

DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING

AGENDA

DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE – TIMBERWOLF CONFERENCE CENTER/D100,
1000 W. CAMPUS DRIVE, WAUSAU, WI 54401 AND VIA [ZOOM](#)
WEBINAR ID: 885 5427 7024 | PASSCODE: 309831

CALL TO ORDER

- A. Compliance with Open Meetings Law (Wis. Stat. 19.81-19.88)
- B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- C. Public Comment

Public Comment periods are not considered to be public hearings or a forum for public debate. No person may speak more than once to an issue or for a period longer than three (3) minutes. Individuals wishing to speak during this period must complete the sign-in form at the meeting location no less than fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the meeting. The total amount of time devoted to public comment at any given meeting will not exceed thirty (30) minutes unless extended by a majority vote of the Board.

ORGANIZATIONAL ITEMS

- A. Oath of Office for Appointed District Board Members – Nikki Kopp
 - a. Rainer Shooter

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

- A. Student Representative Update – Grace Koehler

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- B. Approval of Minutes from January 14, 2025, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

CONSENT VOTING AGENDA

- A. Approval of Consent Voting Agenda Including:
 - a. [New Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship Program](#)
 - b. [Receipts + Expenditures](#)
 - c. [Personnel Changes](#)

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

- A. President's Report
 - a. Capital Budget Philosophy + Goals – Chet Strebe
 - b. Comments from Informational Update
- B. Chairperson's Report
 - a. Spring 2025 Board Appointment Cycle:
 - b. Reminder to Complete Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) by 4/30/2025
 - c. Next Regular NTC Board Meeting: Tuesday, March 4, 2025
- C. Information
 - a. [Advisory Meeting Minutes](#)
 - b. [Upcoming Meetings + Events](#)
 - c. [Good News](#)

CLOSED SESSION (IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE ABOVE OPEN MEETING)

- A. Adjourn the Board into Closed Session pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes Section 19.85(1)(d) for the purpose of:
 - a. Consideration of Existing and Future Strategies for Crime Prevention

OPEN SESSION

- A. Reconvene the Board into Open Session to confirm any action deemed necessary as a result of the Closed Session.

MEETING ADJOURN

Note: Meetings of the Northcentral Technical College District Board are held in compliance with Wisconsin's "Open Meetings Law".

Mission: Northcentral Technical College enriches our communities by providing high quality learner and employer focused educational pathways that transform lives.

**NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE
DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TOPIC SUMMARY SHEET**

MEETING DATE: February 11, 2025

TOPIC: Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program

POLICY Community Benefit Statement 2
Employers have an available and skilled workforce.

DATA/RESULTS:

The Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program provides a new pathway for learners in pursuing a professional career in the early childhood and child care industry. A graduate of the Early Childhood apprenticeship program supports the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children through developmentally appropriate programming and environments. Completers of the program will be able to use best practices in teaching and learning, demonstrate professionalism, integrate health, safety, and nutrition practices, and apply child development theories to practice.

The demand for Early Childhood professionals continues to be high throughout the state and within the NTC District. There are currently over 800 jobs within the district and demand is expected to remain strong. Early childcare staff shortages have created long waiting lists of over 1 year for childcare, impacting the ability for parents to find affordable care and return to the workforce. NTC already offers a successful Early Childhood Education Associate Degree and an Early Childhood Teacher Technical Diploma program. By offering the Early Childhood Apprentice program, NTC can provide another flexible avenue for students to gain the necessary skills for this occupation. This program also meets specific industry requests for Early Childhood apprenticeship in the District. Further, the program aligns with statewide efforts by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards (BAS) to launch apprenticeship programs in new industries and non-traditional occupations.

This apprenticeship will align with the technical diploma, providing graduation students with a dual credential: a technical diploma and a BAS Journey Worker card. We anticipate serving approximately 6-12 apprentices per term upon initial implementation of this program in Fall 2025, with strong potential for growth.

The College wishes to submit the Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program District Request form to the Wisconsin Technical College System Office for consideration. By approving the submission of the program request, the College will continue to the next step in the process for developing this as a WTCS approved apprenticeship program.

AGENDA CATEGORY:

PROPOSED MOTION:

✓ **Consent Agenda** Approval of program request for Early Childhood Apprenticeship program

CERTIFICATION OF ACCURACY: I, your CEO, certify that the information contained in this report is true as of this date.

Signed Dr. Janis Worden Dated 2/11/25

**NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE
DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TOPIC SUMMARY SHEET**

MEETING DATE: February 11, 2025

TOPIC: Receipts & Expenditures

POLICY 1.1 – Presidential Expectations – The President, in execution of his/her duties, shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision or organizational circumstance which is either irresponsible or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics, or that results in failure to be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

INTERPRETATION: To avoid *violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics* NTC will follow Wisconsin statute 38.12 **District Board Duties (2)** “...All expenditures exceeding \$2500 shall be approved by the district board.” Also, in compliance with Wisconsin statute 38.12(4) District board duties, “The publication proceedings shall include a statement of receipts and expenditures in the aggregate.”

DATA/RESULTS: The following Status of Funds listing receipts and expenditures including operating transfers in the aggregate is included for informational purposes as of **December 31, 2024** (preliminary).

F1-F7 Revenue:	\$64,073,508.96
F1-F7 Expense:	\$52,761,420.39

AGENDA CATEGORY:
Consent Agenda

PROPOSED MOTION:
(Motion is included with consent agenda.)

CERTIFICATION OF ACCURACY: I, your CEO, certify that the information contained in this report is true as of this date.

Signed: 

Dated: February 11, 2025

**NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE
DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TOPIC SUMMARY SHEET**

MEETING DATE: February 11, 2025

TOPIC: Personnel Changes

POLICY 1.1 – Presidential Expectations – The President, in execution of his/her duties, shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision or organizational circumstance which is either irresponsible or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics, or that results in failure to be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

INTERPRETATION: NTC will follow Wisconsin Statute 38.12 (3) "The district board shall employ and fix the compensation..." and Wisconsin Statute 118.22 (2) "...No teacher may be employed... except by a majority vote of the full membership of the board. Nothing in this section prevents the modification or termination of a contract by mutual agreement of the teacher and the board."

DATA/RESULTS: A request is made to approve the following personnel changes:

New Hires:

- Susan Pernsteiner – Faculty, Dental EFDA

Resignations:

- Stacy Kunz - Custodian, Trainer
- Rachel Holzinger - Faculty, Communications
- Maggie Long – Academic Coach
- Paul Strehlow – Supervisor, Custodial & Central Services
- Liberty Heidmann – Supervisor, Advising
- Casey Rozowski – Faculty, Math
- Martha Scott – Assistant, Student Services

AGENDA CATEGORY:

Consent Agenda

PROPOSED MOTION:

(Motion is included with consent agenda.)

CERTIFICATION OF ACCURACY: I, your CEO, certify that the information contained in this report is true as of this date.

Signed Dr. Janis Worden

Dated 2/11/25

Sign Language Interpreting in Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: 10/30/2024

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Attendees

Industry Members:

- Katy Bauer – School District of Niagara
- Kallie Freel – Lamira School District
- Amy Miller – Two Rivers School District
- Jennifer Sartori – Lamira School District and SLIE
Advisory Committee Chairperson

Interpreter:

- Dawn Koplitz – Interpreter

NTC Team:

- Erin McNally – Learning Manager, School of Business
- Vicki Shapiro – Sign Language Interpreting in Education Faculty
- Chanel Volpel – Sign Language Interpreting in Education Instructional Assistant
- Valerie Becker – Administrative Assistant, School of Business
- Sheri Rehman – Student Success Advisory

Industry Discussion

Shifts in Educational Interpreting

Kallie Freel: Noted the differences in traditional interpreting versus more hands-on educational interpreting. She sits with students, uses textbooks, and takes notes during class to ensure engagement, emphasizing that interpreting in education goes beyond simply translating what the teacher says. She emphasized that hands-on interaction is essential for student success.

Katy Bauer: Noted that her approach also involves closely following materials with the student and tutoring in addition to interpreting.

Virtual Interpreting and Technology

Katy Bauer: Noted the rise in job postings for virtual interpreters and noted that virtual interpreting may not suit all age groups or situations. However, virtual roles could help address interpreter shortages in rural districts.

Kallie Freel: Noted challenges in virtual interpreting, such as poor microphone use by teachers and increased student behavioral issues, which impact the quality of interaction. Virtual interpreting, while potentially useful for older students, is more costly and often less effective for younger students.

Jennifer Sartori: Stated that interpreting technology is improving. She discussed the importance of preparing students for virtual interpreting settings they may encounter outside of school, like at medical appointments, and emphasized teaching students self-advocacy skills to navigate virtual interpreting successfully.

Student Advocacy and Behavior Policies

Amy Miller: Shared her school's approach of involving interpreters in addressing negative student behaviors, emphasizing that they contribute to the classroom environment by actively addressing issues when they see them; most school districts do not allow interpreters to address students' behaviors. Her school district has also implemented a no cell phone policy and has seen a significant improvement in student behaviors due to this new policy, as well. She also praised her student's advocacy skills, noting her student's insistence on in-person interpreting when virtual was offered as a backup. Her student has even solely used technology devices when an in-person interpretation is not available rather than use a virtual interpreter.

Jennifer Sartori: Noted that her school district also does not allow cell phones, and they have also seen an improvement in student behaviors. She also underscored the importance of advocacy, teaching students to voice their needs and adapt to different interpreting environments.

Instructional Area/Program

Enrollment Update

Vicki Shapiro: The program currently has 9 students, down from 12 at the start of the term. This new cohort is highly motivated, collaborative, and engaged, often studying together. Most classes are held in person, with only one online course: Interpreting in Educational Settings. An open lab has been introduced twice a week to help support students, a resource that wasn't available in previous years.

Program Updates

Vicki Shapiro: Last spring, we began program mapping with Stephanie Vobornik, now Director of Academic Excellence, to ensure that program outcomes, competencies and learning objectives for each course align. We're ensuring that competencies align with learning objectives through a Practice Assessment model, where each competency is labeled as Introduce (I), Practice (P), or Assess (A). For example, ASL 1 focuses on introducing competencies, ASL 2 on practicing them, and ASL 3 on assessment.

Erin McNally: All programs at NTC are going through the program mapping process, which is a well thought out and detailed process. It will take time to get through every class but so far, we are finding that Vicki and Chanel are doing a lot of things right in the SLIE program.

College Wide Updates

Erin McNally reviewed Fall 2024 college-wide initiatives, including new programs, NTC's Health Mobile Lab, Community Safety Simulation Center, and the University Transfer program. She highlighted courses in Workforce Training, student support resources, and Handshake for employer connections. She also announced upcoming events: NTC's Community Open House on November 6th, Mind Trekkers on April 11-12, and the Spring 2025 Advisory Committee Summit.

Next meeting schedule & agenda items discussion

The date for the next meeting is Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 5:00 pm via Zoom.

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Civil Engineering Advisory Committee

19th November 2024 | 3:30pm to 5:00pm | F107 STEM Center/Zoom



Industry Members:

- Matt Gruan – Becher Hoppe Associates
- Nick Pehler – Jewell Associate Engineering, Inc.
- Kevin Boyer – EMCS
- Steve Opatik – USDA
- Brandon Bradley – Integrity Grading & Excavating
- Stephanie Christensen – EMCS
- Tonia Westphal – Clark-Dietz
- Mark Barden – Town & Country Engineering
- Jim Volkman – Dept. of Transportation
- Andy Walters – American Engineering & Testing

NTC Team:

- Michael Kowal – Faculty
- Heidi Latendresse – Learning Manager
- Susan Clark – Administrative Assistant

Welcome

Stephanie Christensen welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Introductions were made.

Highlights From The Previous Meetings

The previous meeting minutes were distributed in advance for the committee to review. Stephanie Christensen asked if there were any additions or deletions to the minutes. There were no specific follow-ups to the previous meeting minutes.

Enrollment and Program Updates

- **Enrollment** - Michael Kowal shared the current enrollments which include 9 first-semester students comprised of 6 full-time students, 1 part-time student, and 2 students enrolled in classes to transfer to Michigan Tech. The third semester has 5 students enrolled. The majority of second-year students are employed.
- **Internships** – Six students will be working toward an internship. The students will be surveyed to see which students would be looking for the internship for the upcoming summer and that information will be passed on to committee members.
- **Transfer Agreements** – The committee was given an overview of the transfer agreement with Michigan Tech. The agreement will transfer two years of NTC credits toward a Michigan Tech degree, allowing students to finish a bachelor's degree with an additional 2.5 years. One benefit from this transfer

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Civil Engineering Advisory Committee

19th November 2024 | 3:30pm to 5:00pm | F107 STEM Center/Zoom



agreement is cost savings to students, as they will receive in-state tuition when they transfer to Michigan Tech. NTC is also working on an articulation agreement with UW-River Falls, UW-Stout, and UW-Plattville.

Curriculum Modifications

The program has no curriculum modifications at this time.

Program and Curriculum Discussion

- **Outreach Efforts** - Heidi and Michael have been promoting this program in area schools, including creating a new PowerPoint which was presented to high school counselors. Our video production students are creating a promotional video for our website, which will be shared with the committee once available. Program banners are also being developed. An event was held at DC Everest, as that high school runs engineering class in conjunction with Engineering Tomorrow. A promotional flyer was developed using a QR code for individuals to access more specific program information.
- **Workshop Development** – Tom Rodemier is developing classroom workshops for area middle and high school areas. These workshops also allow rural school to see what engineering programs offer without traveling to NTC. We started using these workshops in October and they are being well received. Tom Rodemeier has created specific and creative activities promoting engineering.
- **Engineering Tomorrow** - Heidi shared information on the Engineering Tomorrow labs which are held here at NTC. Civil Engineering labs are being developed for inclusion on the list of labs for area high school students. We would like to develop a virtual lab as well as a hands-on lab for Engineering Tomorrow. Heidi asked if any of the committee members would like to help develop a lab, to contact Michael. Michael asked members to look at the website located at EnginneringTomorrow.org and send him any ideas they may have for a new lab.
- **High School Student Engagement** - A discussion was held on how to engage more students in the program, particularly those from smaller schools, and it was suggested to reach out to these schools for potential partnerships. The suggestion was made to have high school students work with NTC students, which could help students identify with the program. It was proposed to create a mentorship program where students could interact with professionals during classroom sessions or through mini-projects. The idea of a "coffee with the pros" or "coffee with engineers" was also discussed, where students could have informal discussions with professionals. Heidi mentioned a potential collaboration with Theron Peterson, Wausau West High School Instructor, as a possible opportunity to spread information about Civil Engineering. Members were encouraged to reach out to Theron directly for potential opportunities. Heidi also mentioned that the new principal at Newman School seemed more open to promoting this program. Committee members could have a follow-up meeting at the April Advisory Meeting to discuss program-specific feedback from committee members.
- **Program Student Engagement** - It was proposed to create a mentorship program where students could interact with professionals during classroom sessions or through mini-projects. The idea of a "coffee with the pros" or "coffee with engineers" was also discussed, where students could have informal

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Civil Engineering Advisory Committee

19th November 2024 | 3:30pm to 5:00pm | F107 STEM Center/Zoom



discussions with professionals. Information was shared on the recent NTC Career Fair, and it was suggested that a program-focused career fair for Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing students might be beneficial. Heidi shared details on recruitment, including NTC's Preview Day event and the Build My Future event. There was a discussion of the importance of having graduates complete the graduate feedback surveys that are sent to them after graduation. Heidi also mentioned the possibility of students being more involved in the Career Fair, perhaps through student presentations.

