

Brookfield & Elm Grove

THIS MONTH

MARCH 2021

Local private schools maintain in-person classes during pandemic

Precautions prompt adapting old traditions, spurring some new ones

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — For Catholic Memorial High School and Brookfield Academy, maintaining in-person class during the coronavirus pandemic has required adaptations, but with one successful semester finished, both communities are hopeful for the future.

“As next semester goes around we certainly hope there will be a way for use to have our teachers vaccinated,” said Brookfield Academy Head of School Sharon Koenings. “That will make a big difference.”

In addition to hand washing, plexiglass and social distancing throughout the school day, lunch time has its own set of compromises. Catholic Memorial removed its traditional tables and spread students out across the cafeteria and one of the gyms, where they all eat facing the same direction. Brookfield Academy students eat in the classroom.

Catholic Memorial High School President Donna Bembenek said several traditional activities at CMH are still taking place, but they look a bit different right now. For daily Mass, which typically involves a sizable in-person gathering, classes will rotate in-person attendance while the rest participate virtually.

The upcoming visit of Archbishop Jerome Listecki will include two Masses, which will allow everyone to participate, but still avoid too large of a crowd.

The Crusader Cafe school store remains closed for now, but Bembenek said she’s hopeful vaccinations could let it open in the fourth



Submitted photo/Mark Frohna
Brookfield Academy student Luca Lombardi works at his desk with wellness protocols in place on the first day of school.

quarter.

Brookfield Academy has cut back on paper books and materials this year as a precaution. All students have chromebook laptops, and if papers are sent home, they’re not intended to come back to school. Younger children are still able to access physical books, but circulation precautions are in place.

Both Brookfield Academy and CMH have taken advantage of Zoom meetings for adults, to accommodate social distancing. Koenings said in some cases, virtual meeting options have led to higher attendance for parents; she said continuing to offer them as an option post-pandemic may have some merit.

Spurring innovation

The pandemic has spurred innovation and new traditions as well. Bembenek said the CMH community got together outdoors on school grounds last weekend for a sort of winter fest while wearing masks, with sledding, building snowmen and hot chocolate. “It was a wonderful, fun time for our community,” she said, adding it might continue in future years. “(the kids) were laughing and enjoying the fresh air.”

Brookfield Academy Upper School students decorated a 20-foot Christmas tree this year, with each student showcasing their own COVID-19 ornament. Students also decorated the halls with Post-it notes, bearing

written messages of what they’re grateful for.

In the future, Koenings said live-streaming events like sports games, plays and concerts may continue. “If their grandparents stay in Florida, they can watch their grandchildren play basketball,” she said.

Both schools look towards graduation day with the hope of a normal celebration. Bembenek said CMH is planning their graduation on its normal scheduled day. If an indoor gathering is safe at that point, it will be held indoors, but if not, the ceremony will be held on the football field as it was last year. Bembenek said if possible, CMH would like to host an end of the year school dance for students.

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INSIDE

Changes at top of police, fire departments

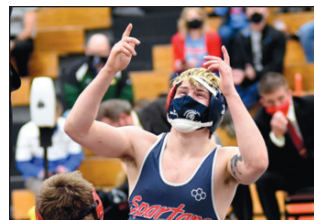
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Thorpe wrestles way to top

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LOOKING BACK
IN HISTORY



From the Freeman negatives at the Waukesha County Museum
John Horan, Bill Walter and Cy Brauneis taste-test the fare ahead of the upcoming St. Mary's Church beef dinner in Elm Grove in this Feb. 29, 1956, photo.

Brookfield Fire Chief
Myers retiring

Expresses
confidence
in department

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — Brookfield Fire Chief Charlie Myers, who has led the city's fire department since 2008, is retiring.

Brookfield Mayor Steve Ponto said he was informed of the upcoming retirement from Myers recently.

"The fire chief has given notice that he's going to retire in June," he said. "I think our fire chief has done an excellent job."

