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Tricia's Troops is Romeo Doubs' cause

Packers wide receiver picks local nonprofit for special cleats



Photos courtesy of Candi Strong

Green Bay Packers wide receiver Romeo Doubs selected Tricia's Troops Cancer Connection to be the nonprofit featured on his cleats for My Cause My Cleats this year. The cleats are shown at Lambeau Field.

ISRT STD POSTAGE PAID JUKESHA, WI RMIT NO. 3

By Katherine Beck kbeck@conleynet.com

when Candi Strong began to help her late sister to create a support system for others dealing with cancer diagnoses, never did they imagine that one day a Green Bay Packer would be wearing cleats bearing the name of their nonprofit: Tricia's Troops Cancer Connection. However, Packers wide receiver Romeo Doubs selected the Oconomowoc-based nonprofit for his shoes as part of My Cause My Cleats this year.

Players wore their specially designed cleats during the 13th game of the season (the Thanksgiving day game) and the Dec. 5 game against the Detroit Lions. Strong said she and her family were at a home game at Lambeau Field last month, but were disappointed when Doubs wasn't able to play due to a concussion. The hope had been he would be able to play Dec. 5, but he was again unable to play.

See **CLEATS**, PAGE 4

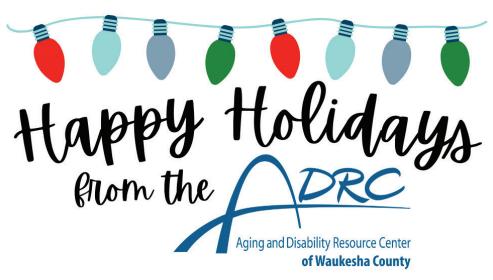


Candi Strong, executive director of Tricia's Troops Cancer Connection, poses for a photo with Green Bay Packers wide receiver Romeo Doubs at the organization's gala in May. Doubs selected the organization for My Cause My Cleats this year.

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NEWSMAKER Q&A: Rich Barnhouse, WCTC president and CEO

Taking WCTC to the next level

'The future of AI is going to be transformative; we're just getting started at WCTC'

By Karen Pilarski kpilarski@conleynet.com 262-513-2657

aukesha County Technical College President and **CEO Rich Barnhouse's** career aspirations were in flex until he started graduate school. As a graduate assistant Barnhouse got to see the inner workings of a university and felt it was really interesting. Barnhouse wasn't one to sit on his laurels and continued to seek out his life passion. According to Barnhouse, he is constantly developing as a person and leader. It is higher education where he can see how he and WCTC impacts each student who walks through its doors.

The Freeman asked Barnhouse questions about education, leadership and the challenges faced in the industry. Here are his responses.

The FREEMAN: What inspired you to go into this field?

Rich Barnhouse: It was by accident. My goal was to get out of school as quickly as possible and never go back. I grew up in a manufacturing family and wanted to get into the workforce as quickly as possible. I finished my undergrad, and at that point I had thought about working in the family business, but I decided to go to grad school. When I was getting my master's, I was a graduate assistant. In that role, you get to see all the behind-the-scenes inner workings of a university and I remember thinking it was really interesting. I finished my master's degree and had a job offer with the Detroit Red Wings; I also had a job opportunity at Rice University in Houston. I wanted to work for the Red Wings, but I was really, really interested in higher education and the impact it has on the

FREEMAN: What skills and experience have shaped your career?

Barnhouse: I think your skills come from your experience. When I was in grad school at Central Michigan University, I had a staff of 20-30 undergrads. I was kind of finding my way in leading and managing. I think I stole leadership traits, leadership style, inflection and tone in my voice, and mannerisms from leaders who I them didn't know that I was doing it, but I was watching them: watching how people responded to them — and watching how people didn't respond to others. Leadership is an ongoing laboratory where you're constantly watching and trying to figure out how to inspire and influence people toward a goal.

FREEMAN: Many colleges and universities are struggling. What are the keys to WCTC's success?