- **Course Review** - Michael Kowal provided an overview of the courses offered in their program, including Autocad, Introduction to Civil Engineering, and Survey and Mapping. He emphasized the importance of hands-on learning and real-world experience for their students. Toward the end, he encouraged questions and feedback from the attendees.
- **Adjunct Instructors** - Heidi discussed the need for adjunct instructors and the current hiring atmosphere. Anyone interested, should contact Heidi directly.

AI and the Workplace

A discussion revolved around the use of AI in various aspects of life, including education and the workforce. Committee members agreed that there are several benefits to the use of AI, such as efficiency and accuracy, but also expressed concerns about its reliability and the need for fact-checking. The importance of teaching students to critically evaluate the information provided by AI and to provide references for their answers was emphasized. The conversation also touched on the generational differences in the workforce, with the participants noting the expectations for new hires are expected to have increased knowledge of new technologies.

Industry Discussions

Current hiring challenges and the competitive nature of the job market were discussed, noting an increase in local candidates for job openings. Members shared workloads are consistent and several companies have employment opportunities. State positions have a hard time competing with industry regarding salaries but recently have had a large number of applicants. Some members noticed a slight slowdown in projects, but anticipate an increase for next year.

The construction industry has been having a longer season, so employee burnout has not been as significant as in the last two years, but finding suitable candidates is still a challenge. Stress and burnout were issues in previous years.

It was mentioned that younger employees who have been through Covid react differently than older individuals to workplace situations. There was a discussion regarding employees under the age of 30 who seem to struggle with simple tasks. A member shared that it is taking approximately 18 months to train new individuals.

Update on WTPD Seminar

Information and fliers were provided regarding NTC's training opportunities, including the CDL Accelerated Program, Apprenticeships, Entrepreneurship Summit, AI Workshops, and many other leadership training

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Civil Engineering Advisory Committee

19th November 2024 | 3:30pm to 5:00pm | F107 STEM Center/Zoom



opportunities that are offered through our Workforce Training and Professional Development (WTPD) team.

Spring Advisory Summit

The committee was informed that the format for the spring advisory committee will change. All committee members will meet on the same day, April 16th. A flyer with specific information was shared. If any specific matters need to be addressed in the spring, a meeting can be arranged or electronic communication can be used.

Upcoming Events

Heidi discussed the upcoming Preview Day on March 11th and the STEM Fest on April 11th-12th, inviting the team to participate as exhibitors or sponsors. Heidi expressed interest in the team's feedback on career fairs and suggested a more focused approach for the fall, with each program having its event. She encouraged the team to reach out with any ideas or suggestions.

NTC College-Wide Updates

A PowerPoint with College-Wide Updates was shared with the Advisory Committee.

Next Meeting Details

The next meeting date will be Wednesday, April 16, 2025.

Contact Details –

Iain Cameron

Dean, School of Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing
cameron@ntc.edu

Ken Parker

Associate Dean, School of Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing
parker@ntc.edu

Stephanie Christensen

Advisory Committee Chair (Vice President-EMCS, Inc.)
schristensen@emcsinc.com

Michael Kowal

Faculty, Civil Engineering Technology
kowal@ntc.edu

Susan Clark

Administrative Assistant, School of Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing
clarks@ntc.edu

Heidi Latendresse

Learning Manager, School of Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing
latendresse@ntc.edu

Legal Studies/Paralegal Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: 11/21/2024

Time: 4:30 p.m. – 5:45p.m.

Location: Zoom

In Attendance					
Practicing Lawyers	Paralegal from Private Sector	Paralegals from Public Sector	General Public Members	Faculty	Administration
Kourtney Imig: Attorney; Winter, Winter & Behrens	Joann Mancl: Paralegal; Crooks, Low & Connell	Carmen Stone: Legal Advocate; Judicare Legal Aid		Tom Wendt	Dr. Brooke Schindler: Dean School of Business
Crystal Sargent: Attorney; Hougum Law Firm	Erin Radtke: Paralegal; County Materials				Dr. Jason Schenzel: Associate Dean, School of Business
					Jessica Katcher: Student Success Advisory
					Valerie Becker: Administrative Assistant, School of Business
Absent					
Practicing Lawyers	Paralegal from Private Sector	Paralegals from Public Sector	General Public Members	Faculty	Administration
Amanda Ley: Assistant Corporation Counsel; Marathon County	Angela Gonzalez: Paralegal; Ruder Ware	Nikki Pretzler: Judicare Legal Aid	Kari Schwingle: Professional Recruiter; Express Employment		
Kristin Slonski: Attorney; Judicare Legal Aid	Brittany Dishaw: (Heath) – Paralegal	Nicole Grawey			
	Jen Borchardt: Paralegal; Terwilliger Law Firm	Becky Schneider; Judicial Assistant; Marathon County- Branch 2			
Instructional Area/Program					

American Bar Association (ABA) Site Visit Updates

Tom Wendt: We addressed and resolved concerns from the ABA site visit last spring, securing official ABA approval in August for seven years with a mid-term review in 3–4 years. NTC is now one of seven ABA-approved programs in Wisconsin and will be listed on the Paralegal Association and Bar Association websites. Updates are being made to NTC's website, marketing materials, and social media to reflect the accreditation.

Program Updates

Tom Wendt: We have implemented live student meetings since the ABA visit to foster peer interaction. Rich Poirier, an attorney and former president of Church Mutual, has been hired as an adjunct faculty member for the Paralegal program starting in January. Tom attended the AAFPE national conference in Washington DC, which focused on AI in the legal field, which he described as the best conference he's attended. NTC also hosted its third on-site legal clinic. This fall we had an estate planning clinic in collaboration with Judicare, which included 6 students, 7 attorneys, and Judicare staff to assist 12 clients, draft over 50 documents, and provide hands-on learning while strengthening community ties.

NTC Library Resources

Tom Wendt: NTC's library primarily operates as a virtual resource but also includes a small law section for traditional use. Most materials are accessible online, with Nexis Uni serving as a key research tool available to all students and faculty. Tom has collaborated with library staff to develop writing assignments for the legal writing class, encouraging students to utilize library resources, including electronic books and periodicals.

Program Effectiveness:

Tom Wendt: There are 31 students currently enrolled in classes, with 9 of them being new this fall. To date, 11 students have graduated from the program, with 4–5 more expected in December. Law classes have been added to three other programs at NTC including Business Law in the Business Management program, Employment Law in the Human Resources program, and Hospitality Law & Regulations recently added to the Hospitality program.

Enrollment Update:

Jessica Katcher: Explained that the transition to Workday has impacted enrollment tracking. We currently have 99 students listed as active in the Paralegal program, though many take breaks but remain enrolled. As an advisor, Jessica works on building relationships with new students and connecting them with Tom to improve retention. She noted 5 new students matriculated for spring.

Industry Discussion

Industry Trends

Erin Radke: Highlighted the use of AI tools like ChatGPT for drafting legal documents, noting that significant modifications are often required. Discussions involving AI have surfaced in relation to litigation. She has also noticed an increase in hiring legal secretaries and legal assistants and has also seen general counsel leaving for remote roles.

Carmen Stone: Stressed caution when using AI, ensuring no client data is input, but acknowledged its usefulness for rewording professional documents. They just launched a new requirement for multifactor authentication due to malpractice insurance compliance. She also noted irregularities in waiving filing fees among the different courts throughout Wisconsin specifically for statutory court forms.

Crystal Sargent: Suggested incorporating bookkeeping skills into the curriculum, such as ledgers, capital gains/losses, and accounting software like QuickBooks. She noted that her firm is growing and looking for skilled paralegals and customer service representatives. She also mentioned the growing demand for remote work among younger hires and emphasized the need for law firms to adapt.

- **Thomas Wendt:** Recognized the importance of preparing students for remote work and suggested integrating related skills into courses. Tom also proposed exploring short courses on specialized topics, including accounting software, and discussed using AI to simplify client communication.

College-Wide Updates

Jason Schenzel: Reviewed the Fall 2024 College-wide initiatives presentation with the committee highlighting new programs, NTC's new Health Mobile Lab, Community Safety Simulation Center, and the University Transfer program at NTC. The presentation also highlighted courses offered through NTC's Workforce Training and Development division, student support resources, and Handshake, which connects students with employers. Additionally, he announced the Save the Dates for NTC's Mind Trekkers on April 11th & 12th, and the Spring 2025 Advisory Committee Summit.

Next meeting schedule & agenda items discussion

The next meeting will NTC's college-wide Advisory Committee Summit: Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 7:30am-11:30am

IT Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: 12/5/2024

Time: 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Attendees

Industry Members

- Matt Hall – Greenheck; Sr. Application Developer
- Eric Buhrow – Skyward; Technical Consulting Team Manager
- Jacob Hale - Dirks Group; Chief Operating Officer
- Matt Hildebrandt - StrataDefense; President & CEO

NTC Team

- Dr. Jason Schenzel – Dean of Academic Technology
- Clay Hess – Faculty, IT
- Dominic Gruetzmacher – Faculty, IT
- Ken Hallas – Faculty, IT
- JJ Minarcin – Faculty, IT
- Josh Kretschmar – Faculty, IT
- Josh Stutting – Faculty, IT
- Zach Thunder - Faculty, IT
- Scott Biscobing – Faculty, IT
- Jake Seever – School of Learning Technologies; Learning Coordinator
- Valerie Becker – School of Learning Technologies; Administrative Assistant
- Bill Schulz - Student Success Advisor

Instruction Area/Program(s)

Gray DI Software:

- **Dr. Jason Schenzel:** NTC is using a new software tool called Gray Di for decision intelligence, which is helping us understand the cost of programs and the need in the local industry. He mentioned that the college is looking to maximize its offerings and bring down the cost per person.

Web Designer Program Updates:

- **Jason Schenzel:** There have been discussions regarding interdisciplinary options for this program such as collaborating with the Graphics, Video Production, or Digital Marketing programs.
- **Clay Hess:** Is interested in feedback from the committee on how they are handling web design and development.

Data Analytics Program Updates:

- **Jason Schenzel:** Discussed the addition of four new AI courses to several of the IT programs. The addition of these AI courses aligns with the AI initiatives at NTC and all these new AI classes will fall under the Data Analytics 156 category although they can be used within other IT programs. These courses taken collectively will also form an embedded technical diploma called the Foundations of AI. We will likely end up tailoring these courses to individual programs, but we want to start with some courses that are cross functional. Our Institutional Research Department also sent out a survey regarding these new courses to advisory committee members.
 - AI Fundamentals Course 1 credit: Introduces the fundamental concepts and history of artificial intelligence (AI), including machine learning, neural networks, large language models and natural language processing. Students will explore AI technologies, review their development over time, and study their impact on society. This foundation will provide students with the necessary framework to understand and work with AI in future courses and professional settings.
 - Business Applications of AI Course 1 credit: Explores the use of AI in modern business environments, focusing on practical applications such as predictive analytics, customer relationship management, and automation. Students will analyze real-world case studies, assess the benefits and challenges of integrating AI into business operations, and explore AI-powered business tools and platforms.
 - Ethics of AI Course 1 credit: Examines the ethical, legal, and societal implications of artificial intelligence (AI). Students will explore issues such as bias in algorithms, data privacy, and the broader impact of AI on employment and social structures and will utilize frameworks for ethical AI development and deployment, emphasizing responsible data-driven decision making.

- **Foundations of Data Engineering Course (3 credits):** This course provides a comprehensive introduction to data engineering principles and foundational cloud computing for data. Students will learn to build and maintain scalable data pipelines, process and store large datasets, and implement cloud-based solutions for secure and efficient data management. With a focus on real-world applications, this course explores data ingestion, transformation, and storage strategies using AWS tools. By combining essential cloud computing skills with data engineering techniques, students will develop the expertise needed to support analytics, machine learning, and business intelligence workflows across diverse environments.

Networking Specialist Program Updates:

- **Josh Kretzschmar:** Josh provided updates on a new course he is creating that was mentioned during the last meeting, *Cloud Networking and Security Essentials*, designed to fill a gap in the networking program by introducing cloud fundamentals, including architecture, security protocols, and access management. Using AWS Academy materials, the course aims to make the program more accessible by offering remote learning options, as it's currently not fully online. Plans also include revising the Capstone course for remote access and integrating AWS as a prerequisite for the cloud course.
- **Jason Schenzel:** Jason mentioned that AWS Academy is free, so we have a lot of options to incorporate aspects of AWS into our courses.
- **Ken Hallas:** VMware has been acquired by Broadcom, which no longer offers educational licensing. This change would cost \$9,000 for the NetLabs environment, prompting the need to find a more affordable solution for managing virtual servers. VMware will remain in use until the current licensing expires next semester. One potential alternative is ProxBox, though it hasn't been explored yet. He noted that the EVS class will undergo some changes to ensure students have access to current industry tools that are also cost-effective. Updates on the approach will be shared at the next meeting.
- **Matt Hildebrandt:** With changes with Broadcom, they are no longer customer friendly. Proxbox does not have a lot of professional support, either, and he does not personally see a lot of HyperV clients.
- **Scott Biscobing:** Noted that the Windows Server class does have a module on HyperV.

Computer Support Specialist Program Updates:

- **Jason Schenzel:** We have an opportunity to work with a Digital Divide grant partnered with our Workforce Training and Professional Development division at NTC to bring refurbishing of computers to the college using our students to help with this. We are still discussing what we can commit to for this as there is not a place in the program as it would be a challenge to incorporate this for our remote students; therefore, this may be a service that our Computer Club provides as a service to the community.
- **Josh Stutting:** We are trying to incorporate as much generative AI training on a daily basis so that grads are ready to help support end users who will undoubtedly have questions about AI.

Software Developer Program Updates:

- **Dominic Gruetzmacher:** As he is developing the three new AI courses that Jason mentioned, he welcomes feedback from committee members on what they feel is relevant to have in the classes from an industry perspective.

Program Modifications:

10-150-3 Software Developer Associate's Degree – Jason Schenzel: Add 1 credit of *AI Fundamentals* to this program for a total of 66 credits, which will still need internal provost approval.

- The committee members approved this change.

10-152-3 Computer Support Specialist Associate's Degree – Jason Schenzel: Remove 3 credits of *Office Level 3 (10-103-245)* as levels 1 & 2 give a sound foundation of Microsoft Office for students. This would allow us to add 1 credit from *AI Fundamentals*, 1 credit from *Business Applications or AI*, and 1 credit from *Ethics of AI*.

