

Spirit of Olympics is both positive and unifying

Two Waukesha County teachers experience the games in Paris

By Karen Pilarski
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WAUKESHA — It has been a dream come true for two Waukesha County teachers who trekked to Europe to watch the summer Olympics in Paris.

Kathi Koepke, an Arrowhead High School teacher, and Emily Paprocki, a Brookfield East High School teacher, have always wanted to see the Olympics up close.

"It's definitely something I've always dreamed of. I watch the Olympics every two years and it always looks so exciting and fun," Paprocki said.

Koepke said she has never been to the Olympics either but has studied and lived in Paris in the past.

"I love Paris and when I heard the Olympics would be here, I thought I have to go," Koepke said.

In 2022, a friend messaged Paprocki about the lottery for tickets. Koepke, Paprocki and other friends' names were drawn. Once they had confirmation of the tickets the rest of the planning started.

Luckily for Koepke and Paprocki, they have been to Paris before. Koepke is a French and Spanish teacher who has traveled to Paris many times. She has been in charge of figuring out transportation and asking for directions.

The tricky part of the Olympics is there are so many events and not all are in Paris. The goal was to be strategic about where they wanted to be during the games. The two teachers chose events that they wouldn't get to see back home such as table tennis, badminton and water polo.

Koepke said they watched the gymnastics team obviously to follow gold

medalist Simone Biles. They are enjoying watching the swimming games. There are free viewing areas for people to watch the games.

"I'm part of some Facebook groups and I see some people that are doing three a day, which is crazy. You know we did two a day for like three days in a row, and that is a lot," Paprocki said.

Filled with excitement

The mood of the city has been positive and there is camaraderie among people. The teachers praised volunteers in the city calling them very nice and fantastic. The volunteers are from all over the world.

There has been a lot of confusion for some tourists. Koepke said everyone helped each other and it helped she is fluent in French. There were announcements in French and Koepke translated for puzzled people around her.

"The events are just filled with excitement. It doesn't really matter what team is participating. Everybody is cheering for everyone. I mean, especially strong for France as the home team," Paprocki said.

Paprocki added, "Every person seems to be enjoying the city in a little bit different way. Overall, it's just a really positive fun spirit."

While outside the USA House, a car pulled up with Flavor Flav inside. The friends talked to him about water polo and took a picture with the famous rapper.



Courtesy of Emily Paprocki
Kathi Koepke, an Arrowhead High School teacher, left, and Emily Paprocki, a Brookfield East High School teacher, stand with the Eiffel Tower in the background. They have been in Paris for the Olympics.

While they did see a few Olympians on the street and subway, they got to cheer on the ones who won medals.

They went to Champions Park and had to wait in line to get in. Koepke and Paprocki were the last 50 people to be allowed in. There was 10,000 people there and they barely squeaked in.

Champions Park is the place to celebrate medalists for that day.

"The spirit of the Olympics has been positive and unifying," she said.

There is an Olympics tradition where athletes trade pins, but fans do it too. Paprocki has been trad-

ing them with other people. She met a high school teacher from Japan who teaches English. They had a nice conversation and ended up following each other on Instagram.

Both teachers plan to incorporate their experiences in their classrooms. Koepke explained as a language teacher she constantly uses her travel and life experiences. When she plans her sports unit she will use her photos, stories and video as tools. Paprocki has previously done an Olympics unit.

"If I taught French, I would have a lot of material," Paprocki said.

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Brookfield council rejects use of absentee ballot drop box

There will be one additional staffed date to return absentee ballots

By Karen Pilarski
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BROOKFIELD — The Brookfield Common Council has become the second municipality in the county to discontinue use of the absentee drop box. The council voted 11-3 to not use an absentee drop box during a meeting on Aug. 20. Aldermen Sara Monty, Mike Hallquist and Bill Carnell were the dissenting votes. This means an absentee drop box will not be available for the November presidential election.

The Common Council also passed an amendment to add one Saturday that would be staffed for residents to drop off ballots on Oct. 26.

Before the vote several residents spoke in favor of keeping the ballot drop box. There were also emailed public comments. Many comments

focused on the ballot boxes ensuring the ballots get delivered as well as accessible for people with disabilities and those who are very busy with work and other obligations.

Alderman Chuck Bloom III explained during the meeting how he worked at the polls for 15 years. “I’ve heard people say, well you can’t trust the mail. Yet everyday they go and get the mail. But oh, I can’t put it (ballot) in the mail to send it back. It is totally wrong,” Bloom said.