Barnhouse: Step one is to just make the decision to not be average, and we are not going to be the status quo. Your mission can't be your goal; your mission is your baseline and you have to shoot above your mission. And you've got to be able to take risks. Listen to the businesses, industry and employers. Listen to the taxpayers. And then do what they're asking for by using your professional skill, ability and knowledge to pull it off. For us, we're defying gravity, but it's not by accident. We're looking at the horizon:



Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College president and CEO

Submitted photo

we're looking as far as we can, and we're working back from there.

FREEMAN: What are the challenges?

Barnhouse: One of the big challenges in higher education is that there was this path for an administrator and playbook for how to run the operations of a college or university — that doesn't apply today. Higher education is having to evolve and adopt more private sector business practices and principles. It's uncomfortable for higher education in general because it's a different model. How we balance that, while keeping true to higher education's mission, is a line that we have to straddle on a daily basis for the health of the institution. It has become a job requirement, which maybe it wasn't for a college president a decade ago.

FREEMAN: What is the most rewarding part of being in this type of work?

Barnhouse: You can actually see lives change. It's palpable. Think about it like this: Education is the only discipline or field that makes all other disciplines or fields possible. It's a noble pursuit. It's truly an honor and a privilege to be in a position where you're leading a college. Seeing the impact at the individual level, when somebody thought that they'd never be able to accomplish something and they do — it's incredible. And it changes families; it changes communities.

FREEMAN: Describe yourself as a leader.

Barnhouse: I would say as a leader, I'm in constant development mode. I'm miles and miles away from the kind of leader I want to be

FREEMAN: How do you assess a program to determine if it needs to grow or change?

Barnhouse: Step one is to listen to employers. Every program at WCTC has an advisory committee composed of business and industry pros who help guide the curriculum. Historically, in education, faculty have relied on a text-

book, and that textbook is often out of date by the time it's published since things change so quickly. Sure, we teach with textbooks, but these advisory committees help us understand what is changing in the industry in real time. We are talking to the people who are on the floor, in the back office, leading these organizations. We also ask business and industry to tell us when a program is no longer needed. We'll teach it out so students can finish, then we'll sunset the program. We're not going to carry legacy programs that industry doesn't want; we're teaching in a very evolutionary and forward-think-

Looking ahead to the future of WCTC

FREEMAN: What other programs are gaining traction? Barnhouse: We will be launching the new Manufacturing Integration Engineering Technology associate degree in fall 2025, and

we are exploring more artificial intelligence programs along with automation specialties. Our liberal arts transfer degrees have become increasingly popular since they began in 2023, and our skilled trades programs remain strong. We've also seen a marked increase in our dual enrollment numbers as younger, high schoolage students are looking to save time and money and get out into

FREEMAN: As higher education continues to evolve, how does WCTC keep the pulse of what future students want?

the workforce sooner.

Barnhouse: I think, one area where higher education missed the mark for years is that they focused on what they thought 18year-olds might be interested in but that doesn't necessarily correlate with what business and industry want. To create a program that might increase enrollment because it's interesting but not employable is ineffective and that's what most colleges do. The most successful program is the program that leads to a wildly successful career. We have been very intentional in developing programs, listening to our stakeholders and meeting their needs. As an institution of higher learning, it is critical for us to maintain strong connections and listen closely to business and industry and see what their specific need is going to be in two, three or five years.

FREEMAN: Why have AI programs at WCTC been so successful?

Barnhouse: The demand from business and industry in Southeastern Wisconsin for AI programming has expanded exponentially. In addition to our strong existing IT programs, such as Data and Analytics, and Cybersecurity, we really partnered with the right people to build the AI curriculum. We designed our AI program (degree and certificates) based on the best technology in the world from Intel, the chipmaker, and then made it applicable to business and industry in Southeastern Wisconsin. We built this from scratch. There are a lot of charlatans out there that take existing IT programs, manipulate the ircowork and then call it A We developed new coursework that didn't exist; it's brand new. That's what makes us truly a trailblazer.

