

Lake Country

THIS MONTH

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

Eating in igloos, bubbles, canal houses

Restaurants adapt to cold weather with heated outdoor dining

By Quinn Clark
Special to The Freeman

Outdoor dining has been the safer option when eating out during the pandemic, but the cold weather's left people wondering how they'll continue to visit their favorite restaurants. Luckily, some restaurants have adapted by providing heated outdoor structures. These clear, spacious structures give patrons the chance to be COVID-safe while staying warm. Here's a guide to socially distanced outdoor dining this winter:

Bass Bay Brewhouse

The beloved Muskego restaurant Bass Bay Brewhouse, at S79-W15851 Aud Mar Drive, has announced the new "Bubbles on the Bay," private heated bubbles outside with a view of the lake.

Purchasing the "Bubbles on the Bay" package comes with 90 minutes in your own private structure with up to eight people, two appetizer platters and drinks, and a warm cookie for each person. You can also reserve the "weekend brunch" option that includes bottomless mimosas, a brunch platter and more.

The bubbles have been met with an overwhelming amount of support, leading Bass Bay to offer smaller weekday packages in addition to its original weekend-only offer. Ryan Oschmann, owner, said that this is because customers always leave pleasantly surprised with the quality and amount of food and drink that they get during their reservation. "We're charging for the

platters and drinks with the same kind of mark-up that you would typically find in the restaurant," Oschmann said.

Oschmann said the bubbles reservations are spaced out so that there is maximum time for cleaning each space. He wants the bubbles to serve as a place for customers to feel safe enough to leave their houses without having to go inside a restaurant.

"Plus, with the bubbles on the bay, you can't really get much better scenery than that," Oschmann said.

You can reserve your own bubble at Bass Bay at bass-bay.resova.us.

Zisters

This isn't the first year that Zisters, 13425 Watertown Plank Road, Elm Grove, has offered the unique experience of dining inside in an "igloo." Last year, the restaurant decided to take advantage of its spacious patio and give patrons a chance to have a private dining experience with the heated igloos, and it was a huge success.

Betsi Zierach, owner of Zisters, said that the igloos are even more popular this year as people want to remain socially distanced during the pandemic. She credits the outdoor dining's success to the privacy it provides.

Zisters is also heavily sanitizing the igloos after each use to ensure safety.

"We wipe all surfaces down and then we have a sanitizer gun that sprays through everything else that's inside," Zierach said.

Zierach loves watching how much people enjoy the



Submitted photo

The domes outside of Belfre, 606 N. Genesee St., Delafield, are a cozy, private dining option that customers can't get enough of.

igloos.

"People have so much fun out there, which is always nice to see, especially after everything (going on) this year," Zierach said.

To reserve an igloo for up to eight people, go to reserveyourigloo.com.

Belfre

Belfre, 606 N Genesee St., Delafield, is another restaurant that's ahead of the curve when it comes to heated outdoor dining. Last year, Belfre introduced their heated, outdoor domes, garnering tons of success. This year, the domes are back open, available for reservations.

Beyond just the unique, private experience, reserving a dome comes with special perks.

"We have a few offerings

for the dome that we don't offer inside; foodwise, we do have a fondue package that people love, so that's been a reason why people love our domes," said Amy Quinn, owner of Belfre.

Quinn explained Belfre's COVID-19 precautions for the domes, including leaving plenty of time between reservations to sanitize everything inside the dome, and the dome itself.

"We also have air filters in each dome, so we feel confident that we're doing everything we can to keep people safe and our servers safe, as well," Quinn said.

To reserve a dome, go to exploretock.com/belfrekitchen.

Café Hollander

All of Lowlands Groups' seven locations have imple-

mented outdoor heated structures, including Brookfield's Café Hollander at 20150 Union St.

Café Hollander's heated outdoor dining includes a pop-up bar and nine canal houses on the rooftop. Up to six guests at a time can dine inside a "house."

Reservations come with a "Snackentrie Box" of your choice, as well as a pre-ordered family meal and beverage package.

Staggered reservation times allow for time to sanitize the canal house before the next group comes in. Each canal house is sanitized with a fog atomizer machine that sprays a fog that kills bacteria.