Bloom said the drop box is a block and a half away from a major post office and questioned what was the difference. He said he trusts the post office sitting across the street more than he would trust a drop box sitting outside.

“Voter integrity, for me, is the most important thing we can have. I worked with the polls. I’ve done the doorbells; I stood in the rain

and snow. People are happy to come and vote,” Bloom said.

Bloom added for people who can’t vote that they go to the nursing homes and take care of them.

Hallquist who spoke during the meeting and released a press release, said the discussion should be about making the voting process more accessible and convenient for residents with work, transportation and disability challenges.

“The voting methods listed by city staff do not provide the same level of accessibility as the absentee drop box privilege that residents previously had from 2011 until the 2020 lawsuit. Residents will be unable to physically return their absentee ballot to a secure and monitored location 24/7 and will have to rely on City Hall’s open hours to do so,” Hallquist said.

“It’s unfortunate that my colleagues are in favor of making it more difficult for Brookfield residents to lawfully cast their ballots. The arguments in opposition were mostly unsubstantiated election denialism-like claims of ‘election integrity’ and an unfortunate unwillingness to consider that vot-

ing can be more difficult for someone other than themselves. If there’s one thing I’ve learned about being an elected official, it’s that you need to constantly seek out wide and diverse perspectives from your community to make sure you are hearing their concerns and meeting their needs adequately. Making life more accessible almost always takes more time, effort, and money, but you do it because it’s the right and moral thing to do for your community,” Hallquist said.

In July, the state Supreme Court overturned its previous decision on absentee boxes and now allows the use of them. Municipal clerks are not forced to use ballot drop boxes, but may choose to use them. The New Berlin Common Council previously voted unanimously to reject the use of a ballot drop box.

According to a memo from Jenna Merten, attorney for the City of Brookfield, when the state Supreme Court ruled that drop boxes were illegal, the city stopped recording the drop box and no longer used the drop box for ballots. Merten and City Clerk Michelle Luedtke concluded that the city could use a drop box, but it is not needed. The memo explained how COVID is no longer a threat to public health like it once was and the city is not under any stay-at-home or mask orders. While a drop box is more convenient, it is subject to poll worker availability.

For people who work during City Hall open business hours, the city will have extended voting hours during in-person absentee voting for the two weeks prior to the election from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Voters could drop off their ballots to a clerk at that time. For voters with disabilities, the city is using a drive-up ballot drop off during in-person absentee voting. There will be a doorbell next to a disabled parking space which will be available when City Hall is open for voting, including extended hours. Additionally, voters with disabilities could always call the City Clerk’s office during its regular business hours to request that the clerk come to the parking lot and take their ballot.



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Thurston resigns from District Attorney’s Office

By Brian Huber
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WAUKESHA — After losing the race for top prosecutor in Waukesha County, Deputy District Attorney Mike Thurston has announced his departure from the office.

Lesli Boese received 32,517 votes, or 51.9%, to Thurston’s 30,017 votes, or 47.9%, in the Aug. 13 primary election, winning by a margin of 2,500 votes out of more than 62,000 ballots cast, according to unofficial results. Thurston has been in the D.A.’s office for nine years, and has been leading the sensitive crimes unit. Boese, a lifelong county resident, has 29 years of experience in the D.A.’s office, most recently leading the drug unit. With no Democratic challenger for the office, the win sets up Boese, 58, to become the next Waukesha County district attorney. She will succeed Sue Oppen, the county’s first female district attorney, who chose not to run for re-election after serving in the role since 2015.

Thurston said that some of the rhetoric during the campaign “and with a complete and utter difference of opinions in the office,” he felt it was best to strike out in a new direction.

“This is a change that the electorate decided and I think it’s with a new electoral winner with Lesli Boese wining I think she should be able to select her own management team and she should be able to determine which direction she wants the office to go and I think it’s really important for her to have that ability so I don’t want to stand in the way of that,” Thurston said Thursday.

A phone message left for Boese was not immediately returned.

As he indicated on election night, Thurston, 44, said he aims to spend some time with his wife and children in the next few weeks before he begins actively looking for a new job. But he made it clear he intends to remain living in Waukesha County.



Mike Thurston

Courtesy Noun Photography

“This is our home. My girls go to school here. My wife is a business owner. I love Waukesha County,” he said. “We’re going to remain here. And hopefully die here. We love it here. But as far as my time in the D.A.’s office, it’s become patently clear my time is done in the D.A.’s office. I wish everybody in that office the best.”