Myers said the retirement date was finalized in February, though he and his wife have been working through retirement plans for about a year and a half.

In the immediate future, Myers plans to take the summer off and spend as much time as possible with his grandchildren, who live in Germantown. In the fall, he plans to evaluate what will come next.

The Brookfield Fire and Police Commission will

handle the process of determining Myers' successor.

"There's always someone who can step up and take the lead of the department," Myers said. "Between the assistant chief and the five deputy chiefs (I believe) they'd be able to find appropriate candidates for my position, definitely."

Before coming to the Brookfield Fire Department, Myers served at the North Shore Fire Department in the Milwaukee area and before that in fire protection in the U.S. Air Force, as well as other positions. He's been in the fire protection industry for about 44 years.

"I have enjoyed my time with the city of Brookfield," Myers said, in a letter to aldermen and department heads.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to work with each of you and for the support you have provided. It has been a humbling experience to be the fire chief for such an outstanding community."



Myers

Area school districts adapt, recruit
to fill substitute positions

By Jake Ekdahl
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BROOKFIELD — As districts have fought to stay open during the 2020-21 school year, staffing has been one of the major hurdles and a key part of that challenge is having enough substitute teachers available.

Traditionally, substitutes are disproportionately older — typically retired teachers — which puts them at higher risk from COVID-19. Many were wary of coming back, and some chose not to.

In Mukwonago, the district reached out to local parents and community members via an advertising campaign. Participants were reimbursed for the cost of classes and license applications. Since October, Mukwonago has added 12 substitutes.

"Those are people who came right out of our community and will sub for us," said Mukwonago School District HR Director Susan Muentert. She said although October and November were challenging, with fill rates at 60-70% when a substitute was needed, but those are now at 90-100% — pre-pandemic levels. If a substitute need is not filled, other school staff can fill in.

"Adding those substitutes certainly helps," Muentert said. "We're in a much better place than we were in fall."

At Elmbrook schools, Superintendent Mark Hansen said the district has

also recruited individuals from local families, as well as reconnecting with recent retirees and internally certifying existing employees as substitutes.

Other districts are recruiting from the local community as well.

At Palmyra-Eagle School District, Guidance Office Administrative Assistant Gigi Laine said the district said they've seen "an influx of new faces" when it comes to substitutes over the first semester.

"OASD has increased the substitute pool by paying for the substitute teacher course and licensing needed for all new substitute teacher applicants," said the Oconomowoc Area School District, in a statement. "The District has also instituted a bonus structure for substitutes who increase the number of hours they work. Any substitute teacher can earn a bonus for every 100 hours served up to 400 hours."

Oconomowoc's fill rates are about 90% currently, the district said, but some days have been at 75% this year due to COVID quarantines and illness. Past years' fill rates were about 95%.

School District of Menomonee Falls HR Director Leia Scopur said the district has been relatively fortunate when it comes to substitutes. She said the district "really leaned on relationships" between HR, principals and other teachers personally reaching out to substitutes, talking to them about coming back and helping them feel

confident with mitigation efforts.

Scopur pointed out that typically, substitutes are needed for longer stretches of time during the pandemic. In past years, one to three days was a typical time period, but COVID-19 related quarantines necessitate 10 to 12 day absences for close contacts. Sometimes teachers had to quarantine but weren't sick and could remote into the classroom and offer support.

"We have hired/rehired 74 substitutes so far this year, but we still have fewer actively working subs than last year," said Waukesha School District Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Sharon Thiede in a statement. "Our sub fill rates are lower than last year, so that requires a lot of creativity and flexibility to make sure students are learning and supervised. We are advertising more frequently so we continue to bring in interested candidates."

"We would encourage anyone with an associate degree or higher and a desire to impact the next generation of learners to consider this opportunity," Thiede said. "It offers candidates meaningful work, income, and flexibility. The flexibility is also a good fit for parents who need to be off when their children are off."