To reserve your own canal house, go to exploretock.com/cafehollanderbrookfield.

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INSIDE



Owner seeks OK for name of Pewaukee Lake island

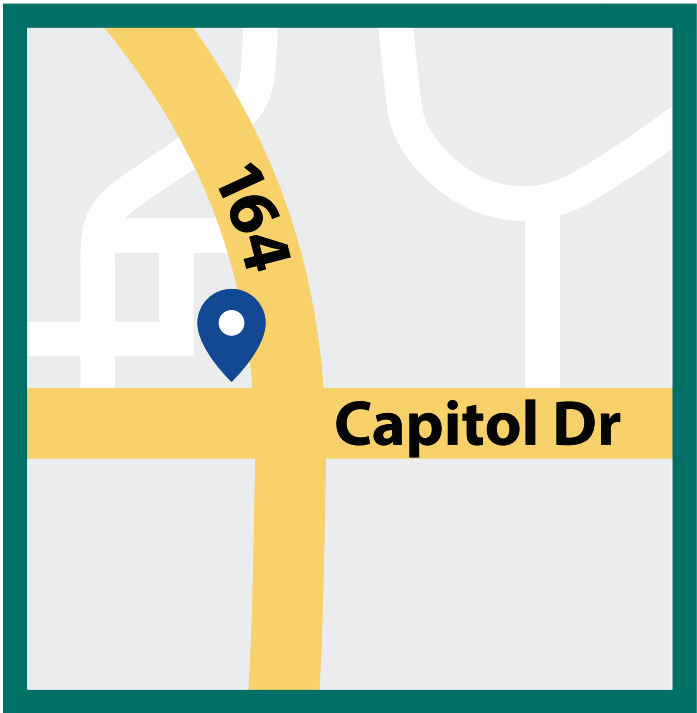
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Pewaukee Lake’s ‘big island’ could get official name

New owner wants state to dub it ‘Green Dragonfly Island’

By Cara Spoto
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CITY OF PEWAUKEE — The three-acre island off Starke Bay in Pewaukee Lake has gone by a number of names over the last 150 or so years. It’s been called The Big Island, Rannie’s Island, Chester Island, and most recently Wilson’s Island, Powers Island or Party Island.

Although those names have been popular at one time or another, the island has never had an official name — at least not one recognized and certified by the state.

But that may be changing soon thanks to its newest owner, Stephen Green.

A real estate investor, Green purchased the small vacation island in May of last year. Soon after, he thought he ought to give the island a proper name.

Holding their wedding ceremony on the island on May 10, 2019, Stephen and his bride, Karin, asked their guests for suggestions.

Perhaps noticing the metallic insects flitting about the island, a few attendees, including Karin’s mother, Edith Koegel, suggested Green Dragonfly Island.

Finding that name a fitting tribute to the island’s colorful inhabitants, Green submitted an official geographic name proposal application to the state Department of Natural Resources last fall, and the City of Pewaukee Common Council gave the name change their blessing.

Although the Common Council’s action does not mean the state will approve the new name, the move could help the application win approval.

Although the island was casually named for its owners over the years, Green said the state



Photos courtesy of the Green family

Pewaukee Lake’s “big island” as seen from a boat in May 2019. Stephen Green, who owns the island, is hoping to officially name the property Green Dragonfly Island, for the emerald insects who make their home there.



Karin and Stephen Green embrace following their wedding on Pewaukee Lake’s “big island” in May 2019. At their wedding, the couple asked guests to suggest names for the property, and several said it should be named for its green dragonflies.



A green dragonfly rests briefly on a rock in a photo taken on Pewaukee Lake’s “big island” last summer. The island’s new owner, Stephen Green, has asked the state to officially name the property Green Dragonfly Island.

doesn’t want applications for personal names, so it makes Green Dragonfly Island a perfect fit.

As does the fact that the island is what Green describes as a “perfect habitat” for the insects. “One day there must have been about a thousand dragonflies on the house on the point,” he said.

In his application to the DNR, Green notes that the dragonflies lay their eggs in the sunlit shallow waters on the south side of the island where there are hun-

dreds of lilies.

“I like dragonflies. I feel they deserve their own island,” he added.