When asked what he would say to the families of victims in the cases that he’s been working with, Thurston replied, “I’d say it’s been a real privilege and honor working with you. I sure hope that the transition can occur quickly. That’s why I am stepping aside in a speedy manner so she can get whoever she wants to handle these matters. But at this time philosophically as far as our vision is concerned, we couldn’t see the future of this office any more differently.”

Thurston added, “It’s been a complete honor and privilege to serve the people of Waukesha County for the last nine years. I’ve been completely humbled by the experience,” he said. “I still call Waukesha County home and I think of my brothers and sisters in blue as dear friends. I will do whatever I can to help in this next adventure but this will be a new adventure for me, and new chapter in my career.”

Voter turnout 40% in county

By Karen Pilarski
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WAUKESHA — Voter turnout remained about the same since April 2024, according to the Waukesha County Clerk’s Office.

Voter turnout was 40% for the primary election last month. During the April election, voter turnout was just under 40%, Meg Wartman, Waukesha County clerk, said.

There were 277,701 registered voters for the Aug. 13 partisan primary and statewide referendum with 110,134 ballots cast (39.6%).

In April the county had 109,925 ballots cast. There were 277,229 registered voters in Waukesha County, making voter turnout just under 40%, Wartman said.

Gov. Tony Evers signed new legislative district maps into law in February. The redistricting requires the Wisconsin state Assembly and state Senate to have different district maps beginning in 2025.

In April 2023, voter turnout in Waukesha County was just over 57%. There were 164,398 ballots cast and 286,699 registered voters.

The big Waukesha County races included district attorney.

Deputy District Attorney Lesli Boese won the race to become the presumed next top prosecutor in Waukesha County, defeating her co-worker Mike Thurston, as there is no Democratic challenger for the November general election.

State Rep. Barbara Ditttrich of Oconomowoc, who currently represents the 38th Assembly District, defeated fellow Republican Hartland Village President Jeffrey Pfannerstill in the primary election for what will be the new District 99. There is no Democratic candidate running for Assem-

bly District 99.

Kevin Reilly, a Democrat, won the primary against Samuel D’Amico Reilly for state Assembly District 82. He will move on to the Nov. 5 general election where he will face off against incumbent state Rep. Scott Allen, R-Waukesha.

State Rep. Tom Michalski of Elm Grove defeated challenger Patti Granger of Wauwatosa in the Assembly District 13 Republican primary election. Michalski will take on Democrat Robyn Vining in the November election.

Jim Piwowarczyk won the Republican primary election on Tuesday night in Assembly District 98 over Don Pridemore by 3,539 votes. Piwowarczyk will now advance to the Nov. 5 general election as the Republican candidate, where he will face Democratic candidate Del Schmechel for the Assembly District 98 seat.

Dan Knodl won the Republican candidacy for the Wisconsin state Assembly District 20 seat. In the race, Knodl defeated former assemblywoman Janel Brandtjen.

Two proposed amendments to the Wisconsin Constitution limiting the governor’s spending power failed statewide in Tuesday’s primary election. Republican WOW counties — Waukesha, Ozaukee, and Washington — supported both questions.

In Waukesha County, where 61.3% of voters identified as Republican and 38.5% voted for Democrats, some 59,811 voters, or 57%, supported the first question, with 43%, or 45,125, opposed. On the second question 57.1%, or 60,014, voted yes, with 45,064, or 42.9%, opposing it.

Election results are unofficial until canvassed.



Photo courtesy Bridget Schoenborn

Bridget Schoenborn, left, is sworn in as Waukesha County’s newest judge last month as Judge Jennifer Dorow administers the oath of office while Schoenborn’s sons Jack and Sean look on.

Judge Schoenborn sworn in

WAUKESHA — Judge Bridget Schoenborn was officially sworn in as Waukesha’s newest judge last month.

“It’s an honor of a lifetime to serve as a Judge in Waukesha County and undertake the important job of keeping our communities safe and adhering to our laws and constitution,” Schoenborn said.

Chief Judge Paul Bugenhagen presided over the ceremony, former United States Attorney Steve Biskupic gave remarks, and Judge Jennifer Dorow administered the oath of office.

“While working undercover in a federal task force, Judge Schoenborn and I were involved in investigating and indicting violent drug gangs and organizations,” said Waukesha Police Chief Daniel Thompson.