- The committee members approved these changes

10-156-3 Data Analytics Associate's Degree - JJ Minarcin: Remove 3 credits of *Modeling and Machine Learning (10-156-106)* as this course is currently very code-based on researching Python and writing script in Python while students follow along with their textbook and right now, AI is doing these coding exercises more efficiently. By replacing this with the 3-

credit *Foundations of Data Engineering* course it will allow us to focus more on the data engineering aspect which aligns better with job placement for students on the 2-year track. We will also remove 3-credits from *Optimization and Simulation 1* (10-156-110), *2* (10-156-112), and *3* (10-156-116) as these courses are more managerial and do not align with what students' need from their 2-year degree. These three credits will be replaced with 1 credit of *AI Fundamentals*, 1 credit of *Business Applications of AI*, and 1 credit of *Ethics of AI*.

- The committee members approved these changes.

31-156- Foundations of AI Technical Diploma – Jason Schenzel: The four new courses: *AI Fundamentals*, *Business Applications of AI*, *Ethics of AI*, and *Foundations of Data Engineering Course* will be able to be taken collectively to earn a Foundations of AI technical diploma, which is will also be embedded in the Data Analytics associates degree.

- The committee members approved these changes.

Course	Data Analytics	Computer Support	Software Developer
AI Fundamentals	X	X	X
Business Applications of AI	X	X	
Ethics of AI	X	X	
Foundations of Data Engineering	X		

Enrollment Updates:

Jason Schenzel: Shared and discussed the below enrollment numbers with the committee.

Year-end Information				Point-in-time Comparison	
Row Labels	2022	2023	2024	Fall 23-24	Fall 24-25
101502 IT Network Specialist					
FTEs	13.7	14.8	13.5	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	35	31	32	24	16
101512 IT - Cybersecurity Specialist					
FTEs	33.2	47.3	54.4	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	73	102	114	96	88
101521 IT-Software Developer					
FTEs	21.3	24.0	34.3	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	57	60	84	71	69
101526 IT Web Designer					
FTEs	1.4	2.2	3.8	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	4	6	12	11	7
101543 IT Computer Support Specialist					
FTEs	31.1	37.9	36.5	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	76	80	80	68	57
301504 IT-Network Technician					
FTEs	1.4	2.0	2.2	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	5	7	9	6	8
301525 IT-Software Development Specialist					
FTEs	1.8	2.1	1.7	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	9	12	11	6	8
301527 IT -Junior Developer					
FTEs	31.6	27.2	6.9	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	99	84	25	24	12
301528 IT - Web Design Specialist					
FTEs	0.8	0.5	0.3	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	5	5	2	1	1
311546 IT-Computer Support Technician					
FTEs	5.2	3.5	5.2	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount	12	9	12	10	11
311547 IT - Help Desk Support Specialist					
FTEs		0.6	1.6	Not Available	Not Available
Unduplicated Headcount		2	6	1	6

Industry Discussion

Remote Work Trends

Jason Schenzel: Asked if organizations still allow remote work and whether students should be taught remote work tools like Teams or Zoom to prepare for the field.

Eric Buhrow: Strongly supports remote work; most developers are fully remote at Skyward, while IT staff come in for onsite server-related tasks. Emphasized the importance of using Teams for collaboration, regardless of work location as students will likely need to meet with clients who are remote or located elsewhere. He also mentioned a current hiring freeze at Skyward but anticipates a rise in job postings soon.

Jacob Hale: Allows remote work but not daily due to client-facing needs.

Matt Hildebrandt: Operates in a hybrid model since before COVID-19, with most work now being remote.

Matt Hall: General office work allows remote flexibility, but IT, including the help desk, is fully remote.

AI Adoption and Industry Tools

Jacob Hale: They are developing their own AI tools for reporting and collaborating with Amazon on these initiatives. He has observed increased spending on cloud migrations, 365 upgrades, and infrastructure updates, particularly in manufacturing.

Matt Hall: Shared updates on Microsoft 365 migrations and automation projects. Mentioned Greenheck's cautious exploration of AI tools like Copilot and the need for corporate policies on AI use.

Eric Buhrow: Security around AI is an emerging topic in companies. Skyward developers use a restricted version of Copilot, reflecting a broader shift toward AI development and API consumption over traditional web development.

Matt Hildebrandt: Highlighted the importance of staying ahead with 365 migrations, given the upcoming "doomsday" in October.

Curriculum Gaps and Changes

Jacob Hale: Stressed that students need stronger foundational skills in subnetting, as many may be relying on Google during class but fail to retain knowledge for industry use.

Matt Hildebrandt: Supports curriculum changes to address gaps, particularly in subnetting, which requires additional training in the field. Acknowledged the solid foundation provided by NTC but noted the need for continual learning in industry.

Eric Buhrow: Supports curriculum changes and stressed the growing importance of API development as companies move away from traditional web development.

Josh Kretzschmar: Networking classes do currently emphasize subnetting, and it is also covered in the Capstone course.

Next meeting schedule & agenda items discussion

The next meeting will be NTC's college-wide Advisory Committee Summit on Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 7:30am-11:30am

2024 Fall Radiography Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: December 05, 2024;

Time: 1:30 pm-3:00 pm

Location: 4011 & Zoom

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://ntc.zoom.us/j/81744009853>

Attendees

Industry Members:

- Valerie Alft- Supervisor, Aspirus Merrill Hospital
- Dana Buttke- Clinical Instructor, Marshfield Clinic Marshfield (NTC Adjunct)
- Jessie Denny-Mabie- Staff Technologist, Aspirus Medford Hospital (NTC Adjunct)
- Kelly Kremer- Radiology Supervisor, Aspirus ZOOM
- Becky Nichols- Manager Imaging Services, Aspirus Medford Hospital ZOOM
- Tracy Rekowski- Supervisor, Diagnostic Imaging, Aspirus ZOOM
- Marlene Roberts- Education Division Administrator, MCHS ZOOM
- Staci Zdroik- Radiology Team Lead, Aspirus Stevens Point ZOOM

NTC Team:

- Laura Ahonen- Associate Dean, Allied Health and Human Services
- Chelsey Kleinschmidt- Learning Coordinator, Health Sciences and Community Services
- Jordyn Olson- Student Success Advisor
- Amber Schuck- Program Director, Radiography
- Sandie Shorey – Administrative Assistant, Health Sciences & Academic Excellence
- Amy Stephens- Faculty, Radiography

Students:

- Brooke Nenahlo, NTC, Radiography Student
- Marissa Pontzloff, NTC, Radiography Student

Welcome Introductions

Meeting called to order by Amber Schuck, Radiography Program Director, at 01:32pm. Amber welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Update and Highlights from Last Meeting

Laura Ahonen, Associate Dean of Allied Health and Human Services, called for any changes to the minutes from the spring meeting (06.06.24). There were no changes made to the minutes from the spring meeting.

College-Wide Initiatives

A Power Point of College-Wide Initiatives was reviewed by Laura Ahonen, Associate Dean of Allied Health and Human Services. Laura discussed 2 new programs that started at NTC this fall: Respiratory Therapy (admitted 13 students this fall) and Funeral Services (offered in partnership with MATC). Laura also shared an update on the Health Mobile Lab, and the Spring STEM Fest set to take place in April 2025. Additionally, she discussed University Transfer – Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees at NTC, which are intended to serve students with the intention of transferring to a four-year college or university.

Students start at NTC and, after 2 years, have 100% guaranteed transfer (after 2 years) to a four-year college or university. Laura also spoke to the group about the Community Safety Simulation Center, a stop the threat initiative that is a partnership with Pennsylvania School Safety Institute-PennSSI (sponsored by Church Mutual) set to open in Summer 2025, in addition to reviewing Student Support resources available, including Health Services via Telehealth.

Workforce Training and Professional Development

Laura also gave an update on happenings in Workforce Training in Professional Development. Flyers will be sent out with the meeting minutes on the current community offerings in this area of NTC.

To access this information, please visit [www. ntc.edu](http://www.ntc.edu), select “Workforce Training & Professional Development” from the top of the page. Flyers will be included in post meeting e-mail.

Student Support

These resources are available to our students


- Access to free mental health services through **TimelyCare** (Timelycare.com/ntc)
- **Academic Advisors** can help students with planning their academic progress and referral to needed resources.
- Non-academic student needs can be addressed through our **Student Resource Coordinator**.
- **Timberwolf Table**, NTC's food pantry for students
- **Timberwolf Learning Commons**, with library, tutors and coaches available
- **Student Scholarships**
- **Student Life** offers a number of programs, both in-person and remote, to allow students to meet each other, get involved, relax, and have fun.

Handshake

NTC uses Handshake to connect students with employers

- Handshake is a leading career network for college students and recent graduates.
- Connects students with employers offering internships, part-time, and full-time job opportunities.
 - Access to Diverse Talent Pool:
 - Streamlined Recruiting Process:
 - Analytics and Reporting:
- How to Get Started
 - **Step 1:** Create an account on Handshake.
 - **Step 2:** Complete your employer profile.
 - **Step 3:** Post jobs and start connecting with students.

For more information contact Ben Bliese at bliese@ntc.edu



Spring 2025 Advisory Committee Summit

This spring NTC is hosting an exciting opportunity for advisory committee members to gather together from throughout the college for a Summit. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

- *April 16th. 2025; 7:30am-11:30am*
 - Networking & Breakfast
 - Learning at NTC- Followed by Choice of 3 Tour Options

Industry Trends

- New CT scanners at Aspirus St Michaels Hospital
 - More PET scans to the schedule
 - Need RT Assistants, but no current openings for Radiography Techs
 - Travelers continue to decrease-could be done with these contracts soon
- New Equipment
 - Aspirus St Michaels is going live with their new CT scanners
 - New DR System and portable at Aspirus Medford
 - Reducing travelers and hiring more x-ray techs across the region
 - Aspirus Inc is investing \$40 million in Aspirus Merrill Hospital, with a good chunk going to Rad areas
 - CT scanner
 - New x-ray rooms
 - C-Arm
 - Mammography
 - Maybe bone density
- Job Postings
 - Various openings throughout the region, with NTC students actively applying for these openings
- Student Progress
 - Positive student feedback
 - Grads are doing very well
 - Will open up positions once graduation nears

Program Updates

Faculty shared the following Program Updates:

- Enrollment Report
 - 51 Students (1st and 2nd year combined)
 - More Clinical Preceptors added due to the number of students
 - Survey was put in Canvas Course shell
 - 19-20 responses thus far (Please respond if you haven't already!)
 - Scheduling for clinicals is challenging at times with this number of students
 - Most clinical sites are full to capacity
 - Trying to go more digital regarding access to schedules, etc.
- Program Information
- Program Recruitment/K-12 Events
 - K-12 Preview Day
 - Oct 29, 2024
 - Over 700 Students and guests
 - Mostly high school students
 - Community Open Houses
 - Nov 06, 2024 was the fall open house
 - Please help spread the word on these and help direct community members to attend these!
- Program Modifications Discussion
 - New for Fall 2025!
 - Admissions Process will be changing:

- Priority for all students will be:
 - 70 or higher on HESI
 - In-district
 - Wait list is based on priority (new for Fall 2025)

Program Modifications

Shared Program Update (MSTC)

- Current admissions requirements:
 - Apply and be accepted to NTC
 - Declare a major (Radiography)
 - Must be 18 or older prior to September 15 (this is due to Radiation Protection in the state of WI) and have a clean criminal background check.
 - Take Pre-Declaration Radiography course
 - Take HESI exam in spring (must score 70% or better to be considered)
- Admissions Priority
 - 30 student cohort capacity
 - In-district and earliest declaration dates taken first.
- 5 students reserved for MSTC students
- Class Representatives
 - Both students are at Aspirus Wausau
 - Double the rooms that used to be in the hospital
 - Clinicals M,W,F; Class T and Th; 2 Saturdays a semester
 - 1 has accepted a position; one has not yet applied

Facilities and Equipment

- Minor Equipment Purchases
 - Leg stabilizer
 - Sponges
 - Dosimeters to measure radiation
- Replace Fluoro room
 - ETA July-August 2025
 - Venders will “bid” on a private website just for this purpose in June
 - Phillips, GE, and Siemens
 - Bids are currently being solicited
 - Selection made by the college with input from Health Sciences Deans and Radiography faculty
- Important considerations (not in order)
 - Price
 - Service timeframes
 - Cost
 - Features & benefits
 - Long-term viability

Other

- ARRT Test Scores

average mean ARRT test score			
year	NTC Ave	Wis. Ave	National Ave
2015	90.4	86.8	83.7
2016	87.7	86.5	83.3
2017	87.7	86.5	83.6
2018	84.5	85.6	83.6
2019	84.7	84.6	83.4
2020	83.7	85.7	83.3
2021	85	85.5	82.3
2022	89	85.1	82.4
2023	84	84.4	82
2024	83	tba	tba

one failure in 2024

- * Our test scores are fairly steady
- * 24 students that took the exam this summer; the average was 84%
- * 1 failure on the boards this summer (only the 6th failure in 30 years)
- * the program is changing mock board test recommendations; if a student scores less than 75, the student redoes the mock test.

Program effectiveness data- ARRT pass rate WTCS radiography programs										
notes	Program	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 avg	last summer?	entrance exam? (HESI/TEAS)
Janesville, /summer start	Blackhawk TC		94	87	100	100	92		94.6	summer start yes
	Chippewa Valley TC	100	95	100	94	93	100		97	yes not sure
shared program with Lakeshore	Gateway TC									
Cleveland, wi above Sheboygan	Lakeshore TC		100	85	100	100	90		95	spring start no
ARRT course in summer only	Madison Area TC		100	100	100	71	100		94.2	yes no
clinic 6 in sum only	Milwaukee TC	100	95	100	100	100	100		99.16667	yes yes
Fond Du Lac (clinic 6 in sum only)	Moraine Park TC	100	69	83	70	83	91		82.66667	yes no
shared program with Lakeshore	Nicolet TC									
us	NTC	100	100	92.3	100	100	100	95.83	98.30429	yes yes
GreenBay (some 8 week courses)	Northeast W TC	100	78	100	100	92	100		95	no yes
Shared program with Milwaukee	Waukesha TC									
LaCrosse	Western TC	100	92	94	86	100	100		95.33333	no no

*indicates the pass rate (not the score) for all students in WTCS

- JCERT Program Goals

- Student will demonstrate professionalism
- Student will demonstrate communication skills
- Student will demonstrate critical thinking
- Student will demonstrate entry-level radiographer clinical competence
- Graduates will be satisfied, ARRT successful & meet the needs of employers and the **community** (consider dropping the word “community”)
 - Amber said there is no tool to measure meeting community needs and asked the Advisory Committee to consider dropping that word from the goal.
 - There are grad surveys but they are linked to the whole department and it is not specific to the students
 - Advisory Committee gave their support to drop the word “community” from this goal.

Note: NTC Radiography Program is well above our JRCERT recommended benchmarks.

