experienced," said Grahame Ferguson, co-founder of The Big Bounce America.

The Waukesha County Expo Center is located at 1000 Northview Road, Waukesha.

County parks to implement artificial intelligence system

AI to assist with vehicle recognition, fee compliance

By Jake Ekdahl
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262-513-2657

WAUKESHA — It's not uncommon to pay a fee for admittance into a public park. In Waukesha County, artificial intelligence may soon be helping with the task of ensuring that visitors comply.

Rekor Systems, Inc., a provider of real-time roadway, customer and public safety intelligence to enable AI-driven decisions, announced it was selected by the county to implement its Rekor One vehicle recognition system at eight Waukesha County public park entrances.

The solution was selected after a competitive bid process earlier this year.

Waukesha County Parks utilizes a fee-based system to offset the cost of maintaining thousands of acres of parkland and greenway. According to Rekor, the company's software and hardware will "replace a time-consuming parking enforcement process and support the integration of various entrance fee payment options into one online payment method, better serving both the public and the county."

The move comes amid rising popularity of local parks. Waukesha County said January through June of this year have seen a 10% increase in daily entrance fees and a 20% increase in annual sticker purchases.

The county said the vehicle recognition system con-



Jake Ekdahl / Freeman Staff

A sign welcomes locals to Waukesha County's Minooka Park, which may soon have an AI-assisted system to help with fee-based entry.

sists of a single camera to be located near the main entrance of each park to capture information for each vehicle that enters and

leaves. All daily entrance and annual sticker payments will be available for online payment and will require park visitors to pro-

vide a license plate upon purchase. The vehicle information from the camera system and online payment system will be used to monitor

entrance fee compliance.

Park user fees will remain the same.

"We're proud of our efforts to not only increase the safety and security of park facilities across the U.S. but also modernize parking compliance, saving municipalities — and their citizens — time and money," said Rekor Systems CEO Robert A. Berman, in a statement.

The county said admittance booth staffing is "necessarily a challenge" but the AI system will help free up staff for other park operations. Entrance huts are typically staffed with park seasonal employees, who make between \$9.87 and \$14.46 per hour — those staff are anticipated to move to other park duties.

Installation is expected to begin in the third quarter of 2021, with full implementation ready for Jan. 1, 2022.

Learn more about Rekor Systems at <https://rekor.ai>.

Wisconsin Coach Lines grappling with worker shortage

By Dave Fidlin
Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — As he seeks to maintain as much normalcy as possible and stick to the company's core business plan, the head of a local transportation company summed up the pandemic-related circumstances he faces on a daily basis.

"I've been here for 23 years. This easily is the biggest challenge I've ever seen," Wisconsin Coach Lines President and General Manager Tom Dieckelman said of the company's worker shortage.

Echoing a sentiment heard from within many companies these days, Dieckelman said Wisconsin Coach Lines is grappling with a worker

shortage across many areas of day-to-day operations.

"We need drivers, we need cleaners, we need dispatchers — it's across the board," Dieckelman said.

Thus far, Wisconsin Coach Lines has been able to maintain regular routes, including the ones within the Waukesha County Freeway Flier program.

But Dieckelman said the worker shortage has forced the company to make trims elsewhere, including the charter business. Wisconsin Coach Lines, which is part of the broader Coach USA company, has historically run on-demand, special request routes to a range of venues.

"Unfortunately, we've had to turn down some work there," Dieckelman said. "From my understanding, it's been the same issue with other bus companies."

Dieckelman said Wisconsin Coach Lines has been working with third-party companies to help spread the word about the company's urgent need for workers. Job posts are routinely placed on Indeed and similar platforms.

But the fickle employment market has resulted in hiccups, with jobs offered and workers simply not showing up.

"We get a lot of resumes in. We call them, we text them, we email them," Dieckelman

said. "Many times, they don't respond. Sometimes we do get responses and we schedule interviews. Sometimes they show up, and sometimes they don't."

Dieckelman said there are a number of reasons behind the worker shortage, including the oft-cited continued availability of \$300 weekly federal unemployment funds.

