

Brookfield & Elm Grove

The FREEMAN

THIS MONTH

JANUARY 2024

The FREEMAN CITIZEN of the YEAR

Rick Verthein

Brookfield native Verthein, known for his positive outlook, gives back on boards and via community projects

By Katherine Beck
kbeck@conley.net.com

Rick Verthein appears to do a few things with ease: approach life with a smile and optimism and help out others in the community. As a financial advisor for Baird, a husband and father of three, Verthein, 38, has a lot to keep him busy, but that doesn't stop him from giving back on area nonprofits' boards of directors, being a leader in the Waukesha Rotary Club and volunteering his time on community projects. For his dedication to helping others around Waukesha County and being a positive force, Verthein has been named the 2023 Freeman Citizen of the Year.

Verthein's nominator, past Freeman Citizen of the Year Rick Kobriger, described his fellow Waukesha Rotarian in his nomination letter as "committed to making the Waukesha community a better place for all of its citizens."

"I am just so impressed about this young guy, who has three little kids and who is taking on all of this," Kobriger said in an interview.

Verthein is president-elect for the 2024-25 fiscal year of the Waukesha Rotary Club, which meets Mondays at noon. He is also on the board of directors and volunteers with Rotary community projects. He is a member of the Rotary's Community Service Committee and the Charitable Fund Committee/Board. The Community Service Committee helps pull together all of the group's community projects, from Salvation Army bell ringing to larger grant projects such as building and repairing the Girl Scout amphitheater.

The motto of Rotary is "Service Above Self," and Kobriger said Verthein exemplifies those words. "His attitude is, 'what can I do to help?,'" he said.

"He is always positive; being positive can be contagious," Kobriger said. "He always has a smile on his face. He is just a great guy."

"I liked the community giving back and 'Service Above Self' piece of Rotary," Verthein said.

In addition to Rotary, Verthein sits on the board of directors for the Adaptive Community Approach Program (ACAP) in Waukesha and the board of directors of the Waukesha County Community Foundation. He also volunteers his time with his children's extracurricular activities.

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Rick Verthein

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Library Memory Project celebrates 2023 successes

WAUKESHA — The Bridges Library System’s Memory Project had a successful year with the completion of 72 Memory Café sessions across 21 libraries and a record high turnout for the annual Family Day event. The project is an initiative of the Bridges Library System, which includes public libraries in Jefferson and Waukesha counties, aging and disability resource centers and the Wisconsin chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association.

Memory Cafés are free social gatherings for those who are experiencing early-stage dementia, mild memory loss or mild cognitive impairment. These individuals can attend with a friend or caregiver or a family member.

“As facilitators, we believe strongly in providing social connections and support to individuals and their caregivers affected by memory loss or dementia,” said Angela Meyers, inclusive services coordinator at the Bridges Library System. “It has been wonderful to see attendance continue to grow at our Memory Cafés.”

The Family Day event had the largest turnout to date, with 140 attendees of all ages.

“So many families were thankful for the opportunity to experience a day together at Retzer Nature Center. Some attendees also made new connections going through similar journeys,” Meyers said.

The Center for Disease Control estimates that 6.7 million Americans are living with dementia, and it expects that number to nearly triple by 2060. The Library Memory Project will continue to support the social needs of those living with memory loss or dementia throughout 2024.



An object of discussion from the Milwaukee Public Museum’s “Digging Up Discoveries” Memory Café about analyzing artifacts at the Brookfield Public Library. This and other activities are created for attendees with early-stage dementia, mild memory loss or mild cognitive impairment.

Courtesy of Bridges Library System

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Recent Brookfield/Elm Grove headlines from The Freeman:

- **ACLU files record requests with six school districts regarding alleged book bans. Districts include Elmbook, Menomonee Falls and Waukesha**
- **Two charged in Brookfield bus stop armed robbery**
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Caribou Coffee

opens new location in Brookfield

BROOKFIELD — Caribou Coffee opened a new location in November in Brookfield. The new coffeehouse is located near the intersection of Capitol Drive and Calhoun Road. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held.

The coffeehouse will feature both indoor and outdoor dining spaces as well as a drive thru. Guests can order all their favorite drinks off Caribou Coffee’s list of handcrafted beverages. Caribou’s food menu will also be available for guests including breakfast sandwiches and bakery including the seasonal Cranberry Orange Muffin.

There was a grand opening celebration at the new Brookfield location in December.

What’s the Dish?

Waukesha County restaurant news

Every week in The Freeman!