- Student/Tech Assistant Scheduling

- Don't allow them to have hours at the same time since they (Tech Assistant) should not be interfering
- This is an issue when the Tech Assistant is not a student (can stock shelves or go to CT)
- Conflict of interest when the Rad student is a second-year student and they are scheduled at the same time as the student
- Our current students actually feel it is a positive to have the Tech Assistants there
- Amber discussed the fact that so much of the teaching really does happen at clinicals

Next Meeting

The date for the 2025 spring meeting is Wednesday, April 16, 2025 from 7:30am-11:30am. Meeting adjourned at 2:31pm.

Save the date!

SPRING 2025 ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUMMIT

APRIL 16, 2025 | 7:30 AM - 11:30 AM

You're invited to spend the morning with us at NTC's Wausau Campus, where you can connect with fellow advisory committee members and stay informed on the latest updates at NTC.

EVENT OUTLINE:


Networking + Breakfast

Welcome from NTC President

Learning at NTC

Tours of College (Choose One of Three Options)

Please note that for most program areas this event will replace the spring advisory committee meeting.

A collage of three images. The left image shows a computer monitor displaying a website with the text 'NTC' and 'Wausau'. The middle image shows a robotic arm in a manufacturing setting with the text 'Industry 4.0 Smart Manufacturing Lab'. The right image shows a person interacting with a large digital display.

University Transfer (UT) Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, December 6, 2024

Time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Location: E101 & E102

Attendees

Industry Members:

- Abby Behnke, 7-12 Counselor, Bowler School District
- Brooke Davis, School Counselor, DCE School District
- Carol Pond, Grants & Outcomes Director, Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area
- Cathy Gauger, Career Center Coordinator, Wausau School District
- Chrisie Wright, Counselor, Colby School District
- Gina Struble, School Counselor, Mosinee School District
- Heather Gallenberg, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Heidi Schmidt, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Jason Beal, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Jennifer Aune, School Counselor, Marathon School District
- Jennifer Rauscher, Executive Director, Intelligent Future Foundation
- Jessica Mehl, Student Development Director, Faith Christian Academy
- Joe Kelter, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Josh Zalewski, CTE Coordinator, FAB Lab Director, Merrill School District
- Kathleen Alexander, Principal, Medford School District
- Katie Gilles, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Kay Pickar, Career Center Coordinator, Wausau School District
- Kaylee Olund, High School Counselor, Edgar School District
- KC Alft, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Kristine Federwitz, District STC Coordinator, Edgar School District
- Lori Huther, School Counselor, Abbotsford School District
- Maiya McSorley, K-12 School Counselor, Loyal School District
- Michelle Murkowski, Business Education Teacher/YA Coordinator, Athens School District
- Michelle Rhodes, MS/HS School Counselor, Rib Lake School District
- Nick Boulanger, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Nicole Kloth-den Otter, F/CE Educator & YA/STW Coordinator, Abbotsford School District
- Nicole Melander, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Olivia Dreger, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Roxie Brecke, Counselor, DC Everest School District
- Ryan Winkler, Business Education/School to Career, Marathon School District
- Ryan Winkler, School to Career Coordinator/Business Education, Marathon School District
- Sarah Baltus, School Counselor, Stratford School District
- Stephanie Gruber, School Counselor, Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District
- Taryn Fuller, YA Coordinator, Wausau School District
- Taylor Wilkowski, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Teresa Pederson, School Counselor, DCE School District
- Teri Sether, School Counselor, Wausau School District
- Tina Vannatter, JAG Career Specialist, Wausau School District
- Valerie Brooks, CTEC, CESA 8 and 9

NTC Team:

- Brooke Schindler, Dean, School of General Studies
- Dan McRoberts, Faculty, Communication
- Hannah Lee, Administrative Assistant, School of General Studies
- Julia Barwick, Specialist, Student Services & K12
- Libby Heidmann, Adjunct Faculty, Advising Supervisor
- Sara Bartelt, Associate Dean, School of General Studies
- Sarah Watson, Faculty, Social Sciences/ Economics
- Tracy Ravn, Director, K-12 Relations
- Tricia Smith, Faculty, Communication
- Veronica Hope, Faculty, Welding

Welcome & Introductions

The Liberal Arts Transfer Advisory Committee was welcomed, followed by introductions of NTC team.

Update and highlights from last Meeting (Fall 2023)

The previous meeting minutes were reviewed from [December 1, 2023](#).

College-Wide Initiatives

The [NTC Fall 2024 presentation](#) was reviewed individually.

Instructional Area/Program

A. Program Overview

Brooke and Sara provided an overview of the [University Transfer program](#), which offers a seamless pathway to transferring to a four-year college or university. These programs are designed to meet general education requirements across various disciplines while ensuring transfer eligibility to partner institutions. They also emphasize the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

Sara shared an update on enrollment, with 31 students in the Associate of Arts (AA) program and 35 in the Associate of Science (AS) program. She highlighted the three courses with the highest enrollment: Metal Fabrication in Art, Social Problems, and Tolerance and Inhumanity. Additionally, she noted that 14 new courses are currently available.

1. Updates on New Agreements

Tricia provided an update on current transfer agreements with institutions such as UW-Stevens Point, Green Bay, Oshkosh, and La Crosse, noting that students work with Academic Advisor Xang Lee to ensure they select courses that will successfully transfer. She explained that high school students who have taken dual credit or Start College Now classes may already have a significant number of credits and can use these agreements to better plan their academic pathways. This fall, the WTCS approved new transfer guidelines aimed at strengthening partnerships with four-year colleges, supporting the development of guided pathway programs. These programs align electives with general education courses, enabling students to enter a four-year college at the junior level while earning their AA or AS degree. NTC currently has a pathway with the Milwaukee School of Engineering for the technical and business management degree, and Tricia and Dan are working to establish pathways with UW-Madison Online and UW-Stout.

Dan addressed a common question about the courses offered in the Liberal Arts program, sharing a list of available options, including Creative Writing, Intro to Literature, Intro to Philosophy, Principles of Sustainability, Comparative Politics, Native American History, Metal Fabrication in Art, and Intro to Children's Literature. He noted that this not a full list, as additional courses are currently in development.

Advisory members inquired whether the NTC website lists current course offerings for the Liberal Arts program. Sara clarified that the site is in the process of being updated to include this information. Another member asked how students should choose which program to apply for, given that other

associate degree programs also have transfer agreements with four-year colleges. Tricia explained that the choice depends on the student's goals, noting that those seeking a more specialized program might benefit from enrolling directly in that program rather than pursuing a Liberal Arts degree.

An NTC graduate shared her experience while pursuing her bachelor's degree, emphasizing that students can continue taking courses at NTC and transfer them to a four-year institution, offering significant cost savings and time efficiency. She also highlighted that earning an associate degree doesn't end the connection with NTC, as many general education courses remain available and transferable.

B. Liberal Arts Faculty Presentation

1. Children's Literature – Tricia shared details about her [Children's Literature](#) course, which began last spring and aims to reconnect students with past literature while exploring new literary themes. The course provides a safe environment for students, particularly reluctant readers, to engage with familiar books like picture books and fairy tales, while also exploring the historical evolution of children's literature, from oral storytelling traditions to the pairing of text and art in picture books. A unique feature of the class is the integration of art through platforms like Canva, where students create their own work alongside reading and writing papers on topics like literacy, diversity, and ideology. The course also delves into nonfiction and factual fiction, genres that tend to engage reluctant readers more effectively, and includes the study of graphic novels and contemporary realistic books to re-engage students with reading at higher levels. Students even work with ChatGPT to "fracture" fairy tales, reimagining them in contemporary or science fiction settings. Another key component is the portfolio students develop throughout the course, where they collect works from various genres and share their discoveries with the class, fostering a sense of community around literacy. Students are encouraged to share their learning with others, such as children or future classrooms, prompting deep reflection on how literature shapes literacy and learning, both past and present.
2. Native American History – Libby introduced a new course she developed, [Native American History](#), offered for the first time this fall semester. The course spans a broad timeline from the pre-Columbian era to the present, focusing on the continental United States (excluding Hawaii and Alaska for simplicity). Students engage with the material through written discussions, short essays, multiple-choice quizzes, mapping exercises, and Padlet posts, which include both individual and group tasks like creating timelines and reflecting on their learning. A significant component of the course is a research project, where students select, narrow down, and research a topic, create an annotated bibliography, and write a reflection paper. The course supplements the textbook with academic articles and videos, often integrating Wisconsin-related content to highlight local Native American tribes. Although guest speakers are not possible for the online format, Libby incorporates resources that allow Native people to share their stories directly. A key element of the course is encouraging students to reflect on who has been telling Native American history and whose perspectives are missing. Through assignments like Padlet posts, students engage with each other and reflect on new knowledge, aiming for a deeper, more accurate understanding of Native American history.

3. Comparative Politics – Sarah provided an overview of a new Liberal Arts course, [Comparative Politics](#), which compares political systems across regions such as Asia, the Americas, and Europe, using case studies to illustrate these systems. The course is structured into eight modules, covering topics like democracy, political culture, and the influence of factors such as ethnicity and social actions on government. Assessments include quizzes, Padlet discussions where students explore current news related to the countries studied, film reflections, and a final project titled "Conversations with Power." In this project, students use ChatGPT to simulate conversations with political leaders, asking questions, fact-checking responses, and critiquing them. Sarah encourages students to take the class to deepen their understanding of global politics and their own political systems, while also fostering success skills like integrity, embracing diversity, and critical thinking.
4. Metal Fabrication in Arts – Veronica shared insights on the [Metal Fabrication in Arts](#) course, which is designed for students with little to no prior experience in metal fabrication. The hands-on course combines technical skills, such as using saws, lasers, and rollers, with artistic elements of metalwork. Early on, students are asked to bring an image that resonates with them, helping them connect their art with their creations. At the end of the semester, students revisit these images to evaluate how their designs align with their original inspirations. Veronica introduced a starter project that encourages collaboration and helps students gain confidence by using various machines and learning processes like welding and shaping. She also encourages students to consider the aesthetic aspects of their work, such as pattern repetition, light and shadow, and texture, as demonstrated in student projects like fire pits, tables, and moving sculptures. Veronica emphasized that no prior welding experience is needed, and she takes great joy in seeing her students discover their own artistic abilities in metalwork.

C. Industry Trends

Brooke asked advisory members to share their feedback on the following questions:

1. For what reasons are your students choosing NTC's University Transfer Program?
Advisory members shared students are choosing NTC's University Transfer Program for several key reasons. Many appreciate its cost-effectiveness, particularly when paired with dual credit opportunities, as it allows them to save money on tuition and housing. The program's location close to home is another major factor, offering convenience and the ability to stay near family while pursuing a degree. For some, the familiarity with NTC from high school experiences and career coach interactions makes it a comfortable choice. Others value the program's flexibility, with options for online and in-person classes, and its ability to help them explore their interests while keeping future options open.
2. For what reasons are your students hesitating to choose NTC's University Transfer program over going directly to four-year universities? How can we help address these?
Advisory members shared several reasons why students hesitate to choose NTC's UT program over four-year universities. A common concern is uncertainty around credit transfer, with students and advisors unsure about what will transfer or where to find clear information, despite tools like Transferology, which still have gaps in understanding or accessibility. The lack of a clear "university transfer" designation on applications further contributes to the confusion. Other factors include the appeal of traditional university experiences, such as dorm life, social opportunities, and the prestige of starting at

a four-year institution. Some students also prefer to avoid multiple transitions and are influenced by peers attending universities. Additionally, there is uncertainty about changes at NTC, limited knowledge of the UT program's benefits, and the perception that dual credit courses already transfer easily to four-year campuses. To address these concerns, improving communication about the program, clarifying the credit transfer process, and highlighting the unique advantages of NTC's UT program could help alleviate hesitation.

3. Are the specific resources (i.e., brochure, video, college partner information) that would make it easier for your students when comparing NTC's University Transfer program to similar 4-year universities? Advisory members suggested several resources to make it easier for students to compare NTC's UT program to similar 4-year universities. These include providing more information on credit transferability, the benefits of completing a degree without continuing, and a clearer explanation of the program's value. Suggested resources include brochures (both virtual and in-person), videos, and college partner information, along with cost breakdowns for NTC and partner universities like UWSP Wausau. Additionally, degree planning sheets, more user-friendly materials, and clearer website information on class offerings and program details would help. Emphasis on the "guaranteed" transfer and clearer communication around the "university transfer" name, along with tours, school visits, and videos, were also recommended. Overall, providing handouts, flyers, and a breakdown of how many credits transfer per specific programs would assist both students and advisors in making informed decisions.

Next meeting schedule & agenda items discussion

The next fall meeting will tentatively be held Friday, December 5, 2025.

Fall 2024 NTC Respiratory Therapy Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: December 11, 2024

Time: 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Location: Hybrid of In-person (room 4011) and Zoom

Link: <https://ntc.zoom.us/j/82370955526>

Attendees

Industry Members:

- Dana Decker- Northshore Health Services, VP ZOOM
- Kristy Hicks- Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital and Howard Young Medical Center- Woodruff, Interim Supervisor for the Northern Region ZOOM
- Dr. Kris Lahren- Aspirus Pulmonary & Critical Care, Physician
- Heidi Obry- Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Director, Cardiopulmonary Services
- Brian Otten- Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce, Marketing Director
- Alison Riedel- Marshfield Medical Center-Marshfield, Supervisor of Respiratory Therapy ZOOM
- Marlene Roberts- Marshfield Clinic Health System, Education Division Administrator ZOOM
- Mike Tracey- Aspirus Home Medical-Wausau, Director of Aspirus Home Medical Equipment
- Lynn Waldera- Aspirus Divine Savior-Portage, Director of Respiratory Therapy, ZOOM
- David Warren- Aspirus Medford Hospital, Manager of Cardiopulmonary Services ZOOM
- Cindy Williams- Marshfield Medical Center Weston, Lead Respiratory Therapist ZOOM

NTC Team:

- Stephanie Bessert- NTC, Associate Dean of Nursing
- Laura Litzer- NTC, Student Success Advisor
- Eric Nelson- NTC, Respiratory Therapy Program Director
- Ben Olson- NTC, Respiratory Therapy Director of Clinical Education & Faculty
- Angela Roesler- NTC, Dean of Health Sciences and Community Services
- Sandie Shorey- NTC, Administrative Assistant Health Sciences and Academic Excellence

Students:

- Diana Bryant, NTC Respiratory Therapy Student
- Madison Cerven, NTC Respiratory Therapy Student
- McKenna Meunier, NTC Respiratory Therapy Student

Welcome & Introductions

Stephanie Bessert, Associate Dean of Nursing, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and which industry partner they represent.

Update and Highlights from Spring 2024 Advisory Committee Meeting

Eric Nelson, Respiratory Therapy Program Director, reviewed updates and highlights from the Spring 2024 (02.13.24) RT Advisory Committee Meeting. Eric called for any changes to the 02.13.24 meeting minutes. No changes were recommended. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Eric Nelson and seconded by Ben Olson. Motion carried.