"You hate to be competing for jobs against, basically, the government," he said. "But to me, it's not just any one thing. It's a combination of things."

The labor shortage — in some form — likely was on the horizon before COVID-19, Dieckelman said, though the pandemic probably sped it up.

"I think, because of the pandemic, a lot of people retired early," he said. "I think there was a shortage coming anyway because the baby boomers were retiring, and the baby boomers, of course, came from big families."

While there is a desire to get back to normal as quickly as possible, Dieckelman said he acknowledges the economic factors that led to the swift shutdown last year and the reality a full recovery will not necessarily follow the same trajectory.

"It's tough because the economy just fell apart in the matter of a few weeks last year," he said. "I don't think you can go from 100 to 0, and then back up from 0 to 100 without ramping up slowly. We're trying to come back. We're trying to build back the business."

The call for workers within Wisconsin Coach Lines' Waukesha office is "an all hands on deck" approach right now, Dieckelman said, but he is optimistic about the future.

"We'll get there, but it's basically going to take some time," he said. "It's a challenge, and it's a challenge for most businesses out there right now."

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A parade Milwaukee has never seen before

Radcliffe joins thousands on Bucks’ parade route to Deer District

I’m not much of a morning person, but there wasn’t anything that could prevent me from giving the NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks a fitting sendoff.

“NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks” — man, I’ll never get tired of saying that, even if it’s yet to fully sink in.

On Thursday, the Bucks held their first NBA Championship parade after claiming the team’s first world title in 50 years. Back in 1971 when Milwaukee won it all, a parade wasn’t held. And while the Milwaukee Brewers were also celebrated with a parade in 1982, that came after losing in the World Series, making Thursday’s occasion that much more special.

I biked from my apartment in Walker’s Point and met up with a few friends before heading downtown around 10:30 a.m. We eventually settled on a spot near where Wisconsin Avenue met Water Street and awaited the cavalcade of players, coaches, families and others that were fortunate enough to soak in the cheers from what was estimated to be over half a million Bucks fans.

There were positive vibes around and people of all ages that eagerly awaited watching the parade pass by. It was around quarter to noon when the first wave of police came through, including five officers on horseback.

The first car to coast through fittingly had former Wisconsin senator and Bucks



DAVE RADCLIFFE

owner Herb Kohl sitting in the passenger seat. It was a nice touch considering what Kohl did to keep the franchise in Milwaukee and all the money he put toward building a new arena. It’s easy to forget how real the possibility was of the Bucks leaving the city less than a decade ago.

Then came the Bucks’ mascot, Bango, who was at the head of a firetruck getting the crowd amped up. Former players like Brandon Jennings, whose prophecy of “Bucks In 6” was fulfilled, and Michael Redd also went by along with buses of fans and family members before we got to the main attraction.

Perhaps happier than I’ve seen him, head coach Mike Budenholzer came through with his arms outstretched. Right behind him was PJ Tucker, who was ... certainly enjoying himself next to Pat Connaughton. I was also able to get good looks at Bobby Portis, who donned a WWE championship belt as he held the Larry O’Brien trophy in the other hand, while a more subdued Jrue Holiday and Giannis Antetokounmpo looked on at the massive sea of people crowding both sides of the street.

Beach balls were batted around, T-shirts were thrown into the crowd and confetti went off at various points of the route, which began at the Museum Center Park and culminated at North Edison Street, making for about a 1 1/2-mile trek through the city.

My friends and I walked back to our bikes after all the commotion and made our way to the Deer District just



LEFT: Bucks head coach Mike Budenholzer celebrates with the crowd at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Water Street in downtown Milwaukee. RIGHT: Dave Radcliffe among the sea of people at the Bucks championship parade.

north of Fiserv Forum for the rally at 12:30 p.m. My assumption was that there was no way we would get close to the stage, which turned out to be correct. But fans were accommodated with multiple video boards in the area broadcasting the celebration.

All in all, it was certainly worth attending. The city of Milwaukee and fans across the state of Wisconsin will ride this high as long as possible, myself included.