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Photo courtesy of EEF

Standing in the car photo booth, from left to right, are: Christie Welch, Sarah Pappas, Craig Husar, Alli Latus and Rebecca Becker.

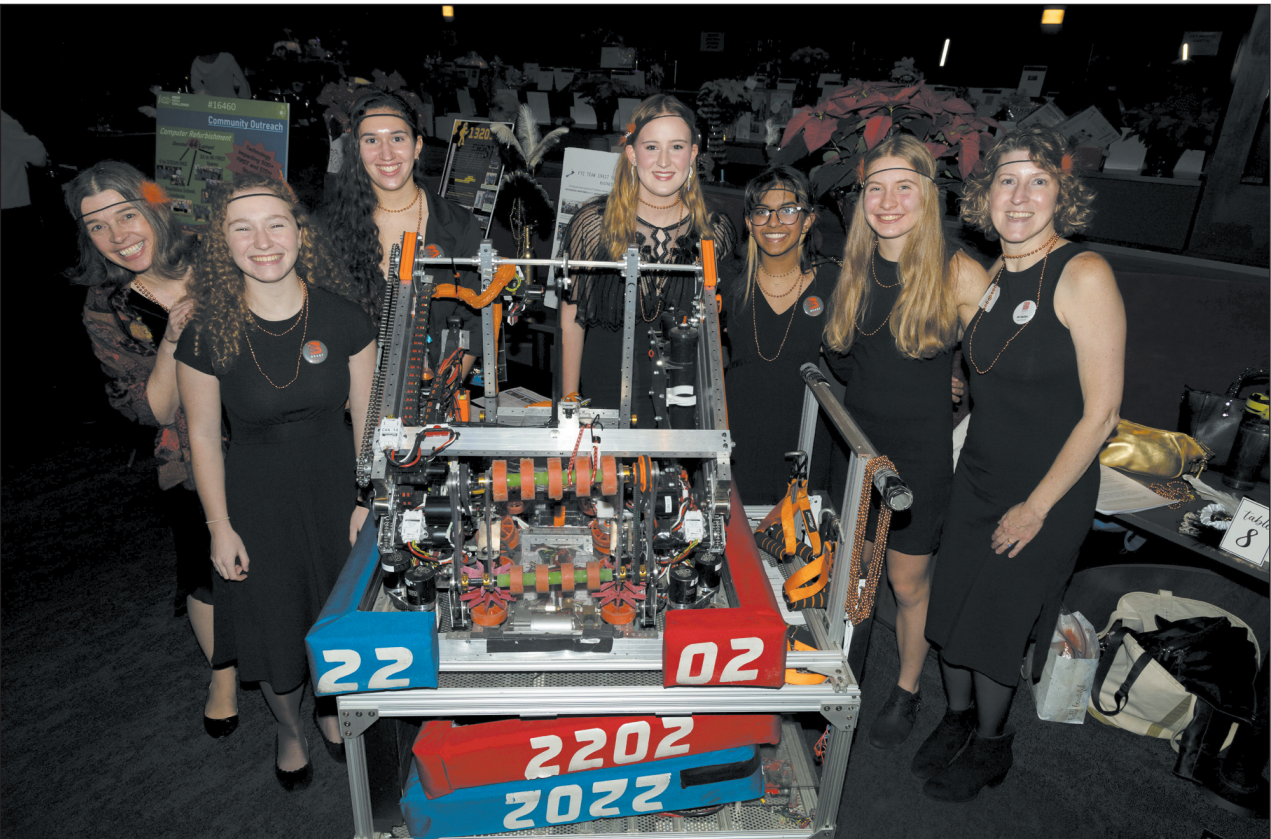


Photo courtesy of EEF

The Elmbrook Education Foundation has made a commitment to the Robotics and Automation space at Brookfield East High School. Pictured from left to right are: mentor Sara Lieske, Elle Hillmann, Amari Siegfried, Sophia Hart-Liepert, Rlyana Expedith, Emily Enright and mentor Kristin Rothe.



Photo courtesy of EEF

Elmbrook Education Foundation Executive Director Beth Dobzynski stands with Ladies Night Presenting Sponsor Craig Husar of Craig Husar Fine Diamonds.



Photo courtesy of EEF

Attending the Elmbrook Education Foundation Ladies Night were, from left to right, front row, Erica Riegelman and Shannon Bibis, and back row, Katy Moss, Jenny Johnson, Caroline DeBauche and Katie Hoesly.