Green had originally planned to sell lots on the island, which was subdivided into 16 lots in 1922, but has since opted to hold on to it in its entirety. The couple spends about half of their summers on its shores, living in one of the two cottages on the property.

They hope to hear to back from the state on the name application sometime in 2021.

“I like dragonflies. I feel they deserve their own island.”

— Stephen Green, seeking to have state formally adopt the name of a Pewaukee Lake island



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Gun club can reopen after Delafield council issues permit

Decision comes 10 years after pregnant woman was grazed by stray bullet

By Nikki Brahm
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DELAFIELD — After a decade of legal and city battles, the Hartland Sportsmen’s Club, a gun club located in Delafield, will be able to reopen to the public once conditions under a conditional use permit are met.

In April 2010, Delafield rescinded the business’ CUP after a pregnant woman, Raluca Buznea, was grazed on the belly by a stray, spent bullet from the gun range while sitting at the nearby Delafield Brewhaus, some 740 yards away. After the incident, the club attempted to gain a new CUP for its business along Maple Avenue, south of Interstate 94, but the city over the years rebuffed club attempts to resume operating.

The conditions approved by the council Nov. 9, under the approved permit, include additional safety measures, such as requiring the impact area for the 50-yard range and the 100-yard range to be secured by a fence — which should be submitted to the Plan Commission for review and approval.

Changes to the proposed improvements will also be certified by a third-party inspector selected in good faith by the city.

Other safety measures in the CUP are reducing the slope of the 100-200 yard range in a specific area, a new firing line enclosure at the silhouette range, new bullet catchers on three sides of the West Bay Range to prevent ricochets from leaving the range, and more.

Legal fight

Throughout the legal battle of two trial courts and an appellate court, a June ruling came in the Hartland Sportsmen’s Club’s favor. In its decision, the Court of Appeals said the city’s position was the prior rulings permitted further hearings and recon-

sideration of the 2011 permit application. The gun club argued that the circuit court’s reversal of the city’s initial rulings was proper, and the appeals court backed it, requiring the city to issue the permit, which a second trial court also agreed with in June.

In March, the council approved a CUP permit. The permit required the club to complete extensive safety renovations within 18 months on five firing ranges and install a fence around the 35-acre complex.

Club attorney Stacie Rosenzweig told The Freeman the conditions were “unrealistic” and “set the club up to fail.”

This led to further legal action and the October court ruling, which found the city in contempt and fines would be imposed upon it in the amount of \$1,000 a day if a new permit wasn’t issued. Rosenzweig said a new CUP was required to be issued by mid-November to avoid city fines.

“We were able to sit down and we were able to negotiate a compromise and get a new CUP that was approved by the Common Council and was signed by the club. There was some give and take on both sides, but this allows the club to implement some improvements range by range and then reopen one range at a time once those changes are implemented instead of all at once,” Rosenzweig said. “And it requires fencing around certain ranges, not around the entire property.”

Rosenzweig said nobody got exactly what they wanted, but both parties could live with the negotiation.

City Attorney James Hammes said the new CUP is the product of discussion with the gun club.

“We made a number of changes. We made a few changes on the hours of operation, but the city tried to do a balancing of interests for the club’s interests and the

adjoining property owners’,” he said. “The court’s ruling is the court’s ruling, so what we did was comply with the court’s ruling. Obviously we had a different opinion, otherwise there wouldn’t have been an appeal on the case.”

Hammes said he understands some of the property owners “understandably may not be entirely satisfied” with the CUP, but it was a necessary decision for the city.

Council vote

The Common Council approved the CUP in a vote 6-1, with Alderman Wayne Dehn voting against it.

“I have no doubt that the council probably will vote in favor of the motion to approve this CUP, obviously to hopefully avoid contempt of court charges,” said Dehn. “But I can’t, as the representative for this area, vote for this knowing that I believe that there are some inconsistencies in the original application.”

Dehn clarified the club has stated in their original application that they were a nonprofit 501(c)(3), but 23 days earlier their nonprofit status was revoked by the IRS.

Dehn also alleged the business has caused the city to lose revenue in property values due to the business’ environmental impacts.

