

JANUARY 2024

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The FREEMAN

CITIZEN of the YEAR

Rick Verthein

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



Rick Verthein

By Katherine Beck kbeck@conleynet.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 citi-

"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 inter-

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.

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.

See **VERTHEIN**, PAGE 3

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The wait is about to get shorter: Kick Switch moving to larger Okauchee building



The popularity of the fish fry at Kick Switch is one reason the bar and grill needed to move to a larger location, said owner Joe Agathen.

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By Katherine Beck kbeck@conleynet.com

Kick Switch owner Joe Agathen has a vision for the bar and grill's new space down the road — and he's eager to share it with the Okauchee area community. Known for its fish fries, the existing 1,600-square-foot location at N51-W34950 Wisconsin Ave., tended to feel too small on Friday nights when the wait to get seated could be an hour to 90 minutes.

Once in the new 2,000-square-foot location in the former Pauline's Supper Club building on the roundabout in downtown Okauchee, the wait should hopefully be decreased, Agathen said. But even if customers find themselves waiting for a table, the new bar promises to "wow" patrons. Made of beams from an 1860s barn that are backlit to show off their imperfections (after all, they were hand hewn), Agathen thinks it will be a real showstopper.

The new location will carry on the existing location's rustic feel, he said, including the strung Edison-style lightbulbs over the tables using hay pulleys. Agathen said he had been thinking about switching to a new building due to outgrowing the existing building and some other issues. He's excited about the visibility Kick Switch will have once it opens on the roundabout by April 1.

The kitchen will also double in size in the new space. Agathen also hopes to host live music in the back in a struc-



ture he wants to renovate into a tiki hut/bandshell-type space this year or

Grand opening celebration

An official grand opening celebration for Full Spoon Grab&Go is planned for Feb. 2. In addition to a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, the event that starts at 4 p.m. will include samples. Located at 116 N. Main St., Oconomowoc, Full Spoon opened June 20. The focus of the business is on grab-and-go items such as salads, sandwiches, wraps and grain bowls.

"Thank you SO much for your support thus far, let's make 2024 AMAZING! Our small business wouldn't be here without this community and your support," reads a post on the Facebook event page.

(Have a Waukesha County restaurant news tip? Email Katherine Beck at kbeck@conleynet.com.)



The former Pauline's Supper Club, which has sat vacant in downtown Okauchee for about a decade, is being transformed into a new location for Kick Switch.

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Bill Yorth - Publisher & Editor-in-Chief..513-2671 byorth@conleynet.com

Jim Baumgart - Freeman Group Ad Director 513-2621 jbaumgart@conleynet.com Tim Haffemann - Circulation Director....513-2640 thaffemann@conleynet.com Patricia Scheel - Prepress Manager.....513-2690

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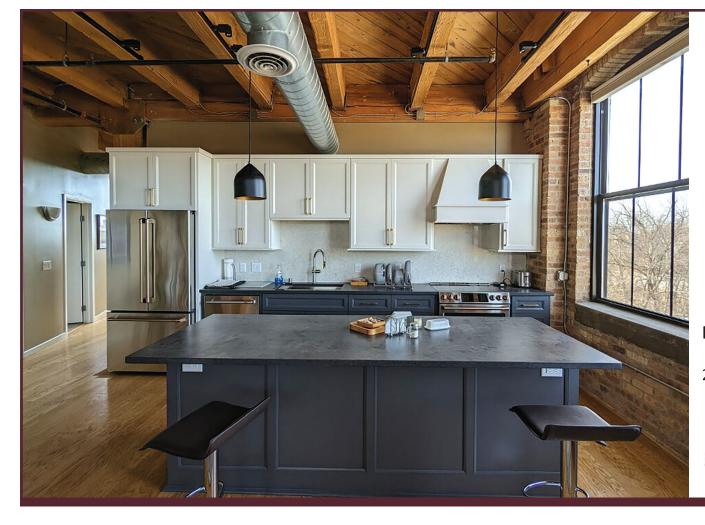
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Verthein

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

Involvement and recognition

- Volunteered with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and chaired their Milwaukee's Finest Program for 10 years (2012-2021). Helped to raise over \$450,000 for the CF Foundation and connect young professionals in the Milwaukee area
- Volunteering with the Adaptive Community Approach Program (ACAP) since 2013 and board president since 2018.
- Joined the Waukesha Rotary Club in October 2014 and served on several committees within the club. Currently on the Community Service Committee and the Charitable Fund Committee/Board.
- Waukesha County Community Foundation Board of Directors member.
- Volunteers for Let Kids Fly soccer
- Recognized by Forbes as one of the Best-In-State Wealth Advisors in 2023
- Recognized by Forbes as Top Next-Gen Wealth Advisors Best-in-State in 2023

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



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

My favorite TV show is: I don't really have a show I watch, but anything sports related. (Packers, Bucks, Golf, EPL

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,

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

Jeanne Verthein said. "There was always enthusiasm about the next adventure, so to speak." That included spending a couple of weeks in Ger-

participated in and took tons of things in high school,"

many 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 per-

The road ahead

As 2023 comes to a close, Verthein sees opportunity in

"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 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.

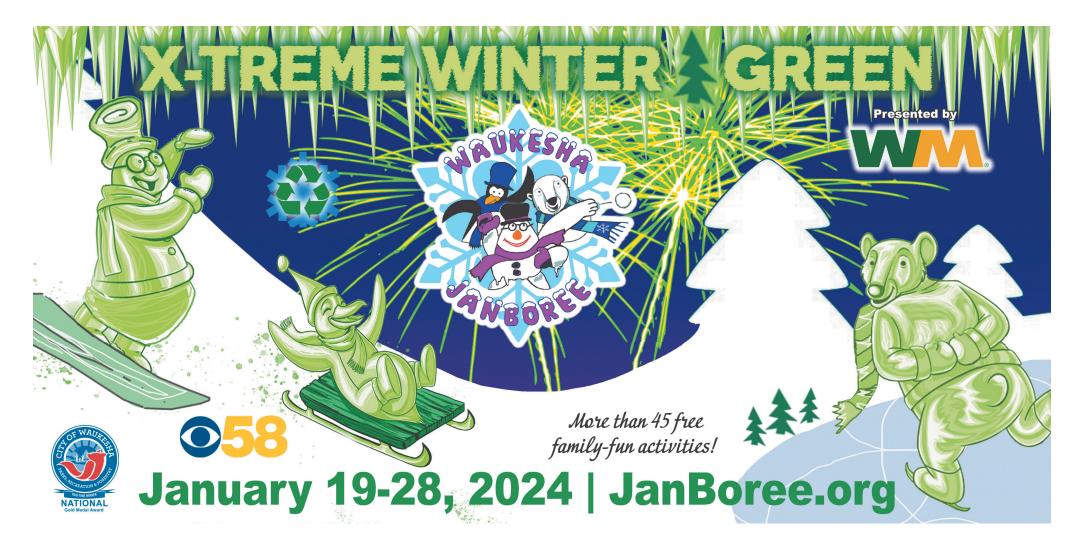
Past Freeman Citizens of the Year

2005: Julie McIntyre 2006: Betsy Forrest 2007: Jay Walt 2008: Brian Dorow 2009: Rick Kobriger 2010: Mary Baer **2011:** Cheryl Gemignani

2012: Nancy Major

2013: Larry Nines 2014: Diane McGeen 2015: Miriam Wellford 2016: Dan Erschen 2017: David Belman 2018: Bryon Riesch

2020: Michael Crowley



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