College-Wide Initiatives

A Power Point of College-Wide Initiatives was reviewed by Dr. Angela Roesler Dean of Health Sciences and Community Services. She discussed 2 new programs that started at NTC this fall: Respiratory Therapy (admitted 13 students this fall) and Funeral Services (offered in partnership with MATC). She also shared an update on the Health Mobile Lab and the Spring STEM Fest set to take place in April 2025. Additionally, Angela discussed University Transfer – Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees at NTC, which are intended to serve students with the intention of transferring to a four-year college or university. Students start at NTC and, after 2 years, have guaranteed transfer to a four-year college or university. Laura also spoke to the group about the Community Safety Simulation Center, a stop the threat initiative that is a partnership with Pennsylvania School Safety Institute-PennSSI (sponsored by Church Mutual), in addition to reviewing Student Support resources available, including Health Services via Telehealth.

Student Support

These resources are available to our students

- Access to free mental health services through **TimelyCare** (timelycare.com/ntc)
- **Academic Advisors** can help students with planning their academic progress and referral to needed resources.
- Non-academic student needs can be addressed through our **Student Resource Coordinator**.
- **Timberwolf Table**, NTC's food pantry for students
- **Timberwolf Learning Commons**, with library, tutors and coaches available
- **Student Scholarships**
- **Student Life** offers a number of programs, both in-person and remote, to allow students to meet each other, get involved, relax, and have fun.

****Please reach out to Program Director (Eric Nelson) or Associate Dean of Nursing (Stephanie Bessert) if you have a student at your clinical site that you feel needs assistance.***

****There will be some RT specific scholarships coming-watch for this, as this money is dedicated to this program1***

Handshake

NTC uses Handshake to connect students with employers

- Handshake is a leading career network for college students and recent graduates.
- Connects students with employers offering internships, part-time, and full-time job opportunities.
 - Access to Diverse Talent Pool:
 - Streamlined Recruiting Process:
 - Analytics and Reporting:
- How to Get Started
 - **Step 1:** Create an account on Handshake.
 - **Step 2:** Complete your employer profile.
 - **Step 3:** Post jobs and start connecting with students.

For more information contact Ben Bliese at bliese@ntc.edu



Workforce Training and Professional Development Initiatives

There was also an update given by Angela Roesler, Dean of Health Sciences and Community Services, on happenings in Workforce Training in Professional Development. Flyers will be sent out with the meeting minutes on the current community offerings in this area of NTC.

To access this information, please visit www.ntc.edu, select “Workforce Training & Professional Development” from the top of the page. Flyers will be included in post meeting e-mail.



To access this information, please visit www.ntc.edu, select “Workforce Training & Professional Development” from the top of the page. On this page you will see various trainings and services that NTC, Brad Gast, Dean of Workforce Training and Professional Development, and his division are offering. The page now is divided into continuing education courses, life enrichment and community courses, and there is a section on apprenticeship offerings. Brad and his team’s focus on bringing the community on to the NTC campus, especially those who either haven’t been on campus before or for those who it has been many years since their last visit. The flyers for current offerings are attached to the meeting minutes.

Program Updates

I. Program Updates

A. Enrollment Report

- i. Started with 13- 1 student withdrew from the program related to being overwhelmed with program courses and gen eds.
- ii. The wait list for fall currently has 23 students on it; some have their general education requirements done and some do not, as there are currently no pre requisites to enrolling in the program. Encouraging students to complete some general education courses like General Anatomy and Physiology prior to entering the program has proven successful. Not all on the waitlist may be ready to enter in the fall (without their pre-requisites completed).
- iii. Out of the 12 current students, 1 student recently stopped participating in RT classes and their gen ed courses.
- iv. Considering admission criteria, currently it’s open enrollment, may consider GAP as a prerequisite. All students on the waitlist are being encouraged to complete gen eds in the Spring 25 semester to be better prepared for program.

B. Program Information

- i. Curriculum Review
 - Positive feedback for the Fall 24 semester, students are doing well and engaged in the classes. Some minor updates are planned for the Spring 2025 semester. Continue to work with Academic Excellence, Medical Director, and faculty reviewers for feedback.
- ii. Accreditation Update
 - Received provisional accreditation on July 12th 2024.

- Currently tracking students and any required documentation for the next visit to become fully accredited.
- The next accreditation would be in 3-5 years we apply for continuing accreditation. This will need to include graduate and employer survey data. As well as pass rates for the TMC exam and CSE exam.
- To obtain continuing accreditation the program will go through another site visit process.

C. Program Recruitment/Events

- *Spring K-12 Event*
 - *Medford Oct 11th with HS students was more successful-interest is high*
- *Open House- November 6th*
 - *700 students came through-very successful!*

D. Technical Standards

- i. During orientation, the technical standards are reviewed with students. Any students that may not be able to meet the technical standards are referred to the Center for Access and Accommodations.*

II. Program Modifications Discussion- None at this time

III. Facilities/Equipment

Equipment has been a combination of donations and purchases. Received a Drager from Drager as a donation along with flow sensors and expiratory block. Aspirus donated a 980 to the program as well; both of these machines are up and running.

All of this equipment will prepare our students for clinicals and careers in industry. We are purchasing and training our students to equipment that they will see across our hospitals in the area.

The various trainers we will continue to purchase will add to the experience while using the equipment. The ABG trainers and airway trainers that we have at NTC also help our students in gaining the experience and practice with skills prior to doing these skills on actual patients.

Supplies are also being ordered and stocked as well as donated. These items are organized and will be adjusted by demand and experience after running through the courses.

A. Capital Equipment

i. Plan for grant purchases

We are in the process of purchasing a Hamilton G5 and will be looking ahead at purchasing a T1.

ii. Recent Purchases

We have purchased and received a Vest and Volera machines, with vests and circuits to get started with; can adjust the rate- more realistic.

The program has also obtained bronchial hygiene items. Glide scope- this helps to put artificial airways in. Has a very large screen, which is very helpful. We most recently received ABG training arms as well; those will be used right away in Spring semester.

iii. *Plan for grant purchases*-no update was given

B. Update on Equipment/trainers

- i. *Alex- simulator that the program has been using*
- ii. *Super Tory- infant manikin*
- iii. *Michigan Instruments Lung simulators*

We are still going to be purchasing some table top lung simulation items. We have also started planning and looking into what other simulators are available for us that would help give our students a very life like experience in the classroom.

C. Facilities

i. *RT Classroom*

In the RT classroom we have capabilities to show multiple items on the big screens in the front of the room. This could be as pictured from the Glidescope and a ventilator or side by side ventilators. It is just an HDMI plug to the wall. This is will be extremely helpful when explaining ventilator graphics, so everyone can see. This is also going to be helpful to show various anatomical landmarks for intubation for example. Alex (The simulator) was also pictured, we have been using to help with check offs and to get our students familiar with working around patients, as well as doing the same in the sim center. There are also beds in the room, which will be helpful for 2nd semester and beyond. The program also obtained some large storage cabinets.

ii. *New Equipment*

Pictures were displayed of the new equipment, the SAM4 lung sound simulator.

- *This piece was chosen because students can use their own stethoscopes on the sim manikin rather than having to have another device attached or the sims stethoscope to hear lungs sounds.*
- *Pictures were also shared of one of the new ABG arms. These we can control the pulse both in rate and pressure so students can practice radial and brachial arterial punctures.*
- *The last two pieces shown in the photos were The Vest and Volera machines. These are used in airway clearance therapies and are pieces of equipment our students need to be comfortable using-for bronchial hygiene.*
- *We have gas outlet items on order as well so we can have quick connects to interchange pieces of equipment quickly and realistically, as well as flow meters to do the same.*

IV. Course Progression/Plans

A. Fall 2024

- i. **Respiratory Therapeutics 1**

- ii. Respiratory Survey
- B. Spring 2025
 - i. Respiratory Pharmacology
 - ii. Respiratory Disease
 - iii. Respiratory Therapeutics 2
 - iv. Respiratory/ Cardiac Physiology- a bit of a spin-off of A&P
- C. Clinical
 - i. Summer 2025
 - Instructor led, onsite with students
 - Small sections
 - ii. Fall 2025 and Spring 2026
 - Preceptor model
 - a. Students will be paired with RT preceptors at the clinical sites
 - b. 1 student per RT
 - c. Preceptor education/training will be required
 - i. question was asked if this training was the same as what CVTC provides. Ben and Eric will check into this
 - d. Instructors will be checking in to monitor student progress and staff engagement
 - e. Students will rotate through different clinical sites
 - i. Hospital
 - ii. Home care
 - iii. Specialty Clinic
 - iii. Planning Meeting
 - The program would like to have a planning meeting with clinical partners to further discuss clinical preceptor requirements. Plan for Spring 2025 meeting. . . Perhaps following spring 2025 advisory board meeting?

Industry Trends

A. Current RT Openings

- a. MMC-Marshfield has two .6 FTE positions and three .9 FTE positions
- b. Aspirus Medford (Northwest part of the state)- more opportunities are coming down the pike
 - i. There is a current opportunity at Stanley Hospital
- c. Aspirus Home Medical- there is never a shortage of opportunities in the Home Care arena
 - i. RTs have a huge impact on the RT care of patients outside of the hospital setting
 - ii. This is a different side of healthcare-build long-term relationships with the patients
- d. Aspirus Wausau Hospital has plenty of openings/opportunities
 - i. There is an overall excitement around the program and students in our communities

- ii. Once summer clinicals are completed, Aspirus will take interns. They will start in the fall and they will stay until graduation

B. *What's going well in the industry? Feedback for potential students.*

- a. System going back to the RT structure

C. *Opportunities for Collaboration-* none were discussed during the meeting

Other Items

Student Perspective- Diana Bryant, Madison Cerven and McKenna Meunier were in attendance and shared the following insight from a student's perspective:

- What has been your favorite part of the program so far, and why?
 - Program thus far is going well; no complaints
 - Simulators are so helpful to learning prior to the students being able to enter clinicals
- What has been the most challenging part of the program so far, and how have you been supported in overcoming those challenges?
 - Helps to minimize challenges when they have their pre-requisites done; can focus on RT specific coursework
 - It will be tougher as students move through the program

Next Meeting Schedule & Agenda Items Discussion

The date for the 2025 Spring Advisory Summit: Wednesday, April 16, 2025 from 7:30am-11:30am. Motion to adjourn was made by Eric Nelson and seconded by Ben Olson. Meeting adjourned at 4:23pm.



Date	Event	Troy Brown	Sherry Buntin	Tom Felch	Renee Krings	Nathan Lehman	Charlie Paulson	Paul Proulx	Heather Renzelmann	Rainer Shooter
2024										
MONDAY July 8	Annual Organizational Meeting	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	
July 23	RFSC Groundbreaking Ceremony	X			X	X	X	X	X	
August 13	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting	X	X	E	X	X	X	E	E	
September 10	WTCS State Board Meeting (NTC)	X	X	X		X		X		
September 10	WTCS State Board Dinner (Holiday Inn)			X		X		X		
September 11	WTCS State Board Meeting (NTC)			X	X			X		
September 17	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting <i>(9:00 a.m. start time)</i>	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	
October 15	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting	E	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	
November 5	Board Retreat	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	
November 20-22	WTC DBA Fall Meeting <i>(Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton)</i>				X			X		
December 3	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting	E	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	
December 14	Graduation <i>(10:00 a.m. @ The Grand Theater)</i>	X								
2025										
January 14	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting	X	E	X	X	E	X	E	X	
January 15-16	WTC DBA Legislative Seminar Capitol Day <i>(Madison)</i>				X					
January 17	ACCT Governance Leadership Institute (GLI) <i>(Madison + Zoom)</i>				X					
February 11	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting									
March 4	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting									
April 8	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting <i>(Antigo Campus)</i>									
April 10	WTCS Ambassador Banquet <i>(Wisconsin Dells)</i>									

April 11	DBA Trustees + Ambassadors Breakfast (<i>Wisconsin Dells</i>)									
May 6	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting									
May 17	Graduation (<i>10:00 a.m. @ TBD</i>)									
June 3	Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meeting (<i>Public Budget Hearing at 12:15 p.m. Lunch at approx. 12:30 p.m. Regular Meeting at 1:00 p.m.</i>)									

All Regular NTC Board of Trustees Meetings begin at 1:00 p.m. and are held on the Wausau Campus located at 1000 W. Campus Drive, Wausau, WI 54401 in Timberwolf Conference Center/Room D100 unless otherwise noted.



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A shock, yet validating



Jennifer Johnson recognized by Wausau chamber with ATHENA Leadership Award

by Matthew Day

MARATHON COUNTY – When imagining the winner of a leadership award, one may anticipate a business owner, CEO of an organization, director of a department or a manager who oversees a large team.

At least, that's what Jennifer Johnson said she would've imagined.

Even when she found out she'd been nominated for the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce's 2024 ATHENA Leadership Award, Johnson said due to her position – senior corporate communications

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Johnson/‘Leadership is not just your job title’

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specialist at Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I. – she never considered she’d be selected for the award over the other nominees.

“When I looked at (the nomination notice), they listed all the other nominees. I thought, ‘Well, it sure was nice being nominated,’” she said of her expectations. “It’s funny – when we left our house to go to the (award ceremony) lunch and my husband said, ‘Let’s practice your Emmy faces... What’s your winning face?’ (I said,) ‘I don’t know – I’m not winning.’ I mean, CEOs and CFOs and executive directors – I was up against some people with some much heavier titles and implied leadership than myself.”

Johnson said her role at Church Mutual is not that of a traditional “people leader,” adding, “I’ve really never been in a role where I’ve had direct reports or people that I directly manage.”

The criteria for the international accolade, however, make no mention of job title or specific requisite duties.

The ATHENA Leadership Award – which, according to athenainternational.org, was named in honor of the wise, courageous and resourceful Olympian goddess – is intended to recognize a person who:

- Has achieved the highest level of professional excellence
- Contributes time and energy to improve the quality of life for others in the community
- Actively assists others, particularly women, in realizing their full leadership potential

Considering her past accomplishments and her present efforts, Johnson said “when I start listing it all out, it does seem like a lot.”

Still, she said, when she was announced as recipient of the award, it came as “an incredible surprise” – to the point where she hadn’t prepared an acceptance speech whatsoever.

“I was shocked,” Johnson said. “I am great at promoting other people – I’m not fantastic at promoting myself.”

Her way

Johnson said she grew up in Tomahawk, graduated from Tomahawk High School and then earned her bachelor’s in journalism, with an emphasis in broadcast news, from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

From there, she said she moved to Joplin, Missouri to work as a reporter for the local NBC affiliate.

“I like knowing what’s happening around me, and I always enjoyed that from the journalism aspect – and the relationships and meeting new people,” Johnson said of her early career ambitions. “I like letting other people know what’s going on, and helping them understand and see how what’s going on on the other side of the county makes a difference to you. Or sharing those stories – those cool, unique things happening, and highlighting that.”

Initially, Johnson said, living a good 12-hour drive from her family didn’t bother her.

“I’ve always been very independent, and my parents would probably still tell you that to this day,” she said. “(But) when you hit your mid-20s, you start to realize there’s more to life than just

being on your own.”