Alderman Tim Aicher made the motion to approve the CUP as written, reminding the council that a permit was issued in March that the council believed to be appropriate; however, the CUP presented to the council on Nov. 9 was in compliance with the court-ordered mandate.

Alderwoman Jackie Valde said she will support the motion only to prevent the city from being fined \$1,000 a day.

“I don’t think this club has shown any inclination to increase safety or honor the people around them. We do not have an option at this moment to do anything else,” Valde said at the meeting.



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Mayor concerned about Delafield development

Attwell hopes construction will begin in spring

By Kelly Smith
Special to The Freeman

DELAFIELD – Mayor Kent Attwell says he is hoping Hendricks Commercial Properties of Beloit will begin construction on its two four-story commercial buildings at the corner of Main and Genesee streets in the spring of 2021.

Attwell says he is concerned that the development site, a one-acre vacant lot in the center of town, detracts from the quaint and historic ambience of downtown Delafield, which attracts tourists and other consumers to local merchants.

The Hawk's Inn stagecoach stop, the city's signature historic landmark, was originally built on the site in the 1840s.

The building was moved to its existing site on Wells Street in the 1960s to make way for a gas station that occupied the site for decades before it was demolished about two years ago after Hendricks Commercial Properties purchased the land.

"I started being concerned when they tore down the gas station. The gas station wasn't pretty but at least it was something, which is better than what we have there now," the mayor said.

After more than two years of deliberations over the design of the buildings, city officials granted final approval for construction during the first quarter of this year; City Administrator Tom Hafner said.

However, Hafner added, representatives of the development company have not spoken to city officials about the project since May or June.

Hafner said Rob Gerbitz, the company's chief executive officer, expressed concern during the meeting about potential increases in cost of construction because of a shortage of labor and



Kelly Smith/Special to The Freeman

This vacant lot in the middle of downtown Delafield at the corner of Main and Genesee streets is the site for two commercial buildings that city officials hope Hendricks Commercial Properties will build next spring.

lumber in the region.

Attwell said he has had several conversations with Gerbitz during the past months but not about the development project.

The mayor and city administrator, in separate interviews, said they did not know if the delay in starting the project is related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other business decisions by the developer.

The company has multiple major development projects in Indianapolis, Ind., Boise, Idaho, and Beloit, as well as Delafield.

Gerbitz did not respond to three telephone messages from The Freeman seeking his comments on the status of the project.

The \$25 million project includes 54,000 square feet of office space and 20,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, and food hall space, according to the company's website.

One of the buildings at the intersection will face the north-southbound Genesee Street while the other building will face east-westbound Main Street.

Critics of the development argued the early 20th century industrial architectural

style of the buildings was not compatible with downtown's Colonial architectural theme and building plans did not abide by the city code.

After months of debate, the developers agreed to "soften" the design of the buildings and city officials agreed to amend the code to permit the project.

The project was a key issue in the 2020 mayoral election when incumbent Mayor Attwell was accused by his opponent, Sandra Felker, of moving too slowly in approving the project.

Attwell was re-elected to a second term with 55 percent of the votes cast.

Hendricks Commercial Properties is part of the Hendricks Group, which is owned by billionaire businesswoman Diane Hendricks who also owns ABC Supply, one of the largest suppliers of roofing, windows and siding in the country.

The company began purchasing downtown Delafield property in 2015 and now owns nearly two dozen buildings, most of them built during the Bob Lang era of the late 1980s and 1990s.

Marijo Weissgerber honored as Okauchee Person of the year

OKAUCHEE — During the recent 2020 annual Okauchee Community Dinner Dance, Marijo Weissgerber was the fifth person, and first woman, to be awarded the Hans Weissgerber Person of the Year Award.

"It was a huge surprise to me," said Weissgerber. "As the chairman of the annual dinner dance I was told we were skipping the award this year, considering all that is going on this year."

Weissgerber has been committed to the promotion and improvement of the Okauchee Community for years. She has served on several committees to help the community, including past president, vice president, secretary and recording secretary of the Okauchee Area Business Association, and various committees.