FREEMAN: What does the future look like for new programs in this field?

Barnhouse: The AI (degree) program we have now is just the start. It was first offered in the fall and it was at capacity, so we had to add more sections. This just goes to show how much this is sought after. We're going to develop more and different AI programs, and we're also implementing AI throughout the whole institution to help our 1,500 employees become more efficient. In our new Applied AI Lab, we're helping entrepreneurs and startups create new, groundbreaking AI products — things that don't exist in the country, and likely, in the world. The innovation that will come out of our lab could change the human experience. The future of AI is going to be transformative; we're just getting started at WCTC.

Biography

Who: Rich Barnhouse Title: Waukesha County Technical College president and CEO Age: 48

Work experience: President of WCTC since January 2021. Past positions have included vice president of Student Services and Enrollment Management, State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota; associate vice chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, University of Wisconsin Colleges; dean of students, Moraine Park Technical College; and assistant campus dean for Administrative Services, University of Wisconsin-Sheboygan. Assistant director for Facilities -Student Affairs, University of South Carolina: and assistant director for Operations - Student Affairs, Rice University. Education: A Ph.D. from Cardinal Stritch University, a master's degree from Central Michigan University and a bachelor's degree from Brock University in Ontario, Canada. Completed the Institute for Educational Management professional education program at Harvard University. Family: Tiffany, wife; Rambo (Dachshund)

Get to know... Rich Barnhouse

My greatest achievement is:
I hope I haven't achieved the greatest thing yet
My favorite TV show is:

"The Crown"

My favorite movie is:
"Shawshank Redemption"

My favorite actor is:

Sean Connery (I'm a huge James Bond fan, so I'm biased) My favorite actress is:

Kate Winslet (everything after Titanic)

My favorite childhood memory is: Watching baseball with

The person I most admire is: My parents

Three words people use to describe me are: Determined, visionary, intentional

The worst job I had as a teenager: Working for my father in a meat plant

The food I like best is:
Roast beef, potatoes and car-

My favorite hobby is: Running

ning
My favorite music group is:
Led Zeppelin

My pets are: Rambo the wiener dog
My favorite vacation place

is: Door County

My favorite childhood toy
was: Hockey stick



DPI publishes school and district accountability report cards

WAUKESHA COUNTY — The Wisconsin Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 96.2. Department of Public Instruction published school and district accountability report cards for the 2023-24 school year in

A district or school's overall accountability score is rated by: Significantly Exceeds Expectations (five stars), Exceeds Expectations (four stars), Meets Expectations (three stars), Meets Few Expectations (two stars), and Fails to Meet Expectations (one

Significantly Exceeds

Elmbrook School District, according to the report, has an enrollment of 7,863. It was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 85.1.

Hartland-Lakeside J3 School District has an enrollment of 1,108. The district was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 92.9.

Lake Country School District has an enrollment of 463. The district was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 89.3.

Merton Community School District has an enrollment of 909. The district was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 93.5.

Muskego-Norway School District has an enrollment of 4,659. The district was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with

New Berlin School District has an enrollment of 4,253. The district was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 83.5.

Richmond School District, which has a population of 412, was rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 89.9. Swallow School District, which has a

population of 445, was rated "Significantly

Exceeds expectations

Arrowhead School District has an enrollment of 2,038. The district was rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of

Hamilton School District has an enrollment of 5,119, The district was rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of

Kettle Moraine School District has an enrollment of 3,395. The district was rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of

Menomonee Falls School District has an enrollment of 3,928. The district was rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of

Mukwonago School District has an enrollment of 4,918. The district was rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of

Oconomowoc Area School District has an enrollment of 4,951. The district was rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of

Pewaukee School District has an enrollment of 2,932. The district rated "Exceeds Expectations," with a score of 81.8.

Stone Bank School District, which has a population of 285, was rated "Exceeds Expectations" with a score of 81.4.