Deciding to return to Wisconsin, Johnson said, resulted in meeting the man she would later marry, and the two opting to stay in Wausau.

Putting down such roots, however, all but signaled the end of her broadcast news career, Johnson said, as growth in that industry typically requires relocation.

She said she then decided to pivot into the marketing and public relations field which, in its own way, bore resemblance to journalism.

“It’s reporting, right? You take things... and make it so that everybody can understand,” Johnson said. “That’s still kind of what I’m doing every day.”

Marketing and PR experience at various agencies, as well as [Northcentral Technical College](#), she said, would eventually lead to a communications career at Church Mutual as she consistently pursued work inspired with a sense of purpose.

“What has attracted me to the things I do, or the organizations I work for, is what they do and what they are at their core,” she said. “You look at [Northcentral Technical College](#) – it is helping people move up and step forward and advance their lives and their careers.”

The same, Johnson said, is true of her current employer, Church Mutual.

“We insure organizations that make a difference, whether it’s a house of worship or a nonprofit or a school, we’re helping to make a difference, and we care,” she said. “I don’t think I realized that as I moved (between roles), but looking back, I think that’s what drew me to those types of organizations.”

Johnson said the other common thread she’s recognized in retrospect is her appreciation for seeing others succeed.

“That’s what makes me happy,” she said. “I like helping someone because to me, that’s what communications is. Whether it was journalism or now in my role, it’s helping with a piece of something and making it successful, whether it is championing others and helping them be successful, mentoring – those sorts of things.”

‘Leading with empathy’

Johnson said her values are rooted in her working-class upbringing.

“My father has a GED – he worked hard in a paper mill all his life,” she said. “As a professional with a college degree, there are things that I see now that might have been struggles for my parents. They hid it well



Jennifer Johnson volunteers with Women United/United Way of Marathon County. Submitted Photos



Jennifer Johnson

from us as kids.”

Her appreciation for others’ plights, Johnson said, has helped her cultivate a mindset of community service – a perspective which informs her work and volunteerism as well as her leadership style, which she calls “leading with empathy.”

“I’ve got to go about leadership a little differently,” she said. “It’s not directing someone to do something. It’s helping people see their strengths and kind of point them in the right direction. You have to know the people you’re working with. You need to understand what’s happening with them in their lives, outside of that workday, to be able to lead them and help them effectively. If something’s a little off or a little different (with someone), you can’t just (tell someone to complete a task). You have to understand, accept and you have to have empathy. It helps them through all of that.”

Johnson said for her, that sense of empathy has extended to a number of volunteer opportunities, with present service including:

- Group advisor for Be Amazing, with Rib Mountain Elementary
- Vice chair of Resource & Membership Development and co-chair of the Member Relations Committee for Women United, with United Way of Marathon County
- Member of the Marshfield Children’s Parent and Family Advisory Council, with Marshfield Clinic Health System
- Member of the local football booster club

“I want to treat others how I would want to be treated,” she said. “It seems silly when you put it so simply, but it’s important to me to teach my children that when we can, we give back, and if we can’t give back financially, we give back with our time and our energy.”

Johnson said it’s important to understand the whole person.

“I’m not really sure where that (value) came

from,” she said. “That’s got to be (from) my parents – they must have done something right. They did a lot right.”

Oddly enough, Johnson said her inspiration to give more was inspired by a time when she felt she had no more to give, as her and her husband’s careers, parental duties (for their three children) and volunteerism had her “burnt to a crisp.”

“I was in the (Greater Wausau) Chamber (of Commerce)’s transformational leadership class, and the topic for the week, for the session, was passion,” she said. “We had to fill out this worksheet, and I remember looking at it and thinking, ‘passion – who’s got a passion? I don’t have time for passion. That takes time, and I can barely keep my head afloat right now.’ But I thought about it more, and I thought about the things that I’ve done and the things that I do, and what brings me joy and kind of fills my bucket – and it’s helping others.”

Acceptance

Though she was aware of the ATHENA Awards, Johnson said earning such recognition has never been a source of motivation for her.

“I kind of like just hanging out in the background and celebrating other people,” she said. “It was actually one of my coworkers who nominated me – she didn’t tell me until after I won. I think other winners would likely say this, too, but I don’t feel like I’m doing anything all that special.”

From encouraging her to reflect on her path through her career, service and life; to finding inspiration in her husband’s own exceptional efforts; to appreciating the way her supervisor, Dawn Bernatz, has pushed her outside of her comfort zone; Johnson said processing this award has been “a huge lesson for me.”

“It’s kind of validation, right?” she said. “I think you get so deep in the things that you’re doing, whether they are for work or community service or personal – you get so deep in them that sometimes it’s hard to remember the difference you’re making. So it was validation that, you know what? I do a lot, and people recognize it. And it feels good, aside from – obviously, when they read my name – shock and thinking, ‘Oh, (no) – I didn’t prepare anything (for an acceptance speech).’”

Another major lesson from the process, Johnson said, has been learning how true leadership can be enacted and appreciated in any number of ways.

The 2024 ATHENA Young Professional Leadership Award went to Lindsey Lewitzke, chair of the DC Everest Area Education Foundation, who Johnson said is likewise not a prototypical business leader, rather “a stay-at-home mom right now, but she’s very involved in the community.”

“It’s important for people to understand that leadership is not just your job title or your position. That’s something I’ve struggled with,” she said. “But there are ways to do it. No matter where you are in your career or your personal life, you can lead. You can influence others to make a difference.” TBN

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CWAIC helps region embrace the full power of AI



Pictured from left Dave Eckmann (CEO, Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce), Jeannie Worden (president, [NTC](#)), Thomas Gibson (chancellor, UWSP), Katherine Frank (chancellor, UW-Stout) and Israel Squires, CEO and co-founder of Midpoint Consulting. Submitted Photo

Center is the intersection of innovation, collaboration and opportunity in preparing Central Wisconsin for an AI-driven future

by Lori Kaye Lodes

NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN – Israel Squires, CEO and co-founder of Midpoint Consulting, said a recent McKinsey & Company survey on the state of artificial intelligence (AI) said it best: “If 2023 was the year the world discovered generative AI, 2024 is the year organizations truly began using and deriving business value from the new technology.”

That said, Squires said it’s only a slice of the business populace that’s embracing AI.

And the even smaller sliver using it for two or more business functions, he said, is just that – a small percent – even as AI adoption is on the rise.

Squires said it’s an example of what businesses nationally are thinking: “I want to embrace AI,

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CWAIC/Aim to engage with more than 300 businesses in next three years

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Israel Squires



Jeannie Worden



Jenny Resch

but how do I do so responsibly, ethically and optimally?"

Providing tailored answers to that very question, and more, he said, is at the core of the Central Wisconsin AI Center (CWAIC), which launched Nov. 1, 2024.

Squires said the center is positioned as the intersection of innovation, collaboration and opportunity in preparing Central Wisconsin for an AI-driven future.

He said it taps into an abundance of AI expertise and application from Midpoint Consulting, a business consultancy with decades of AI experience; alongside three post-secondary educational institutions – Northcentral Technical College (NTC), the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout) and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) – and the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce, to tackle business opportunities and needs relative to AI adoption.

Squires said the center is expected to help hundreds of businesses in the region get started in their AI adoption journey and, in turn, train thousands of workers in the foundational building blocks of AI adoption.

Using proprietary, AI-driven assessments at the front end, Squires said the center then taps its partners to provide the right workforce training programs, industry-specific AI solutions, cutting-edge AI resources, personalized support and networking opportunities with others in the same shoes.

He said its primary goal is to provide the resources and support necessary to ignite AI growth in every sector of the Central Wisconsin region.

Center origins

It's a journey that Squires said has been two years in the making.

Midpoint Consulting, he said, started conversations with Greenheck Group and the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce about two years ago regarding the gaps in AI adoption and the resulting workforce training needed in response.

And simultaneously as businesses voiced a need for all things AI learning, he said the cry went out for higher education to address the AI knowledge gap.

All roads convened, Squires said, with the establishment of the membership-based CWAIC.

"(At Midpoint), we had the AI software, but we needed experts and business leadership in

the region to come together with a mechanism to 'answer the call' of meeting the market where it was," he said. "I don't know that there is anything like this center in the country."

Squires said an increased number of Central Wisconsin businesses are realizing they need to invest in AI or risk losing market share – with many admitting they aren't sure how to invest.

For those who are unsure, he said, the center delivers comprehensive learning on how to invest in AI.

He said it is a hub of both AI expertise and application with the tools and knowledge that businesses, students and the workforce need to thrive in the era of AI.

Its foundational course offerings include AI 101, Prompting Techniques, Security and Compliance and AI Adoption for Businesses.

What the numbers say

AI is an area of explosive growth – with MarketsandMarkets anticipating the market size to grow from an estimated \$214 billion in revenue in 2024 to \$1,339 billion by 2030.

Squires said he sees the opportunity for impact as two-fold.

First, the business's training software will allow for a tailored focus on specific use cases, all of which will be data-driven decisions.

"It starts with blocking and tackling work," he said. "We know that 70% of workers in business, regardless of size, are using free ChatGPT and likely uploading company data or client data into open AI. This is not a good practice, and so the first box to check is to make sure we're helping businesses not do that."

Second, Squires said it helps businesses make thoughtful, intentional and fiscally responsible investments in AI.

"What we've seen in the past few years is that even middle market companies have created chatbots and chased shiny things, versus taking a pragmatic approach (to AI)," he said. "We want to look at and prioritize use cases to determine how they can use AI effectively."

Squires said it's about starting small and being fiscally responsible.

"The imagery we use is that we will enable a company to 'turn on the electricity' – use AI – at some point," he said.

Squires said the center's services are the outgrowth of data-driven AI assessments offered to center members on the front end.

He said that's followed by AI training and

upskilling for businesses and workers through in-person and online programs provided by the center, as well as its partners.

Squires said those are further complemented by the creation of innovative ecosystems within each business, identifying AI use cases, selecting the right AI tools and providing the necessary training.

Within three years, Squires said the center aims to engage with more than 100,000 workers and more than 300 businesses in the region through digital AI assessments, digital training, in-person training, in-person workshops, in-person seminars and other programs.

And that, he said, is where any or all of the post-secondary educational institution partners come in.

"When a business wants to send 10 finance folks to get a certificate in AI or help them optimize new tools, we work with our educational partners to deliver that," he said. "There's that circular mission we're trying to execute so that the institutions can answer the exact calls of business."

AI training provider, beneficiary

The post-secondary educational institutions that stepped up to the plate as partners in the center, Squires said, each do so with distinct offerings, strengths, expertise and opportunities.

NTC became a partner and the first client of the center simultaneously, which NTC President Jeannie Worden said was a natural outgrowth of its existing initiatives, alignment with the college's five-year strategic plan and ongoing work to incorporate AI into curriculum.

"The work in AI really aligns with our strategic plan, and when the center became an opportunity, it just made sense to be a partner with it," she said. "We are a leader in AI and a leader in the ecosystem to help our students and our employers."

During her 29-year tenure at NTC, Worden said the closest thing she can liken to the opportunities and potential pitfalls of AI is the introduction of the internet.

"I think about AI in terms of how revolutionary the internet was, and I put AI in the same ballpark as that," she said.

The educational institution's embrace of the new technology, Worden said, can be seen in its faculty's commitment to research and incorporation of AI into each curriculum as appropriate.

Worden said the college's implementation plan is focused on three areas: having structure and resources in place to serve students pursuing associate degrees, businesses tapping

continuing education offerings and adopting AI further as an employer itself.

"We are working to make sure our students graduate with that leading-edge experience as they go out into the workforce," she said. "It's what our employers expect of us, and we are proud to train for what's important to our community."

In particular, Worden said NTC brings expertise in serving healthcare, agriculture and manufacturing industries, particularly of great interest to CWAIC.

"We're coming at it from all three areas and have hired the staffing and invested in the technology to support it," she said.

Worden said she credits long-standing, collaborative relationships with the chamber and their fellow higher educational institutions as being integral to the center's ability to work.

"I don't see them as competition – I see them as partners in ensuring we are training a qualified workforce," she said.

CWAIC's physical location is on the NTC campus, which Worden said offers high-tech conference room space, office space and training space for both in-person and virtual learning for CWAIC members.

"We're excited to partner with UW-Stout and UWSP in building a culture of responsible AI use that drives productivity, sustainability and innovation in central Wisconsin," she said.

Teachers lead the way

At UWSP – another of CWAIC's educational partners – Jenny Resch, executive director of economic engagement and strategic partnerships, said a key focal point of AI-focused effort on campus is with its School of Education and the K-12 teachers the program graduates and sends into schools nationwide.

"Our K-12 education program is phenomenal, a nationally known program, and we're graduating teachers who are going to immediately engage in the AI landscape in their schools," she said. "We acknowledge that if we're going to advance the strengths of the Central Wisconsin workforce, employees – including teachers – need to show up with the tools, knowledge and resourcefulness to navigate the AI world."

Resch said the same mindset applies throughout the campuses' other programs, such as the Sentry School of Business' adoption of AI for use with financial industry tools.

The university, she said, is walking the walk, guided by an AI implementation committee with representation from across campus benefiting from each others' research and learnings.

In addition, Resch said faculty have access to the Center for Inclusive Teaching and Learning to help adapt and change coursework and the classroom in response to AI.

"For example, it includes recognizing students may integrate AI with assignments, using it to their advantage, but that requires us to advance the curriculum and evolve our teaching to enhance additional learning," she said. "AI permeates every corner of the university."

In addition, Resch said the university embraced AI by planning and hosting an AI conference for business and industry in early 2024 – which focused on manufacturing and health care – and will host its second annual AI Innovations Conference in February 2025.

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CWAIC/Can further businesses' ability to embrace AI

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The 2025 conference, she said, will host industry tracks including education.

Resch said NTC is involved in helping to plan the 2025 event because of both geographic and mindset synergy, while simultaneously offering an opportunity to highlight CWAIC's work and the educational institutions' strengths to train the workforce.

Resch said the knowledge and training of CWAIC extends not only to graduates but businesses tapping into the university's continuing education and outreach offerings.

UWSP frequently works with business and industry to customize specialized training, she said, whether it's leadership development, wellness coaching or AI.

Resch said UWSP will answer the call to provide AI-focused training and professional development to businesses through the CWAIC.

"What we've been working on is now integrated into the work of the center, meeting organizations where they are, as everyone is at a different point of integrating AI into their company," she said. "Recognizing where they are – and not telling them where they need to be – is critical to the success of the center."

Manufacturing first for polytechnic university

UW-Stout's participation as a partner in the CWAIC, Seth Hudson, executive director, corporate relations and economic engagement, said was an easy "yes" for the state's only polytechnic university whose approach involves hands-on learning and strong working relationships with industry and community stakeholders.

"CWAIC allows us to further bring that approach to companies seeking AI resources and assistance, especially manufacturers," he said.

Hudson said AI is something UW-Stout is embracing across campus from having a designated staff member to coordinate how AI is being incorporated campuswide, to the AI Club which is fast approaching 50 members.