This year, the Annual Okauchee Dinner Dance, with a "Masquerade Ball" theme, was downsized and held at the Golden Mast restaurant. The event raises money to fund flowers, hanging baskets, flags, banners, seasonal decorations, the annual Okauchee Christmas Tree Lighting event, the Okauchee Lake fireworks, the Oconomowoc food pantry, and the Okauchee American Legion.

Weissgerber has served as the chair of the annual dinner dance fundraiser for the past 10 years. She was the inspiration behind the flower baskets and the flower plantings in Okauchee. When the pandemic struck, Weissgerber volunteered her time to make over 500 masks for the Milwaukee United Way. She has continued to co-chair the Okauchee fireworks over the past several years.

Inspired by a family of volunteers,



Submitted photo

Tim Michelic, the 2018 Okauchee Person of the Year, and Marijo Weissgerber, the 2020 Okauchee Person of the Year, stand together.

Weissgerber has spent a lifetime volunteering and helping. She has been on mission trips around the world, including India and the Dominican Republic. She has served on boards for ProHealth, Thrivent Financial, Parent Teacher League (Divine Redeemer School) president, and the Arrowhead High School Broadway Company parent group president, always available to serve her community.

Former award recipients have included Hans Weissgerber (2016), Brian Bergmann (2017), Tim Michelic (2018), and Richard Bertrand (2019). The 2021 Okauchee Community Dinner Dance will be April 14.

Williams-Berg named Oconomowoc Chamber Citizen of the Year

By Alex Nemec
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Highway 16 with the Scouts and the Oconomowoc Rotary Club.

That sense of community and helping where she can was instilled in her as a child, she said.

"I grew up in a family that there was no argument that we would remember our community and uphold it," Williams-Berg said.

"... If we were needed somewhere, we would work to the best of your abilities to provide our talents and skills as needed."

Shorehaven CEO Dale Dahlke said he has come to know in his 31 years with Shorehaven that Williams-Berg has her finger on the pulse of the community and that service to others has always seemed to be part of her persona.

OCONOMOWOC — Sarah Williams-Berg was named Oconomowoc's Citizen of the Year last month by the Oconomowoc Chamber of Commerce during its annual award ceremony.

Williams-Berg is the director of community relations at Shorehaven, but her sense of community stretches far beyond her work there.

Williams-Berg said she has worked with a lot of organizations in the community including multiple school districts and civic groups.

She also said one of her favorite community efforts is helping to pick up trash on

"I quickly learned that anytime I was at a community event that my place of employment came up in conversation the very first thing the person I was talking to would say is 'You must know Sarah,'" Dahlke said. "Because it was evident that everyone in Oconomowoc did."

Williams-Berg said she feels helping in her community is "reoundingly" fun.

"It's so rewarding to get to know the different kind of causes, beliefs and convictions and motives of people trying to do good on Earth," Williams-Berg said. "The more you reach out, the more you learn about your own capabilities and about where the needs are and it is tremendously rewarding."

WCTC Learning in Retirement program receives donations

PEWAUKEE — Learning in Retirement of Waukesha County Inc., which is hosted by Waukesha County Technical College, was the recipient of three monetary donations that have been used to assist LIRWC members who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Waukesha Noon Lions Club and the Wisconsin Lions District 27-A1 donated \$1,043 and \$1,003, respectively, for the purchase of devices that aid individuals with hearing impairments. LIRWC used the funds to buy

two Phonak Roger Digimaster 5000 devices, which are classroom amplification systems that improve the listener's experience, and one Roger Soundfield Touchscreen Microphone, which assists with clarity in communication and noise reduction.

A third donation from Enterprise Holdings Foundation in the amount of \$1,500 permitted the addition of a Roger Touchscreen Mic and two Roger MyLink units. This enables members who have hearing aids with T-

coils the ability to connect directly into the instructor's microphone rather than listening through the amplification system alone.

Lisa Peterson, president of LIRWC, said the organization is grateful for the donations, and it will provide current and future members who have hearing issues to better enjoy LIRWC offerings. A representative from Phonak provided instructors and members with a demonstration on how to incorporate the technology into classes.