Individuals interested in becoming substitute teachers or investigating the prospect are encouraged to reach out to their local school district.

Community raises money
for Innovative Signs

Business relocates to Pewaukee temporarily

By Nikki Brahm
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TOWN OF BROOKFIELD — Since losing the building which housed their business, the owners of Innovative Signs are thankful to the community for their support and have temporarily relocated their business to Pewaukee.

On Feb. 6, the Town of Brookfield Fire Department and 16 assisting departments were called to extinguish a fire in an industrial building at 21795 Doral Road, Town of Brookfield. The building housed three busi-



Katherine Beck/Freeman Staff

Innovative Signs at 21795 Doral Road in the Town of Brookfield was a total loss after a Feb. 6 fire.

nesses, including Innovative Signs.

Crews battled the blaze for two hours before bringing the fire under control.

Owner Chad Schultz said he started the family owned and operated business in 2001 with his wife, Stephanie. They have been at the Doral Road location since 2006. Schultz serves customers mostly throughout southeastern Wisconsin. Schultz said they had purchased property across the street in December, which they plan to be operating at by the end of June.

Schultz said a GoFundMe was set up by Greg and Valeria Kopulos. Greg is his wife's brother. As of Feb. 18, the fundraiser stood at about \$28,600 raised.

Schultz said the money will be the last thing they spend, and it will be used for extra expenses as needed. Schultz said they are still working with their insurance so expenses from the damage are still up in the air.

"It's very humbling to be in need," he said. "Steph and I have always been very self-sufficient, we do things ourselves,

we take care of ourselves, so to be in a position where we're depending on others is very humbling for us."

Schultz said the business has found a temporary location along Paul Road in Pewaukee.

"As of today I'd say (operations) are about 70% back to normal," Schultz said on Feb. 18. "Tomorrow we should have internet and phones set up and by Monday we will be printing back in-house and by the end of next week we'll be manufacturing at full in-house again."

Schultz again thanked his team, who he credited for getting his business up and running again after the fire.

"We want to thank all the local responders because it was amazing on that day and it was so ... cold out," he said. "So I want to thank the team, the first responders and the community, everyone's been amazing at reaching out and offering help."

Schultz said he's planning on hanging a banner thanking first responders at the site of the fire in the near future.

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Brookfield assistant police chief
to take over helm of department

BROOKFIELD — A longtime member of the Brookfield Police Department, Jim Adlam will lead the department with the retirement of Chief Dan Tushaus.

Adlam joined the Brookfield Police Department in January 1986 and has been serving as assistant police chief.

He was selected by the Police and Fire Commission to be chief, effective

April 6. Adlam says he is "looking forward to the challenge."

"We are going to try to maintain what we have and keep the same culture because we have a very well-trained and young agency and we want to maintain what we have here," Adlam said.

On his Facebook page, Brookfield Alderman Brad Blumer congratulated Adlam.

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Submitted photo

An array of food served at Badger Burger Company.

Badger Burger Company expanding to Oconomowoc, Brookfield

By Alex Nemec
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OCONOMOWOC — Badger Burger Company is expanding to two new locations as it takes over the former Scramblers locations in Oconomowoc and Brookfield, owner Mark Weiss said.

The two new locations will be at 1320 Pabst Farms Circle, Suite 170, in Oconomowoc and 12455 W. Capitol Drive in Brookfield.

Weiss opened the first Badger Burger Company almost five years ago and expanded his business to Richfield last summer.

Weiss said the opportunity to take over the spaces was merely a coincidence and he is excited to serve a new market.

“I had looked in Oconomowoc before,” Weiss

said. “It’s already a built-out restaurant. I’ll be doing some basic remodeling and making the kitchen a little smaller to add more seating, the bar area and I think it’s a great market.”

Burgers are made to order. The restaurant also has homemade pizzas, sandwiches and is going to install new bars in the locations.