Elmbrook Education Foundation Ladies Night raises over \$70,000

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD — The EEF hosted the 20th Annual Ladies Night, presented by Craig Husar Fine Diamonds, on Nov. 29, at the Milwaukee IMPROV in The Corners of Brookfield. More than 250 women attended and participated in an evening of shopping and socializing while participating in raffles, silent auction and more.

“We’re grateful for the overwhelming community support at Ladies Night. The energy was amazing as we celebrated the Roaring ’20s. This was a great experience enjoyed by all,” said Jessica Gonzalez, Ladies Night co-chair.

More than \$70,000 was raised at this event and the proceeds will support the EEF’s \$100,000 commitment to the Robotics and Automation space at Brookfield East, available to all high school students in the Elmbrook district.

“Ladies Night is a testament to the

power of unity and empowerment. For over a decade, Craig Husar Fine Diamonds has proudly sponsored this event, embodying a legacy of passion, purpose, and sparkle in our commitment to supporting education and community enrichment,” said Craig Husar, owner of Craig Husar Fine Diamonds.

The EEF was organized in 1958 to award scholarships to select Brookfield High School graduates. In 1999, the Foundation’s mission expanded to include teacher grants for innovative projects that benefit all students and raise money to support and strengthen outstanding learning ideas that improve the overall educational quality of our public schools. EEF has awarded over \$1,600,000 in scholarships and over \$625,000 in grants, which enhance and extend the established curriculum and support projects that are beyond the district’s budget.



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Verthein

From Page 1

Wanting to do more

Verthein said he first got involved in volunteering his time as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as a member of the Delta Sigma Pi fraternity. The group was involved in giving back, such as raking leaves and feeding the homeless. When he learned about a fellow Delta Sigma Pi brother having cystic fibrosis, he decided to support the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and chaired their Milwaukee's Finest Program for 10 years from 2012-21. Verthein said he helped to raise more than \$450,000 for the CF Foundation and connect young professionals in the Milwaukee area.

It was in 2013 that Verthein first began to volunteer with ACAP after attending the Waukesha organization's Christmas party with a friend who invited him.

"I was blown away by the programs they provide," he said. As a small, grassroots organization, even a small contribution can go a long way.

In 2018, he was elected board president. During the past five years, the board has helped to oversee a transition to a

new executive director after the organization's founder retired.

Executive Director Sandra Gines describes Verthein as a "gem" because "he takes the time to get to know the organization and really leans into his organization."

On the board of directors, Verthein's financial knowledge has been a huge asset for ACAP, Gines said.

"For a small nonprofit like ACAP, his financial expertise is invaluable. We can't afford a lot of administrative staff that have that depth of understanding," she said. "We really do lean on our experts on our finance committee. He understands how to make money work for us."

In addition to serving on the board, Gines said Verthein has participated in ACAP's programs and helps to spread awareness of the good work they are doing.

"He works to really keep things optimistic and to invite people to support an organization because he does a good

job of sharing positives around what the organization means to its community," she said.

More recently, Verthein has gotten involved with the Waukesha County Community Foundation, where he also serves on its board of directors. The organization, through permanent endowment funds, project funds and grants, meets local challenges and improves the quality of life in our community.

Melissa Baxter, Waukesha County Community Foundation president, first met Verthein through Waukesha Rotary and has gotten to know him even better as a member of the board. She said his connection to the community and his experiences at Baird as a financial advisor have been beneficial for his role on the board.

"Rick is always positive. He is a very positive person and it's obvious how much he cares about his community and his family," she said.

A local upbringing

Verthein grew up in Brookfield as the middle child with two brothers, Bill and Michael, and his parents, John and Jeanne. He graduated from Brookfield Central High School and then pursued an accounting and finance degree from UW-Milwaukee. It was his father who got him interested in business. John Verthein worked as a commercial lender at a bank.

Verthein said he was intrigued by business and its many areas and found accounting to be a good way to understand the nuts and bolts of business. He has worked as a financial advisor at Baird for 17 years and has been a director with the company for its Waukesha office since March 2022.

Being in the financial services industry allows Verthein to get to work with many people and to get to know them.

Learning about the world and experiencing new things has always been important to Verthein, his parents said.

"He is always someone who likes to be involved. He participated in and took tons of things in high school," Jeanne Verthein said. "There was always enthusiasm about the next adventure, so to speak."

That included spending a couple of weeks in Germany as part of the German Club.