Everything can be taken ... except the freedom to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.
~ Viktor Frankl

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Bye 2020, you will not be missed

Still plenty of great stories despite pandemic shortening year



This year started like every other. Games were played, postseasons started and championships were won. Then, Thursday, March 12, happened. The COVID-19 pandemic started and 2020 went from being just another year into one that will live in infamy. I wish I didn't have to review 2020 — or the year that must not be named for those Harry Potter fans out there.

Before the pandemic

The Waukesha South/Catholic Memorial boys swim team and Mukwonago wrestling team each won a silver trophy and individual awards were given to some area gymnasts. But the highlight prior to the shutdown was Arrowhead's Keegan O'Toole becoming the first Waukesha County wrestler to win four state championships — 18th overall in state history.

O'Toole is a once-in-a-generation talent on the mat and after his winning state his freshman year, I thought this talented kid could do it. He made winning look so easy. O'Toole never lost a prep match to a Wisconsin wrestler and finished his historic career 157-5. In 2019-20, O'Toole won the 160-pound title and went 49-0. He added two wins when he helped Arrowhead get to the semifinal of the Team State wrestling tournament.

Arrowhead's individual state tournament was one for the books, too. The Warhawks had an unprecedented five wrestlers make the final at the individual state tournament. Mitchell



Freeman file photo

The Pewaukee girls basketball team celebrates winning the WIAA Division 2 sectional final with a 73-42 victory over Pius. However, Pewaukee and Oconomowoc didn't get to play in the state tournament as the night before, the WIAA canceled the entire winter season.

Mesenbrink (138) and Mason Diel (182) both stood on top of the podium like O'Toole, while Jack Ganos (145) and Noah Mulvaney (152) both finished runners-up. Brookfield Academy's Aidan Medora made the D2 final at 145 pounds, but his quest for a third state title fell short in the final.

Mukwonago's grapplers were ranked No. 1 all season, but lost 32-30 against Stoughton for the second straight time in the state final.

The Blackshirts were just six points back of Middleton for the boys swimming state title. South/CMH's Caleb Blischke won gold in the 200-yard freestyle and he was part of the 400 freestyle relay team with Jacob Carlson, Nolan Scanlan and Joe Esterle finished state with a first-place finish.

Gracie Moran represented the Waukesha gymnastics team the best way she could by claiming the state title on the uneven bars.

March 12, 2020

This was the night where basketball teams were supposed to be celebrating a sectional win or getting some important sleep before state. It ended up being the worst day in prep sports. The WIAA made the tough call — and in hindsight the right decision — to cancel the winter sports season.

The Brookfield Central boys basketball team beat rival Brookfield East 76-66

in a double overtime thriller and the Hamilton boys basketball team defeated Arrowhead 67-55 that fateful Thursday night that would have created a third meeting in a Division 1 sectional final matchup. New Berlin Eisenhower also advanced by beating Catholic Memorial 66-50 in a Division 2 sectional semifinal game and was ready for a sectional final matchup.

A pair of Lake Country girls basketball teams were all set in their respective hotels ready to play in a game they would have remembered for the rest of their lives. Oconomowoc and Pewaukee were told before they set foot on the Resch Center court their seasons had ended. It was the first state berth for both schools.

I honestly don't know how Oconomowoc coach Bob Shea and Pewaukee coach Jim Reuter told these girls their dreams of playing at state were dashed. To get the rug pulled out without even playing has to sting. Luckily for these prep athletes, the sting of losing (or not playing) your final game heals with time.

The WIAA also did a great job of postponing the spring season to keep hope alive, but the ultimate cancellation of that season without an event being played was inevitable. Yet, it still was a kick where the sun doesn't shine.

Aug. 17, 2020

It took 158 days for prep sports to pick back up when the WIAA set Aug. 17 as the earliest day to practice for cross country, girls golf, girls swimming and diving, and girls tennis. It felt much longer than that.