Throughout my lifetime, there have been far more downs than ups as a Bucks fan. Ray Allen is the first player I truly remember latching onto as a favorite, and it was heartbreaking to see him fall short of an NBA Finals appearance in 2001 with the likes of Glenn Robinson and Sam Cassell.

In the coming years, there wasn’t a whole lot to cheer about. There was failed draft pick after failed draft pick, including the injury-plagued career of 2005 No. 1 overall selection Andrew Bogut, and the franchise became embedded in mediocrity due to the franchise’s M.O. to scratch and claw for the No. 8 seed year after year, preventing

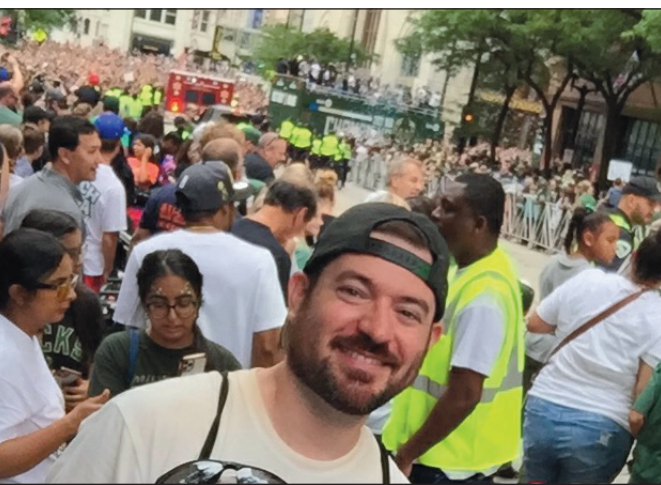
the team from ever drafting a true game-changer.

There was hope Jennings, the 10th pick in the 2009 draft, could fit that bill after he went off for 55 points in a game against the Golden State Warriors his rookie year. But that’s essentially where his career peaked, and he became the laughing stock of the league when he boldly predicted the Bucks would beat LeBron James and the Miami Heat in six games in the first round of the 2013 playoffs.

That obviously didn’t happen. But what did happen months later was the most pivotal moment in franchise history — the selection of a scrappy, little-known 18-year old from Greece at 15th overall.

It would take some time. Milwaukee only won 15 games in Giannis’ rookie season, but just over a month after drafting the Greek Freak, the team made another crucial personnel move by shipping Jennings to the Detroit Pistons in a deal that landed them Khris Middleton.

What followed is well documented, as well. Ownership changed hands. A new arena



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

was built. Giannis blossomed into an MVP and perennial All-Star. The front office did its best to build around him. And despite winning their first playoff series in 18 years under Budenholzer, who was in his first year with Milwaukee, the NBA Finals remained out of reach. A pandemic-altered 2019-20 season halted any momentum the Bucks had in their favor; and the 2020-21 campaign was also far from smooth sailing.

But as fans were allowed back inside Fiserv Forum and the playoffs got underway, there was belief. The Bucks swept the Miami Heat, avenging their second-round exit in the bubble one year ago, before winning an epic seven-game series against the Kevin Durant and the Brooklyn Nets.

Hope seemed lost when Antetokounmpo went down with a nasty-looking knee injury in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Finals, only for the rest of the team to band together and take the next two games over the Atlanta Hawks.

Suddenly, the “Bucks In 6” rally cry was as alive as it had ever been.

After learning Giannis had somehow avoided serious injury, he was miraculously back for Game 1 of the NBA Finals against the Phoenix Suns. Just as they did against the Nets, the Bucks fell behind 0-2, but rattled off four straight victories, the final three each in nail-biting fashion, and Antetokounmpo cemented his legacy with a 50-point performance in the clincher with over 65,000 people packed into the Deer District on Tuesday night.

It was another all-timer from Giannis, who scored 40 or more points in three Finals games. Just 26 years of age, the young man who promised he wouldn’t leave Milwaukee until he helped build the Bucks into a championship-level franchise would not be denied. And while years may have been subtracted off my life during this run, it could not have been more reminiscent of the decades-long journey it took to reach the pinnacle.