Weiss said with the chance to expand, Badger Burger Company will have restaurants in different areas of the region, in Richfield to the north, Brookfield to the east, Mukwonago to the south and Oconomowoc in the east.

With remodeling underway, Weiss said he is hoping to open both locations sometime in March.

For more information visit the restaurant’s Facebook page, Badger Burger Company Mukwonago.

Hassan, Gunsalus move on to general election for Elmbrook School Board

BROOKFIELD — The race for the Elmbrook School Board’s at-large seat narrowed Feb. 16, with incumbent Mushir Hassan and challenger James Thomas Gunsalus moving on to the April 6 election.

Hassan, who has served in his current role since May 2020, won 39.7% of the vote with 1,789 votes while Gunsalus won 1,522 votes and 33.8%. Leanne Wied won 26.3% with 1,182 votes, and will not move on to the gen-

eral election.

As a medical physician, Hassan has said his priority for the time being is navigating the district through the coronavirus pandemic and maintaining safe in-person school. He’s also been an outspoken supporter of four-year-old kindergarten.

Gunsalus has said his priority is improving academic performance for students and taking a critical look at the Common Core curriculum.

Hazardous waste drop-off sites used steadily amid COVID-19

Residents encouraged to exercise restraint with toxic materials

By Jake Ekdahl
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WAUKESHA — It’s not uncommon to want to dispose of something but, other than knowing it doesn’t belong in a typical trash can, not to know exactly how to get rid of it.

When it comes to hazardous waste items like ignitable, corrosive, reactive, poisonous or toxic materials, Waukesha County operates sites to take those off residents’ hands. Those materials are “typically things that are highly corrosive, things you would never want to just pour in your garbage or down your drain; things that need to be handled a special way,” said Waukesha County Recycling and Solid Waste Supervisor Analiese Smith.

According to the county, those sites are experiencing above average use these days. With COVID-19, they operate in a limited contact format with residents staying in their vehicles when they drive up to the sites. Smith said those utilizing the service are asked to put the materials they want disposed of in a box in their trunk. The box should be disposable as well, as it typically isn’t intended to be returned to the vehicle, with the exception of gasoline or oil containers that can be returned.

Smith said although there were some disruptions due to the pandemic last spring, services have been up and running at all sites. Waukesha Recycling and Solid Waste Coordinator Dustin Nolan said he’s actually observed more

activity at the Waukesha site lately. That could be the result of residents who are spending more time at home doing house projects that require using hazardous materials, or residents finally getting around to disposing of those items now that they’re home more often.

“I think it’s a matter of cleaning out old stuff (and) also new projects,” he said, offering the necessary stain and varnish materials for a new wooden deck project as an example.

Large electronic items like television sets and computers are not considered hazardous waste; they’re categorized separately as e-waste. Smith and Nolan both said disposing such items is typically handled at the municipal level and encouraged locals to check the process for their neighborhoods.

“Different communities have different plans for electronics,” Nolan said.

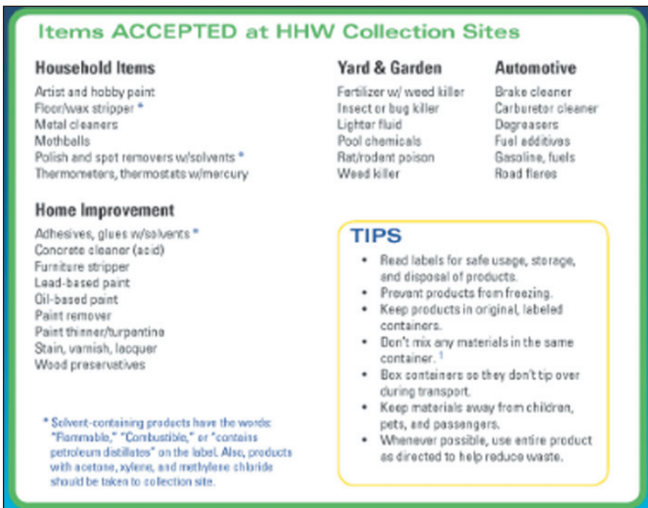
Waukesha County residents can access a list of potential disposal sites for a wide variety of materials, including hazardous waste, medical, automotive and electronics, at www.waukeshacounty.gov/productdisposal.