"We are integrating AI mindfully into everything across campus," he said. "We're approaching it like when the internet came out. It's going to touch all these areas in different ways, and it's important to have a common basis of understanding throughout all programming."

Hudson said it's also an integral part of the university's existing work with small- and medium-sized manufacturers – one of Wisconsin's leading workforce sectors of more than 8,900 companies, employing more than 490,000 workers.

One of UW-Stout's manufacturing center offerings includes the late summer launch of the Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Artificial Intelligence (CAM-AI), which Hudson said was created to leverage the university's expertise in solving technical issues and conducting research to support private industry.

"That center's role is to use faculty, graduate students and some undergraduate students to work with industry to address issues and challenges on the manufacturing floor and throughout the company, including advanced manufacturing and AI," he said.

Hudson said CAM-AI is tied to UW-Stout's Manufacturing Outreach Center, one of two Wisconsin centers affiliated with the National Institute of Standards and Technology/Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

The two-decades-old program, he said, offers comprehensive solutions through consulting, training and workforce development for manufacturers in particular.

Hudson said it leverages the university's industry experience, tech savviness and teamwork to improve manufacturers' processes, grow their businesses, enrich their people and develop products.

Together, he said the CAM-AI and UW-Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center deliver consulting, training and workforce development for clientele.

Hudson said those two programs' capabilities are now interwoven with CWAIC, both serving as a "feeder" to CWAIC, as well as drawing additional training opportunities to UW-Stout from businesses that start by knocking on CWAIC's doors.

In doing so, Hudson said UW-Stout's expertise in manufacturing and AI solutions and support can reach businesses beyond the 33 Northwest Wisconsin counties with which they typically work.

"Companies (in these UW-Stout programs) that say, 'We need to figure out how to implement AI on our floor, or in our supply chain,' can come through our centers where we can get an understanding of what they want to focus on," he said. "If it's AI, the collective group at (CWAIC) can look at the (intake survey) and say, 'Here are the opportunities for back office accountants on how to use AI with Excel' or 'how to incorporate AI into an assembly line.'"

Hudson said it's really a matter of synergy and compounding the impact any one of the entities can have for businesses seeking AI knowledge and training.

Depending on the needs revealed, Hudson said any one or more of the educational institutions (UW-Stout, UWSP and NTC) may step up to deliver training and education for a given CWAIC member.

"Any one of us could deliver the training depending on capacity, existing relationships and the right offerings," he said. "We can collectively figure it out to find the best fit."

Hudson said he is excited to see what CWAIC's intake survey reveals for companies they will work with, even manufacturers that have been working with any of UW-Stout's programs for years.

"It's a great way to start and it will guide the entity or individual on where to go next (in their AI journey) based on data," he said. "That intake process narrows the focus and provides a better understanding of what a business's needs are and how we, across CWAIC, can collectively come back to them with solutions."

Case in point: Greenheck Group

Scott Graf, chief manufacturing officer of Schofield-headquartered Greenheck Group, said the company sees the CWAIC as a natural next step to its existing partnerships with higher education.

Graf said the HVAC equipment manufacturer sees many applicable opportunities for businesses and the community at large.

"We are only just beginning to engage in the AI Center, but see many applicable opportunities," he said. "AI is already a vital tool in our personal lives – think of how you use Google, GPS, Amazon, etc. It has many similar opportunities in business, allowing us to access information, analyze data and make better decisions."



Seth Hudson

Graf said he anticipates Greenheck will embrace AI for multiple benefits – including:

- Improving office efficiency by quickly drafting communications, presentations and emails
- Creating better sales and finance forecasts to more accurately plan labor and material requirements
- Enhancing quality, safety and efficiency by monitoring manufacturing equipment for potential failures before they occur
- Improving product design and model/predict the performance of the company's fans for better energy efficiency

Collectively, Graf said applying AI will reduce redundant and/or repetitive tasks, freeing up time for more meaningful work at Greenheck.

"And that means better and more rewarding jobs," she said.

Business case for AI advancement, training

Dave Eckmann, president and CEO of the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce, said of its 800 members, 450-500 are small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Eckmann said their level of knowledge and integration of AI and innovation of all kinds can differ significantly from their larger business peers.

"The economic development plan we created a few years ago calls for action in placemaking, talent and innovation," he said. "It all fits together, and there is a lot of work being done on placemaking and the talent pipeline in the community. But we needed to do more for innovation. That requires small, medium and large companies to access technology including (Industry) 5.0 technologies, and AI is part of that."

Eckmann said a conversation with Squires about the importance of advancing technology and Industry 5.0 prompted work with business and industry partners to understand the current state of AI adoption.

Conversations, Eckmann said, revealed it was incumbent on the chamber to play a role.

"Our members need to always be looking at innovation and change to be more competitive in this changing economic environment," he said.

Eckmann said he recognizes that if North Central Wisconsin businesses don't integrate AI and other innovations into their businesses, the competition will move ahead of them.

Supporting the center, he said, is well aligned



Dave Eckmann

with other, complementary work the chamber is doing toward embracing more of a culture of innovation.

Eckmann said that includes work during the 18 months to create a program called Powering Innovation, an innovation ecosystem, that will launch soon.

"When you look at Central Wisconsin, we don't have that ecosystem here," he said. "We are separated from Green Bay by 90 miles on one side, and Eau Claire and the Twin Cities on the other – sitting in the middle of Wisconsin and (we) don't have the density of the Green Bay to Milwaukee corridor, Milwaukee to Madison or Madison to the Cities. We are isolated here, which is why we are creating our own innovation ecosystem."

Eckmann said the ecosystem is built on three pillars: a digital toolbox, awareness built by bringing the toolbox into the region through content planning and storytelling of ecosystem partners' successes and failures.

The digital toolbox, he said, is a significant aspect of the chamber's website redevelopment to showcase innovation resources and expertise as well as programming, all collected and presented in a single place.

Eckmann said it's well-timed as a complement to CWAIC, delivering small business resources for AI and further directing chamber members to CWAIC within the toolbox.

He said it also features a compilation of the services and resources from universities, technical colleges, small business development centers, innovation centers of excellence, funding sources and more.

Bringing all those together, Eckmann said, will allow the business community to easily access points of service "versus having to hunt down each service."

"It's a new digital resource and center of excellence to serve business, industry and entrepreneurs," he said.

Pointing more businesses to CWAIC, Powering Innovation and the chamber, Eckmann said, can further businesses' abilities to embrace the technology and innovation opportunities inherent in AI.

"At the heart of every business enterprise is its people – the workforce," he said. "CWAIC will ensure companies and working professionals have access to AI tools that will allow for growth and prosperity."

For further details on the CWAIC, visit centralwaicenter.com. TBN

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100 years and counting: Zelazoski Wood Products ready for the future

The family owned wood manufacturer is located at 839 9th Ave. in Antigo

by Rich Palzewicz

ANTIGO – One hundred years is a long time. But if you ask Co-owner Ben Zelazoski, he'll tell you he hopes Zelazoski Wood Products – the family owned specialty wood manufacturer located at 839 9th Ave. in Antigo – will be around for 100 more.

Though Ben, 74, said turning 100 as a company is a great honor and there has been a lot of company history, running a business for that long has also been challenging.

"We refer to ourselves as a custom job shop," he said. "There has been a lot of good but also some down times – it's been quite a ride."

Ben said he attributes being around for 100 years to his father.

"His foresight was to be better, not bigger," he said. "So many people try to be big right away, and it's all about growth. Though we certainly won't turn down any growth, we've seen a big change in our product line over the years."

Beginning operations in 1924

Ben said his grandfather, Thomas, worked for an Antigo company, named Matfey, that built

a lot of potatoes being grown here."

Ben said after that, his grandpa continued to branch out.

"There was a guy who wanted to know if we could make a handle for a curved wire scratch brush, so that's when we got into the brush industry," he said. "In the 1930s, we made crutches, and Grandpa sold those out of the backseat of his 1932 Oldsmobile – or whatever it was – during World War II."

In the 1950s, Ben said Zelazoski started making cutlery racks for the West Bend Company.

"The cutlery was a gift traveling salesmen would give while going around selling their pots," he said. "If they made a sale, then they had this cutlery they would give for a prize. One of their salesmen was from Antigo, and he came to us and wanted to know if we could design a rack where people could store these knives. We made those for quite some time."

In the 1960s, Ben said Zelazoski began making parts for folding chairs.

"That was one of our busiest times," he said. "People weren't up scraping the paint off their house or sweeping their floors, they were sitting (in chairs) sucking down a Pabst or a Miller and enjoying the fruits of their labors – that worked out pretty well."

Suick Lure Manufacturing in Antigo was next to reach out to Zelazoski, Ben said.

"We are still in the business of making fishing lures," he said. "Several years ago, we were also approached by a company that was getting into the baseball bat business. They wanted to know if we could turn the bats for them, and then they found out we could finish



Over the years, Zelazoski Wood Products has made anything from cutlery racks to fishing lures to baseball bats.

others have since passed away."

Over the years, Ben said Zelazoski has made hundreds of different parts.

"It's kind of nuts," he said. "We have several walls upstairs that have our samples on because it's easier to look at a 3D item than picking up a blueprint and trying to read it. Quite frankly, all of the parts we make aren't even up on the walls."

Ben said Zelazoski is now making an animal grooming tool and still makes a good number of brush and broom blocks.

"We're still a variety manufacturer," he said. "We'll make all sorts of things. We don't really have a product that's saleable directly to the public, but Fleet Farm and some other hardware stores used to sell brushes we made blocks for. Now, so much of that stuff is coming from overseas, so we don't get much into that high volume, low markup stuff anymore."

A young start

Like many family owned businesses, Ben said he got started young, helping out his father and uncle.

He said when he was about 10, he began earning money for rides at the fair.

"I would nail potato crates together for 10 cents apiece," he said. "Rides were only 25 cents, so it wasn't bad. I started part-time legally when I was 14. Back then, you could work for your parents in a manufacturing atmosphere as long as you

weren't around machinery."

Eventually, Ben said he went off to college.

"I went off to school because my dad thought that we needed to be something other than in a woodworking business," he said. "He wanted us to get a job that would actually pay something."

Ben said he first wanted to be a data processor.

"That was in 1968 when data processing was basically sorting punch cards," he said. "I decided I didn't like that, so I switched to accounting. I didn't find a job in accounting I really liked, so I figured I'd just go work for Dad until something better came along – that was more than 50 years ago."

A need for the future

Ben said currently, Zelazoski has 18 employees. He said getting employees into the trades is becoming increasingly difficult.

"That's one of the reasons the wood technologies class was started at Northcentral Technical College years ago," he said. "We've

hired two people from that. People don't have much of a problem (right now) trying to find a job, so the enrollment isn't as high as we would like it, but it's doing okay. We've turned out a lot of good graduates who have gone into either sales, manufacturing or repairs – it's been a really good program."

Ben said the program "is very much needed" because, soon, many of Zelazoski's long-time employees will begin to retire and will need to be replaced.

"The thing is, we've done such a good job of retaining our employees that we've got some who have been here 40 or 50 years," he said. "They're about ready to retire, so we will have all that knowledge going out the door. We've got to bring some people in to take their place." Being in his mid-70s, Ben said he's thought about his future at Zelazoski as well.

"I'm already coming in for less time, but I remember my dad – who passed away at 89 – getting the mail for us in the morning," he said. "Then he'd come here and shoot the breeze with us for a while and then go home and do whatever he wanted with Mom. He enjoyed coming to the plant and saying 'hi' to the guys and gals."

Ben said that's what he envisions for himself.

"It's been part of my life for so long, so it's kind of hard to just drop it and say, 'I'm not coming in anymore,'" he said. "In the position I'm in, if I don't want to come in, then I don't have to. The plan is for my nephews, Brett and Andy, to take over and lead Zelazoski into the future."

For more information on Zelazoski Wood Products, visit zwpi.com. TBN



Zelazoski Wood Products in Antigo recently celebrated 100 years in business. Zelazoski is a family owned specialty wood manufacturer. Submitted Photos

houses more than 100 years ago.

Tragedy at that business, Ben said, led to the beginnings of Zelazoski Wood Products.

"My grandpa built door frames, cabinets and stuff like that," he said. "One night, Matfey had a fire, and it burned down. The company he worked for figured the building boom in Antigo was just about over with, so they decided not to rebuild."

That's when Ben said his grandpa took advantage of the situation.

"My grandpa had a wife, two kids and a mortgage he had to worry about," he said. "He pretty much started up his own company doing the same thing he was doing for Matfey. Then he got into making potato crates because there were

and imprint them and everything else. We were basically making the bats here and shipping them to whoever."

Ben said making bats eventually went by the wayside.

"The cost of doing business with Major League Baseball was extreme," he said. "The bat company couldn't sell enough bats to make a good cash flow."

In 1958, Ben said his father, Clarence, and Uncle Bernard took over the business from Thomas.

And then in 1986, Ben said he and his brothers – Jim, Mike and Charlie – and cousins Tom and Joe became owners of the company.

"Charlie and I remain active," he said. "The

Business in Brief continued

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Rhineland-Oneida County Airport to offer flights to Chicago

RHINELANDER – Rhineland-Oneida County Airport has announced new, nonstop seasonal service to Chicago O'Hare International Airport beginning May 22.

Matthew Leitner, airport director, said United Express, operated by SkyWest Airlines, will offer daily service into and out of the Northwoods region.

As of June 28, a second daily flight will be added, Leitner said, with flights offered seasonally through Sept. 28.

He said each plane has a capacity of 50 passengers for the approximately one-hour flights.

Keller to build for Marthaler Chevy, Good News Project

MINOCQUA/WAUSAU – Keller, Inc. has been chosen as the architect and general contractor/builder on a renovation project for Marthaler Chevy of Minocqua located at 8240 US-51 S.

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Making a Difference

A shining 'Star' of restoration and community philanthropy

NorthStar Restoration Services raises nearly \$64,000 for the Blue Hearts organization

by Rachel Kroeger

WAUSAU – Jay Cricks – co-owner of NorthStar Restoration Services – said it sometimes feels like he and his business partner, Shawn Millikin, started the company so they could give back to their community.

NorthStar, Cricks said, provides a one-stop-shop for restoration services and is known for being heavily involved in community philanthropy.

After sponsoring several events across the North Central region, Cricks said they found a disconnect between the money raised and the money donated.

"We have been doing a couple of different charity events for different nonprofits that raise money for (various) police entities," he said. "We've done a Crime Stoppers event, and we did this event for the Marathon County (Deputy Sheriff's Benevolent Association). We discovered that the majority of the money was going to the promotion company that was promoting the event, and not much of it was flowing through to Crime Stoppers and Marathon County Benevolent."

After that discovery, Cricks said he approached NorthStar's VP of business development, Clay Rice, and asked if there was an event their company could personally host to benefit the local police department.

Already hosting an annual charity golf outing that raises funds for the Wausau Firefighters Community Assistance Foundation, Cricks said he felt like they could do more.

"I thought, 'You know what? We're already working with the firefighters,'" he said. "Let's find something to do for our police officers in the area."