So here we are. Milwaukee has a champion for the first time in half a century, and hundreds of thousands of people were in attendance to celebrate it.

Not bad for a terrible city.

No knocking East off top pedestal at state tennis

Top-ranked Spartans dominate D1 field

By Jim Hoehn
Freeman Correspondent

Brookfield East just finished ringing down the curtain on a championship performance, but a sequel might already be in the works.

The Spartans rolled to the Division 1 team title at the WIAA state boys team tennis tournament in Eau Claire, just one week after having their doubles teams finish first, third and fifth, and three singles players reach at least the round of 16 in the state individual tournament.

Of those top 10 players, only three are seniors.

“We’ll be in good shape for next year,” said Brookfield East coach Linda Lied.

Brookfield East, ranked No. 1 all season in the Wisconsin High School Tennis Coaches Association, lost just one individual match en route to three wins at the team tournament, including a 7-0 victory over five-time defending champ Milwaukee Marquette in the final.

The top-seeded Spartans opened with a 7-0 victory over eighth-seeded Appleton East and then No. 4 seed Neenah,

6-1. The Spartans finished 20-0 to garner their first title since 2014. Brookfield East lost to Marquette in the final in 2018 and 2019, dropping a 4-3 decision.

East defeated Marquette, 5-2, in a regular-season dual this year.

“From the time we played Marquette in May to when we got to play them again in June, they definitely saw a lot of improvement in areas, but luckily we were improving as well,” Lied said. “We really believed we could beat them, we just never really thought it would be a 7-0 victory at this stage of the season, so very exciting for us.”

East’s No. 1 doubles team of juniors Henry Irwin (29-1) and Reed Scullen (29-1) captured the individual state title, avenging their only defeat of the season with a 6-2, 6-1 victory over top-seeded and previously unbeaten Sam Kredell and Nick Tiahnybik.

The Spartans No. 3 doubles team of juniors Owen Kendler (31-1) and Michael Francken (29-1) finished fifth at individual state, with their only loss to Kredell and Tiahnybik in the quarterfinals.

Seniors Simon Johnstone (29-2) and Nick Fisher (29-2) bounced back to finish third after losing to Kredell and Tiahnybik in the semifinals.

“To see all three doubles teams on the podium, that was pretty special,” Lied said. “That’s the first time we’ve

ever done that at East and that speaks volumes to our depth.”

Christopher Knutson, the lone senior among the top four singles players, finished sixth at individual state. His three brothers, triplets Colin, Andrew and Jonathan, would have been the other three singles players on the 2020 team whose season was canceled.

Klein (24-3), who was seeded fourth, lost in the round of 16 to Marquette’s Noah White, the eventual third-place finisher, but bounced back to defeat White 6-3, 6-7 (2), 10-3 in the team tournament.

“Just with the experience, the crowd and stuff, that will help me for next year,” Klein said after his loss at the individual state tournament.

Freshman Oscar Corwin (28-1), seeded 16th, lost to eventual state champion Martin Blagoev of Kenosha Indian Trail, who finished his senior season undefeated.

The No. 4 singles player, Arthur Dickson (18-3), also is a junior: Dickson defaulted in the conference match against Marquette’s Aidan Ferber, but avenged the loss in the state team tournament.

“For him to come back and beat that young man that nobody thought he could — except me — in three sets was really exciting for him,” Lied said. “I think that puts a fire in his belly for next year that he can be a difference-maker for us. He had a great year. First time in a varsity lineup on such a good team. He only had three

losses.”

Three of the varsity alternates this season were seniors, but junior Ben Plichta was 4-1 in singles play and 9-2 in doubles.

“He literally would be in the

starting lineup in just about any school’s top 10 in the state,” Lied said. “He’s ready to play.”

The Spartans also won the junior varsity title in the Greater Metro Conference, Lied said.

“That keeps me very excited for what’s coming up the path of players for next year,” Lied said. “We should have a few guys that should be able to jump into that doubles lineup for us.”

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