Nolan emphasized that while Waukesha hosts one of the county’s hazardous drop-off sites on scheduled days — the other is in Menomonee Falls — certain drop-off services, like those available for lawn waste items such as leaves, are available only to city residents, not all county residents.

Getting rid of hazardous substances

Smith said getting rid of hazardous materials is an expensive process, and encouraged locals to use up all hazardous material product when purchasing it, or share surplus with others who could put it to use, and think of disposal as a last resort.

“We really want people



Submitted images

The county advises residents as to what is and what is not allowed at household hazardous waste collection sites. Residents are reminded to remain in their vehicles, show their IDs through windows, with hazardous items kept in the trunk of their cars for easy access and disposal. They should be kept in a box or disposable container, as such containers will not be returned.

to reduce their use of these hazardous chemicals,” she said.

Nolan said those types of items should never go in the general trash or down a drain.

“It starts with making prudent choices when purchasing or planning a project,” he said on reducing use. It can also be helpful to investigate whether a less toxic alternative product may be available.

Some items, like latex paint, can actually be thrown away once dried. Smith said kitty litter and paint hardener both speed up the drying process;

household cleaners are not considered hazardous either. Others, like CFL lightbulbs, can be turned in at certain businesses.

Waukesha County operates two permanent household hazardous waste drop-off sites for county residents and four special one-day collections during the spring and fall in Brookfield, Delafield, Mukwonago and Oconomowoc. All sites are free to Waukesha County residents and proof of residency is required. Those interested in using the services can visit www.waukeshacounty.gov/productdisposal.

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Thorpe finally reaches pinnacle at state

East senior ends career with title after three 3rd place finishes

By Dave Radcliffe
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KAUKAUNA — There was no way Connor Thorpe was settling for anything less. And a sport that helped give him a purpose in life finally rewarded him with the ultimate prize.

The Brookfield East senior avenged a trio of third-place finishes in his previous state appearances to win it all at 145 pounds during the WIAA Division 1 Individual Wrestling State Tournament on Feb. 13 at Kaukauna. Thorpe earned a 7-2 decision over Neenah senior Drake Hayward (18-1) to finish the year a perfect 13-0 and become the second wrestler in program history to win a state championship, joining Dennis Fadeski (1996, 160 pounds). “I just compared it to another wrestling match and it got done and I didn’t even ... I always spent time in middle school, how am I going to celebrate for a state title?” Thorpe said. “I didn’t even know what to do.”

What he did was point to the sky when the final whistle was blown before running into the crowd to embrace his parents.

“I have no words,” Thorpe said. “I’m really thankful for my parents, my coaches, everyone that’s helped me to get here. I really wouldn’t have done this by myself.”

As a 126-pound freshman,



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Brookfield East senior Connor Thorpe throws Neenah senior Drake Hayward in the 145-pound championship match during the WIAA Division 1 Individual Wrestling State Tournament Feb. 13 at Kaukauna High School.

Thorpe was giddy to battle back and finish third at state after losing in the first round. He reached the semifinals as a sophomore at 132, this time more so settling for bronze. But 2020 was the breaking point for Thorpe as he took third once again, this time at 138 pounds.

“The third third was really hard,” Thorpe said. “That

really hurt. You’re third again? You literally did this already two times.”

So Thorpe went back to the drawing board and this time around, he’d reach his first championship match. A take-down gave him a 2-0 lead after one period, then an escape and reversal made it 5-0. The Northern Iowa recruit finished the job and knew he had



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Brookfield East senior Connor Thorpe points to the sky after beating Neenah senior Drake Hayward for the 145-pound championship during the WIAA Division 1 Individual Wrestling State Tournament Feb. 13 at Kaukauna High School.

it won with five seconds remaining as he rode out Hayward and pumped his fist.