“It was in these intense and often dangerous situations that I first saw Bridget’s character truly shine. She was not only committed to upholding the Constitution and the rule of law but did so with a servant’s heart — a rare and admirable quality.”

Judge Schoenborn’s election is set for April 8, 2025.

For 20 years, Schoenborn was a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

Schoenborn has lived in Waukesha County for nearly 20 years. She is the youngest of seven children, having two children of her own, twin boys, who were both graduates of Elmbrook schools.

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Photos courtesy of Starbucks

Along with its fall menu of beverages, Starbucks has unveiled a seasonal selection of bakery items that include from left to right, Pumpkin Cream Cheese Muffin, Pumpkin & Pepita Loaf, Baked Apple Croissant and a raccoon-shaped cake pop.



Starbucks has been serving the autumn classic — Pumpkin Spice Latte — for more than 20 years. Since, many smaller, independent coffee shops serve their own version.



Starbucks' new seasonal Iced Apple Crisp Nondairy Cream Chai features flavors of chai combined with creamy oat milk and topped with nondairy apple crisp cold foam.

As seasons transition, so do the flavors

By Katherine Beck
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It's that in-between time of the year when mornings and nights are cool, but the days are warm and sunny. The trees and plants are beginning to turn a little yellow and the squirrels are getting a little nut crazy, but the grass is still green and many plants are still flowering. It's also a time when it's hard to pick between an iced or hot latte, as well as whether to keep ordering bright summer flavors or to go for cozy cold-weather favorites like pumpkin spice latte.

Starbucks thinks people are ready for those flavors of fall, but they are available in both cold or hot beverages. The classic Pumpkin Spice Latte, along with the rest of the coffee giant's autumn menu, made its return on Thursday.

The limited time menu also includes Iced Pumpkin Cream Chai, Pumpkin Cream Cold Brew, Iced Apple Crisp Nondairy Cream Chai and Iced Apple Crisp Oatmilk Shaken Espresso. Bakery items include a raccoon-shaped cake pop, Pumpkin Cream Cheese Muffin and the Baked Apple Croissant.

Local coffee shops are still embracing summery beverages and treats, but will likely unveil their seasonal flavors soon. Whelan's Coffee & Ice Cream and The Roots Coffeebar & Café, both in downtown Oconomowoc, are making "Wizard of Oz"-themed items until the end of the month in honor of the 85th anniversary of the movie premiering in Oconomowoc. On Whelan's menu is Dorothy's Sparkling Lemonade, Ruby Slipper Chai, Good Witch, Bad Witch Latte and Cowardly Lion Cold Brew.

Down the street at Roots, customers can munch on the Ruby Red Slipper muffin (Cherry Cheesecake) or the Flying Monkey muffin (Banana Chocolate Chip). Beverages include the Flying Monkey (Banana Mocha), Ruby Red Slipper (Cherry Cheesecake Latte), The Good Witch (Watermelon Lemonade with Coconut Milk and Whip Cream), The Bad Witch (Blackberry Matcha) and Yellow Brick Road (Toffee & Salted Caramel Latte).

Mill Street Café to have grand opening celebration

Although it's been open for a few



What's the Dish?

Waukesha County restaurant news

months, the owner of Mill Street Café, has decided it's time for a grand opening celebration, which will be held 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 8. Located at W315-N7735 Highway 83, North Lake, the café will have raffle prizes and samples available.

Coming soon to Brookfield

Opening Sept. 5 in Brookfield is Raising Cane's at 12660 W. Capitol Drive. Known for its chicken fingers, the chain restaurant will offer a chance to win free Cane's items for a year and the first 100 dine-in customers will get a free hat and box combo gift card.

A transformation

Westridge Builders wants to transform a property at 4865 Westridge Drive in Brookfield into offices and a coffee shop. The company has submitted an application to remodel an existing residence into a coffee shop and an existing barn into offices.

Westridge Builders also wants to construct a 4,000-square-foot building that would be used as a company warehouse. Westridge Drive, and the Northern subdivision known as Northern Oaks which the company is currently building, is located off Lisbon Road just east of Lannon Road. The farmhouse and barn are near the entrance to the subdivision from Lisbon Road.

According to a statement of operation presented to the city of Brookfield, the existing farmhouse that would be turned into a coffee shop would have a coffee bar and seating on the first floor and storage on the second floor. The plans also call for an outdoor patio with seating. The coffee shop would operate from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

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

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