Meets Expectations

Palmyra-Eagle Area has an enrollment of 543. The district rated "Meets Expectations," with a score of 67.6. The Waukesha School District has an enrollment of 10,535. The district was rated "Meets Expectations," with a score of 68.6.

Pewaukee librarian to help select 2026 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award

PEWAUKEE — Peter Blenski, youth services manager for the Pewaukee Public Library, will be one of seven librarians in the nation to select the 2026 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award, which is part of the American Library Association's Youth Media Awards.

"It is a huge honor; easy readers have come a long way since I started being a librarian, so I'm really excited to see what the next year of books brings," he said.

The Geisel Award is given to "the most distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States during the preceding year,' according to the ALA website.

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dren's librarian in southeastern Wisconsin for over 12 years. He was previously on the 100th Newbery Award Committee, which gave the 2022 Newbery Award to "The Last Cuentista" by Donna Barba Higuera. He is also the creator and writer of the website "The Lego

Blenski has been a chil-

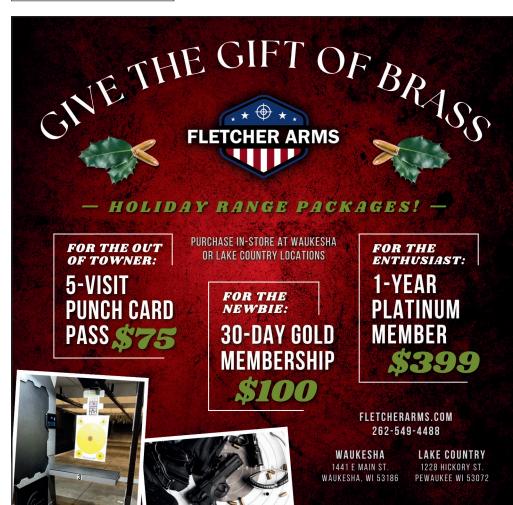
Librarian" (www.legolibrarian.com), which offers free programming and storytime ideas to edu-



Courtesy of Marnie Peters

White deer, white deer, what do you see?

DOUSMAN — A white deer stares intently as its photo is taken by Marnie Peters in Dousman on Tuesday. The deer was in her yard, which is located off of Highway D.







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Yule Feed Families sets \$40,000 goal for 2024

By Karen Pilarski kpilarski@conleynet.com 262-513-2657

WAUKESHA - 'Tis the season to be generous during the annual Yule Feed Families food drive. An undisclosed donor's challenge donation is kicking off the Lake Country Rotary Club's ambitious 2024 holiday food drive that started last month

The unnamed donor matched donations up to \$5,000 in the first week which help boost Yule Feed Families' efforts to assist five Lake Country food pantries: Hartland, Pewaukee, North Lake, Kettle Moraine and St. Vincent de Paul.

Giving made from Nov. 27 to Dec. 5 was equally matched by the undisclosed donor as an incentive to help the drive meet its higher target.

Organizers of the Yule Feed remain ambitious to fight

hunger in Waukesha County. 'The annual drive has set an aggressive goal of raising \$40,000 for five local food

pantries, more than \$5,000 higher than last year's total, which was already the best the drive had done in the post-pandemic era," a news release said.

New to the drive this year is the extension of the food drive. The drive, which traditionally has ended just before Christmas since its inception, has been permanently extended to Dec. 31 starting this year.

Fox Bros. Piggly Wiggly in Hartland announced that Yule Feed Families will be a beneficiary on its Receipt Roundup program in December. Customers during the month can choose to round up their shopping totals so the remainder can go to Yule Feed Families and the five pantries and their guests who benefit from the drive.

Also new this year is electron-

ic donations, which will now be possible through the Venmo app, in addition to PayPal.

Still in need

The Lake Country Rotary Club had its best-giving year for the 2023 Yule Feed Families Food drive since the pandemic began, according to the club. A total of \$34,688.55 was contributed to the holiday food drive from 50 distinct donors to raise money for five Lake Country food pantries.