“I’ve fallen short in so many different tournaments in so many different ways that I don’t even know how to describe it,” Thorpe said. “This is huge for me, just to finally get through it.”

Thorpe was a floundering sixth grader when he discovered wrestling, and his life changed forever.

“Wrestling really guided me to where I am today,” Thorpe said. “If you ask anybody who’s known me since I was young, they’d tell you that it didn’t look like I was going very far. But I worked my tail off and I wrestled year-round and every day of the week. I just love wrestling, man.”

He faced plenty of adversity during his high school career, and then the coronavirus pandemic put everything in flux.

Thorpe persevered through it all and turned the lowest of lows into the highest of highs.

And he couldn’t care less that it didn’t come at the Kohl Center.

“I would do this in a barn in the middle of nowhere,” Thorpe said. “It’s just what I wanted and we did it. I’m excited and I’m excited for my future as well. It’s a good way to cap off my high school career.”

Brookfield’s Long wins 100 back title from Lane 6

Central junior earns four medals at state meet

By Dave Radcliffe
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WAUKESHA — Michael Long touched the wall, looked up at the scoreboard and couldn’t believe what he saw.

From Lane 6, the Brookfield Central junior had just broke 50 seconds in the 100-yard backstroke. Better yet, he was a state champion.

“I’ve been wanting to go sub 50 for like over a year and I’ve never really been super close but it was always in the back of my mind, like, you’ve got to get it some time,” Long said.

He couldn’t have picked a better time, nearly improving on his qualifying mark by 1 1/2 seconds to clock in at 49.89 in an event littered with area swimmers. Long was a four-time medalist at the WIAA Division 1 State Boys Swimming and Diving Championships, helping the Brookfield Central/East co-op finish fifth with 135 points Saturday at Waukesha South.

Long began the day teaming with sophomore Stuart Seymour, junior Brady Miller and freshman Thomas Bergin to finish fourth in the 200 medley relay with a time of 1 minute, 34.30 seconds.

Then he left his seed time in the dust in the 200 freestyle by over two seconds, placing third (1:42.11).

That set the stage for his stunning 100 backstroke victory, as he beat out Muskego senior Adam Fisher (second, 50.05), Arrowhead senior Adam Braunschweig (third, 50.26) and Muskego senior Nolan Anderson (fourth, 50.65) before looking at his cheering section in disbelief and emphatically pumping his fist.

Defending 100 back state champion Ziyad Saleem was unable to compete due to Milwaukee King not participat-

ing in winter sports.

Long felt he could have performed better at the sectionals and used that as motivation heading into the biggest meet of the season.

“Besides my 400 free relay time, I felt like I could have done better, so this whole week I was just so keyed in,” Long said. “So coming into it I was ready. I was very ready to just go fast today. Not even like go fast, win state. I was just ready to do something,

impress myself.”

It’s safe to say he did, and he made sure the Barracudas would podium one last time in the 400 free relay as it was junior Jonathan Day, Seymour, Bergin and Long combining to finish sixth (3:13.14), which was just .04 ahead of the team from D.C. Everest.

Brookfield nearly crowned another individual state champion, but junior Brady Miller settled for second in the 100 backstroke (56.03), an

event won by Marquette senior Owen Miller (55.97).


“I’m very lucky to have teammates that are able to just come out and swim so fast no matter if they’re individual qualifiers or Brady Miller who was runner-up, I’m so lucky to have people who came to state with fire in their eyes,” Miller said. “It’s just a good team atmosphere and everyone’s here for the same reason — to try to go fast.”



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Brookfield Central/East junior Michael Long celebrates after winning the 100-yard backstroke during the WIAA Division 1 State Boys Swimming and Diving Championships Saturday at Waukesha South.

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