"He likes being involved; it is not something that is a chore for him," his mother said.

A devoted father and husband

As a father to three, Charles, 9, Henry, 7, and Eloise, 2, Verthein said he tries to do as much with his kids as he can, including coaching Henry's soccer team. The family, which lives in Nashotah, also shares a passion for skiing and are members of Ausblick, a private ski hill in Sussex. Verthein also went with his father and sons to ski hills in Upper Michigan.

Traveling is another activity that Verthein likes to do with his whole family, including wife Jessica. The two have been married for 11 years.

She recalls how he wore a sweater vest on their first date, but what really left the biggest impression was that he was a "really nice guy. One that would open your door for you, pay for your meal."

Jessica Verthein said she appreciates her husband's involvement in the community and how he is willing to help others out, while still working and being a "good dad, a good friend to everyone."

"For a lot of people, that would be very hard, but he is able to pull it off. He stays so calm," she said.

John Verthein said Rick sets a great example for his children with community engagement and positive personality.

The road ahead

As 2023 comes to a close, Verthein sees opportunity in the new year.

"It really is always about trying to be a better person every day," he said. Like most working adults, Verthein said striving for good work-life balance is always a goal.

Volunteering his time remains a key part of his plans, and for others who want to help out, but don't where to start, Verthein advises them to "find out what you really enjoy doing first." He said that could be working with



Photo courtesy of Rick Verthein

Rick Verthein takes a selfie with other Waukesha Rotarians as they build an amphitheater for the Girl Scouts.



Photo courtesy of Rick Verthein

Rick Verthein stands with his wife of 11 years, Jessica.

Get to know ... Rick Verthein

My greatest achievement is: has yet to be determined.
My favorite book is: "From Strength to Strength" by Arthur Brooks
My favorite TV show is: I don't really have a show I watch, but anything sports related. (Packers, Bucks, Golf, EPL soccer)
My favorite movie is: "Almost Famous"
My favorite actor is: Kevin Costner
My favorite actress is: Emma Stone
My favorite podcast is: Joe Rogan
My favorite childhood memory is: Driving to Florida to visit my grandma in the Orlando area
The person I most admire is: My wife
Three words people describe me are: Positive, outgoing, kind
The worst job I had as a teenager: a VERY brief stint in clothing retail during the holiday season
The food I like best is: Anything Italian
My favorite hobby is: Right now, it's probably golf
My favorite music group is: Zak Brown Band
My pet is: Dexter (schnauzer mix)
My favorite vacation place is: Charleston, S.C.
The favorite vehicle I ever had was: My 2006 black Mitsubishi Eclipse, which was a stick shift
On my desk is: Way too many papers
My favorite childhood toy was: a soccer ball
My favorite custard flavor is: Kopp's Chocolate
My goals for the year are: try to improve or learn a little something new every day



Photo courtesy of Rick Verthein

Rick Verthein, second from right, works with fellow Waukesha Rotarians and volunteers on a Habitat for Humanity build. From left to right are, Waukesha Rotarian Terry Inman, Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha County staff member Connie Neibauer, past Freeman Citizen of the Year Rick Kobriger, Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha County staff member Kathy Laur, Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha County staff member Ludek Zatopek (in stocking cap), Waukesha Rotarian Ken Genin, Verthein and Waukesha Rotarian Lori Kasun.

"It really is always about trying to be a better person every day."

— Rick Verthein,
2023 Freeman Citizen of the Year



Photo courtesy of Rick Verthein

Rick Verthein, second from left, stands with Waukesha County Deputy District Attorney Mike Thurston, left, and Adam Deputy, second from right, and Elm Grove Detective Craig Mayer, right.

animals or an environmental cause.

"If you're not sure, try one of the service organizations to get a taste of a lot of things," he said.

Saying "yes" is also key because more doors open for you. And every little bit helps, from selling tickets to making banners.

"You don't need a lot of money to make a difference; it's about giving of your time," Verthein said.



Photo courtesy of Rick Verthein

Rick Verthein shares a love of skiing with his dad, John Verthein.

Past Freeman Citizens of the Year

2005: Julie McIntyre	2013: Larry Nines
2006: Betsy Forrest	2014: Diane McGeen
2007: Jay Walt	2015: Miriam Wellford
2008: Brian Dorow	2016: Dan Erschen
2009: Rick Kobriger	2017: David Belman
2010: Mary Baer	2018: Bryon Riesch
2011: Cheryl Gemignani	2020: Michael Crowley
2012: Nancy Major	