The 2023 donations raised the total giving to the Lake Country Yule Feed Families drive to \$1.02 million since its inception in 1991. If spinoff drives are included for Sussex,

Oconomowoc and Mukwonago. the grand total for giving since the drive began stands at \$1.2 million plus 51,389 grocery

Rotarians Gary Jasiek and

Scott Peterson have encouraged generosity to fight hunger in Lake Country. The men launched the Yule Feed Families food drive 34 years ago and are not letting up on the mission.

"It's a big ask, but we think Lake Country is up to this fresh challenge," said Peterson, who, along with fellow Jasiek are cochairman again in 2024. "So many of us have been blessed and we are requesting people share some of their good fortune with those who are in greater need.'

Jasiek said the food pantries are still in need of help.

'The pantries are telling us that the need is still strong. There are many families, from those with children to senior citizens in tight spots, that could really use our help, and there is no better time than the holidays to answer that call," Jasiek said.

At a glance

There are many ways to give. Taxdeductible checks can be made out to the Lake Country Rotary Club's 501(c)3 partner organization, Lake Country Foundation, and mailed to PO Box 406, Hartland, WI 53029, or made payable to the individual pantry of your choice. You can also make a donation through PayPal or Venmo using the links on the Lake Country Rotary Club's website.

Click on the Yule Feed Families link at the top of the page: https://lakecountryrotary.org/.

Students at North Shore Middle School have again agreed to collect nonperishable grocery items for Yule Feed Families. Donations can be dropped off at the Hartland school, 800 North Shore Drive, Hartland, during school hours.

Cleats From Page 1A

Doubs made the announcement about the special cleats during the Tricia's Troops gala on May 17 when he and Green Bay Packers legend Gilbert Brown took to the stage.

Strong, executive director of Tricia's Troops, said gala attendees were not aware the announcement was going to happen, so when Doubs pulled out the cleats and they could see the design on the big screen, it created a lot of buzz.

"It shines a much brighter light on the mission we're so passionate about,' Strong said of Doubs wearing the Tricia's Troops cleats. "We've had many of the people we serve over the years say, 'I didn't even know you existed. I wish I had heard of your organization sooner.' As a small organization, this gives us a really special and unique platform to introduce ourselves to more people who may need our help and also inspire more people to be involved in making our mission possible!"

Also, she said it gives people who are involved with Tricia's Troops a sense of

In addition to exposure at the game, the shoes created for My Cause My Cleats are on the Packers' website.

"I think it just elevates the mission," Strong said.

Tricia's Troops was the vision of Tricia Wright, who was diagnosed with

stage 4 colon cancer with metastasis to her liver and lungs at age 35 on Jan. 16, 2010. Doctors attempted to treat the cancer with chemotherapy and surgery; however, Wright died April 26, 2012. While going through treatment, Wright received lots of support from members of her church, Dr. Martin Luther Church in Oconomowoc. The group became known as "Tricia's Troops." and her husband realized that not everyone who has cancer would be able to receive the same type of support, so they decided to create a nonprofit to help others touched by cancer.

The first year, they helped about 23 people, Strong said. Now they are supporting about 600 people per year.

Tricia's Troops is a cause that Mark Mayfield, president of Mayfield Sports Marketing, has supported over the years. Both Doubs and Brown, who has been Tricia's Troops' emcee every year, are represented by Mayfield.

Mayfield said Wright's husband, Bill, had told him numerous times over the years that his goal was to have a player wear Tricia's Troops cleats for My Cause My Cleats.

"I've been working very closely with Romeo since the beginning of the year on appearances, interviews ... (I) asked him if he would be willing to make Bill's wish come true. We educated him on Tricia's Troops' services and he said 'of course'," Mayfield said.

To learn more about Tricia's Troops, go to https://triciastroops.org/.



Green Bay Packers wide receiver Romeo Doubs selected Tricia's Troops Cancer Connection to be the nonprofit featured on his cleats for Mv Cause My Cleats this year. The cleats are shown at Lambeau Field.

Photos courtesy of Candi Strong



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