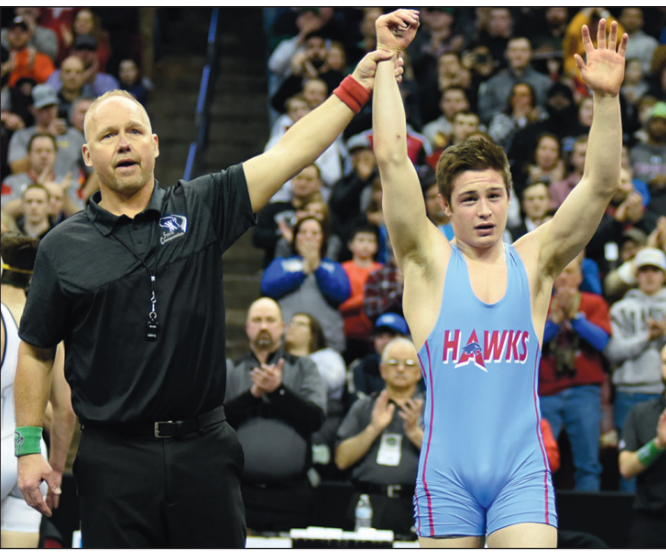
We at least had some professional sports to watch on TV by then.

Fall saves the day

Like typical Waukesha County fashion, the girls golf state tournament kicked off the postseason in the fall and Brookfield Central claimed the team title while talented Arrowhead freshman Jessica Guiser won the individual title. And like typical 2020 fashion, this tournament was played at Blackwolf Run in Kohler instead of University Ridge in Madison.

That was just the start of the titles that came back to the county. Muskego senior Elizabeth Sobieski went unbeaten in two state tournaments. She first claimed the singles championship — the school's first individual girls tennis title. Then, she was the top singles player for the Warriors' Team State championship squad. CMH brought home a second-place trophy — its third straight girls tennis trophy.

The Oconomowoc boys cross country team won its first state championship in program history on its



Freeman file photo

Arrowhead's Keegan O'Toole has his hand raised after winning the WIAA Division 1 160-pound state championship. O'Toole became the first Waukesha County wrestler to win four state titles and 18th in the state.

rival Arrowhead's home course. It was the first Oconomowoc state team title in any sport since 1981.

Add two more to the trophy case as the county swept the boys and girls volleyball state tournaments. Yep, two more programs won their first state title in program history.

The Hamilton girls volleyball team hoisted the gold ball for the first time at Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln. Kettle Moraine won the almost-all-Waukesha state boys volleyball tournament. The Lasers defeated Marquette for their first state championship in program history. Arrowhead, New Berlin and Muskego plus KM made up four of the six state teams.

Arrowhead finished with the silver ball in boys soccer, which was played the same day as the volleyball state tournaments on Nov. 7, at Mukwonago.

It was a clean sweep of a Waukesha County team bringing home a state trophy when Brookfield East repeated as the state champions in girls swimming and diving. Senior Reilly Tiltmann, junior Abby Wanezek and sophomore Lucy Thomas were the stars for the Spartans. Tiltmann and Wanezek both won in all four of their events, while Thomas was a three-time winner. Arrowhead sophomore Campbell Stoll took home two gold medals as the

Warhawks were runners-up. Waukesha South senior Abby Carlson added a state championship in the 500-yard freestyle. The county won gold in every event but diving.

The WIAA didn't crown any football championships, but Muskego was clearly the best team in the state. The Warriors finished 9-0 and had a margin of victory of 31.1 points per game. After their 31-7 victory over Menomonee Falls in the unofficial Division 1 state title game, Muskego has now won 37 straight games.

On to 2021

Everyone on Earth was ready for 2020 to come to a close, but I think we all need to put into perspective that 2021 will not get us back to normal. We will still have to wear masks for probably most of the year. Our Waukesha County prep athletes will be finishing the winter season in masks. We still may not have a true ending to a season if COVID-19 cases skyrocket for some reason.

I hope these kids get a true finish to the season. I hope the spring athletes get a true beginning, middle and end. The WIAA really needs to do everything in its power to get a spring season started and finished, even if that finish is in July.

2020 is officially in our rearview mirror. Good ride.

Beat the winter blues

Five ways to stay active this season

By Quinn Clark
Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — Don't let the cold weather get you down this winter season. Keep your spirits up and stay active by checking out all that Waukesha County's parks, trails and hills have to offer.

"We know that our parks and trails provide opportunities for physical activity and stress relief that is critical to the health of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Emily Heller, public communications coordinator for the Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use.

Here's a list of outdoor activities to try this winter.

Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing

The Waukesha County Parks System has over 16 miles of cross-country ski trails. The trails are specifically maintained for cross-country skiing, so all they need now is snow.

You can keep an eye on the snow conditions in Menomonee, Minooka and Nashotah Parks and learn more about the trails at www.waukeshacounty.gov/snowconditions.

For a more traditional hiking experience, you can snowshoe at the Retzer Nature Center at S14-W28167 Madison St. and with snowshoe rentals available, you don't even have to bring your own.

There are five more parks in Waukesha County with snowshoeing available in Muskego, Fox River and more with varying levels of difficulty. All snowshoeing

locations can be found at <https://rebrand.ly/evdd8>.

Sherper's, a family-owned business in Oconomowoc, Port Washington and Hales Corners, has been Wisconsin's go-to for outdoor supplies since the 1950s. Beyond selling supplies for all of your outdoor needs, they have given advice to Wisconsin's nature lovers.

"With great ski hills in southeastern Wisconsin, plus plenty of parks with cross-country ski and snowshoeing trails, these are fun and easily accessible activities for both beginners and those with advanced skill sets," said Kayla Schneider, marketing and E-commerce manager of Sherper's. "Places like Lapham Peak that offer lighted ski trails make getting outside after work hours easy and enjoyable."

Sledding

All ages can agree that the rush of sledding down your favorite hill never gets old. Sleds, tubes and snowboards are all welcome on Menomonee, Minooka, Muskego and Nashotah Parks' sledding hills.

Don't have a sled? Sherper's offers a variety at all three of their locations.

"For adults and kids alike, grabbing a sled and hitting a local hill is one of the easiest and most fun ways to beat the winter blues," Schneider said.

Snowmobiling

Check out a new snowmobiling trail this year — you may be surprised at how many there are in Waukesha County. You can access Waukesha County's interactive snowmobile map at

<https://www.waukeshano.org/waukesha-county-trail-map>.

David Groszczyk of the Waukesha County Snowmobile Association says snowmobiling is a sport that the whole family can enjoy.

"Much like taking a road trip with the family in the summer, you can essentially do the same thing when you hop on your sled and ride any of the 100+ miles of trails in Waukesha County," Groszczyk said. "The freedom to explore where the trail leads you with family and friends, seeing parts of the county others rarely see and the sparkle of freshly fallen snow on a clear winter day is unmatched."

Groszczyk reminds beginners that they must pass a snowmobile safety course before hitting any of the trails.

"You are operating a powerful vehicle on ice and snow, so it's your responsibility to safely maintain control of your vehicle at all times, not just for yourself but for family and everyone else on the trail," Groszczyk said.

For more information on safety courses and registering your snowmobile, go to dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Snowmobile. Groszczyk also recommends joining a snowmobile club; clubs in Waukesha can be found at waukeshasno.org.

Hiking

Take in the snowy scenery and go hiking this winter. Lysianne Unruh, communications manager at the Ice Age Trail Alliance, says the health benefits from hiking can



Courtesy of Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use

The Waukesha County Parks System offers four sledding hills for all ages to enjoy. Pictured is Minooka Park's sledding hill.

help with the winter blues.

Beyond getting your heart rate up and getting your daily dose of vitamin C, Unruh points out the beauty that winter, specifically, brings to hiking.

"With its white, blue, gray, brown shades, winter offers a color palette that invites reflection," Unruh said. "It's a season where tree bark texture, seed pod formation, and animal footprints capture attention. Hikers cresting a hill will enjoy expansive views during this leaf-off season. Once hidden from view among brambles or brush, erratics or kettle lakes are now in plain sight."

There are nine popular Ice Age National Scenic Trail segments in Waukesha County. Many can be accessed at the Kettle Moraine State Forest's Southern Unit at S91-



Courtesy of Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use

Snowshoe rentals and trails are offered at the Retzer Nature Center.

W39091 Highway 59.

"These segments cross extensive prairie restoration areas, oak forests, wetlands and pass by trailside kettles, creeks and even the Oconomowoc River,"

Unruh said. "Along the way, they highlight the region's natural beauty and impressive glacial landforms: kettles, eskers, drumlins, kames and erratics."