Cricks said that's when NorthStar found the Blue Hearts organization.

NorthStar + Blue Hearts

The Blue Hearts organization – according to bluehearts1274.org – raises money "to support local law enforcement officers and their families, the community they live in, as well as law enforcement agencies with fallen officers nationwide."

Cricks said when NorthStar contacted Blue Hearts they discovered it was founded by the widow of Jason Weiland – an Everest Metro Police Detective who was killed in the line of duty while responding to an active shooting.

Kara Weiland, Cricks said, had been trying to establish her nonprofit for several years and though she had held a few events, she didn't have a major sponsor behind her to really help get it off the ground.

That's when Cricks said NorthStar had the

idea for the 2024 Jingle Ball Rock the Hall charity concert.

"We reached out to the Grand Theater in Wausau and inquired about renting the entire Grand Theater, bringing in a band and promoting (Blue Hearts)," he said. "They were on board, and ended up getting some other corporate sponsors on board."

The Jingle Ball Rock the Hall event was held Dec. 22, and according to NorthStar's Facebook page, the community event raised nearly \$64,000 "for future first responders in Central Wisconsin, honoring the memory of Detective Jason Weiland and Blue Hearts."

Cricks said the Mayor of Wausau, Doug Diny, also attended the event – making a mayoral proclamation declaring Dec. 22 as the city's official Jingle Ball day in honor of the event and the Weiland family.

Beyond Blue Hearts

Aside from the Jingle Ball Rock the Hall event, Cricks said NorthStar is also involved in other forms of community philanthropy.

This year, he said, will be the 12th consecutive year of the aforementioned charity golf outing to benefit the Wausau Firefighters Community Assistance Foundation (WFAF).

"It's called the Restoring Kindness Open," he said. "I came across these guys years ago. I saw their mission, what they were trying to do and it completely aligns with what we're doing here at NorthStar."

Cricks said the foundation – similarly to Blue Hearts – had held smaller events, raising a few thousand dollars before partnering with NorthStar.

"We hooked up with WFAF, and we started the Restoring Kindness Open and it has been hugely successful," he said. "We typically raise between \$40,000 and \$60,000 each year."

WFAF, Cricks said, has several different missions it supports – one being its gift card program, which provides first responders with gift cards to distribute to people in need while responding to emergency calls.

"For example," he said, "if they show up at an elderly person's home and this individual keeps falling in the bathroom, they can use the gift card program to put grab bars in the bathroom."

Cricks said WFAF also uses the money raised at the Restoring Kindness Outing to buy Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts for families in need, fund a scholarship program for those seeking firefighter training through Northcentral Technical College and send families of fallen first responders on a dream vacation – something Cricks said the Weiland family received after Jason's passing.

"They sent Kara on a dream vacation when the family (was) ready to start the healing process and take a step forward," he said.

Another organization Cricks said NorthStar regularly supports is the American Red Cross – annually hosting a charity car show that benefits both it and the WFAF.

"We give (WFAF) some of the proceeds because the firefighters show up and help, they volunteer," he said. "And then the Red Cross also shows up at our car show and they volunteer."

The Red Cross helps those in need in many different ways, but the service that Cricks said is



NorthStar Restoration Services held the inaugural Jingle Ball Rock the Hall charity concert Dec. 22 to raise money for the Blue Hearts organization. Submitted Photos

"near and dear" to NorthStar is its SAF (service to armed forces) program.

"What they do is they find and locate in-need and homeless veterans and veteran families in the Central Wisconsin region," he said. "We try to outfit them with winter weather clothing, fresh socks, underwear, T-shirts – so it's a car show but it's also a big clothing drive as well."

The car show is in its seventh year, Cricks said, having originally started in the NorthStar parking lot before quickly outgrowing the space.

"We reached out to Harley-Davidson down in Rothschild and said, 'Hey, we've got this charity car show we do, (and) we were wondering if you guys would want to partner with us, and by the way, can we use your parking lot?'" he said.

Cricks said Harley-Davidson happily obliged their request.

He said Camping World has also joined as a major sponsor of the ever-growing charity event.

"It's now (called) the Central Wisconsin Rod & Bike Show," he said. "We're hoping to make it one of the largest regional car shows in the area and use the power of gathering those people together for a good cause."

Cricks said through its work as a full-service restoration business, when they process clothing, bedding "and things like that, we will launder it, repackage it and then get it out to the Red Cross."

Cricks – who serves as a board member for the North Central Wisconsin Chapter of the Red Cross – said NorthStar also hosts its own blood drives.

"We do three blood drives in our facility a year," he said. "About every 16-17 weeks, we've got a blood drive in our facility, and to date, we've collected 294 life-saving units of blood."

Cricks said he and Millikin believe the good you give comes back around, and they want to

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NorthStar Co-owner, Jay Cricks (right), said his VP of Business Development, Clay Rice (left), organized the Jingle Ball Rock the Hall event.



NorthStar/Company has multiple triple masters on staff

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serve as an example for their community.

"When they see NorthStar – hear the NorthStar name – we want people to know that it has a positive connotation to it," he said.

More about NorthStar

Cricks said NorthStar is a catch-all restoration company that "makes the process easier," with three separate entities doing "all the things" needed to restore a home: NorthStar Restoration Services, NorthStar Builds and NorthStar Contents Services.

After a fire, Cricks said homeowners are left with a soaking wet structure, burnt belongings and lots of questions as to what to do next.

"People get pretty stressed out when this happens," he said. "You'll have one company come in and maybe do the cleanup, and then another company comes in and takes your clothes, and then another company comes in and takes your electronics and cleans them, and then a third company would come in and collect your hard contents, and then another company is going to come in and give you some quotes on putting your roof on, and then you might have to have another company come in and give you a quote on the electrical or the plumbing."

NorthStar, Cricks said, alleviates that stress by providing homeowners with a central resource to achieve all that needs to be done to make the house liveable again.

"You're a homeowner, you're not a general contractor," he said. "Some people are very 'roll-up-their-sleeves' and 'I can handle it,' (but) some

people are like a deer in the headlights... That's where we like to step in, sort of hold their hand through the process and explain it from A to Z."

Cricks said NorthStar will pack up all of a homeowner's belongings and bring them to their facility for processing.

"We've got a climate-controlled warehouse, and we've got a complete contents processing plant where we can unload your stuff and clean it," he said. "We barcode everything. Everything gets loaded up in big storage vaults, and then it goes into our back warehouse facility that's (also) climate controlled... so everything's taken care of."

After their belongings are removed, Cricks said NorthStar will then consult the homeowner on the state of their house and what needs to be done to restore it.

"That's when we would remove any of the burnt-up debris and start the drying process and the cleaning and the disinfecting of the home," he said. "When stuff like plastics and a lot of these man-made textiles burn, they give off what are called VOCs (volatile organic compounds), and this is stuff that's very toxic to breathe (in) and be around."

Because of the toxicity of the chemicals often released during a house fire, Cricks said "there's a whole process of cleaning and restoring the integrity of the structure."

The final step, he said, is designing plans to restore the house to the homeowner's liking.

"We are a general contractor," he said. "We create fresh blueprints of the home. We lay

everything out on a big flat screen, and we can do a virtual walk-through with the homeowner. We can help them pick out new colors, new furnishings. We handle basically the reconstruction process from beginning to end. So ultimately, we can clean everything from your socks and underwear to putting the shingles on your house."

NorthStar's employees, Cricks said, are certified in the various steps of the restoration process through the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC).

According to its website, the IICRC offers training and certification for nearly 30 different restoration services.

"After you've collected all of these different certifications you can apply to become a journeyman, and then you become a master," Cricks said. "There are different master certifications that you can get – you've got your master water restorer, you've got a master fire and smoke restorer and then there's a master textile restorer."

Cricks said those who obtain all three master certifications become what's known as a triple master.

"We have multiple triple masters here at NorthStar – that is extremely rare," he said. "You might find maybe one triple master at a company – typically, it's one of the owners – and that's usually it... We've got, I believe, three triple masters."

NorthStar University

Determined to be "one of the more highly-trained companies in the area," Cricks said

NorthStar started NorthStar University – which is focused on furthering the education of their own employees and those of other companies.

"We originally started that because we were looking for a space that we didn't have to rent... We wanted to have our own space," he said. "When we moved into our new building coming up on four years ago, we redesigned the layout. So we completely came in and renovated this building, and we made sure that we carved out a space that was large enough to seat 60-70 people comfortably."

That state-of-the-art space, Cricks said, has dual 15-foot drop-down screens and fully integrated sound and projector systems.

"We can host continued education, not only for our staff, but we bring in other restoration companies and do training for them (as well)," he said. "We've been doing this for literally 10 years – we've been hosting continued education for insurance agents."

Cricks said in the restoration process, NorthStar employees work closely with insurance agents who also require continuing education (CE) credits.

NorthStar, he said, hosts "three really large CE days," where insurance agents in the area can come in for "top-notch" instruction and live demonstrations.

Cricks said the space is further used to host NorthStar's annual blood drives and as a community gathering space utilized by various

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NorthStar/Started University to educate, give back

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organizations in the Wausau area.

"There's literally a different entity or nonprofit using the space two to three times a week, and sometimes even on the weekends, and we lend it out free of charge," he said.

Recently, Cricks said his business partner came up with an idea called the "12 months of giving," in which NorthStar will nominate one nonprofit, charity or cause every month to benefit from the use of NorthStar University.

"There's a bucket that we put out with information, and if you're using our room, we ask that you find it in your heart to throw a few bucks in the bucket," he said.

For the inaugural month of the program,

Cricks said NorthStar selected a family whose daughter was struck and killed in a traffic accident on her bike.

"This (happened) right in the neighborhood that this family lives, and they absolutely could not bear to go past that spot (where) their little one was killed, and they did not have the means to just pick up and move," he said. "So we saw their plea for help, and... we helped raise the funds to get that family packed up and moved."

Cricks said the program looks to those who use their space to help those in need, and that NorthStar University can be used to not only "bring value to the people that are using it, but we can use it to bring value to those around us as well."

20 years and counting

NorthStar, Cricks said, celebrated 20 years in business Jan. 1 between its Wausau and Green Bay locations.

The Green Bay location, Cricks said, is owned and operated by his original business partner – and older brother – Nick.

"Originally, we were NorthStar Cleaning and Restoration, and then on Jan. 1, 2012, myself and... Shawn created NorthStar Restoration Services," he said.

Now after two decades in business, Cricks said the NorthStar team is looking forward to the continued years of restoration and community service that lie ahead.



NorthStar University's classroom-like space seats 60-70 people. Submitted Photo

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Aspirus and North Central College working to improve healthcare education

CONTRIBUTED

WAUSAU, Wis. — Aspirus and North Central Technical College (NTC) are working together to bring immersive reality technology into healthcare education. This partnership is giving students a chance to experience clinical scenarios like never before, helping them feel more prepared for real-world challenges.

NTC's new Simulation Center features an immersive room funded by the Health 4.0 grant. "With immersive reality, we can create scenarios students might not encounter during traditional training," said Reed Champagne, NTC's Manager of Education Technology. "We change the room's background, add sounds, and even smells to mimic real clinical settings. It gives students a much deeper understanding than they would get from just sitting in a classroom."

Aspirus employees, like nursing student Aspen Gunnlaugsson, are already seeing the benefits. "The realistic structure is so like clinical settings. It's helped me feel more confident in my skills and ready for patient care," Aspen shared. She also noted that the immersive technology made it easier to refresh her knowledge after taking time off, which prepared her for clinical rotations.



Education/

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The immersive room also allows students to tackle complex scenarios that they might not experience during their training. “We can’t guarantee students will see every type of case in real life, but this technology helps fill those gaps,” Champagne explained. He added that by integrating sounds, visuals, and even smells, students are better prepared to respond effectively to various situations when they enter the workforce.

This collaboration helps

strengthen the community by ensuring future health-care professionals are better trained to deliver high-quality care. Students gain more hands-on experience, which ultimately improves patient outcomes and ensures that local healthcare providers are ready to meet the needs of an ever-changing population. This partnership between Aspirus and NTC demonstrates the power of combining innovation with education to support both students and the communities they will serve.



Antigo's Brandon Zielinski earns CWI certification

CONTRIBUTED

MEDFORD — Enerquip's Quality Control Specialist, Brandon Zielinski, has earned the highly regarded Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) certification from the American Welding Society (AWS). The rigorous certification process involves extensive online study, hands-on training, and

comprehensive exams, covering welding codes, inspection methods, and quality control practices.

The AWS CWI certification is a globally recognized benchmark for welding excellence. It underscores Zielinski's expertise in safeguarding the integrity and safety of

critical components such as pressure vessels and heat exchangers.

To qualify, candidates must meet stringent educational and professional experience requirements, and by attaining this certification, Zielinski joins an elite group of welding inspection professionals

known for their technical aptitude and dedication to safety.

"Brandon's CWI certification is a testament to his commitment to professional growth, quality, and safety," said Jeff Dums, Quality Control Manager. "This milestone not only highlights his personal achievement but also reflects Enerquip's culture of

continuous improvement. We are proud of his accomplishment and look forward to his ongoing contributions to our success."

Zielinski's journey with Enerquip began in 2005 after earning his welding degree from Northcentral Technical College. Since then, he has honed his skills across a range of

roles, including welding, assembly, and shipping/receiving. His passion for quality improvement led him to the quality department in 2021, where he has become an essential member of the team. He now joins fellow Quality Control Managers Jeff Dums and Kenny Devilbiss in holding the prestigious CWI certification.



Zielinski

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Advancing healthcare education through innovation

FOR CITY TIMES

MARSHFIELD -- Aspirus and North Central Technical College are working together to bring immersive reality technology into healthcare education. This partnership is giving students a chance to experience clinical scenarios like never before, helping them feel more prepared for real-world challenges.

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Wisconsin Dairy Athlete of the Month



TAKING A BREAK FROM BARN CHORES - Emery Borchardt is pictured in the family's town of Wien dairy barn with her two Australian Shepherd mix dogs Charlie and Sammy. PHOTO SUBMITTED



HELPING HER TEAM BEAT THE ROCKETS - Edgar senior guard Emery Borchardt drives the basketball toward the hoop during the second half of her team's 66-53 non-conference home win against Spencer on Dec. 23. STAFF PHOTO/CASEY KRAUTKRAMER

Edgar senior Emery Borchardt honored for balancing athletics, academics and home farm chores

By Casey Krautkramer

Edgar senior three-sport student athlete Emery Borchardt is being recognized as the Wisconsin Dairy Athlete of the Month in January. The award is sponsored by the Wisconsin Sports Network and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and honors Borchardt for her balance of athletics, academics and farm work.

Borchardt maintains a cumulative 3.97 GPA at Edgar High School. She is a captain on the Edgar varsity volleyball, girls basketball and softball teams. She is also a member of the Edgar High School FFA (Future Farmers of America), Student Council, FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America) and National Honor Society.

During the school year, she does barn chores in the mornings and nights on her parents Jason and Penny Borchardt's town of Wien dairy farm. Her responsibilities include cleaning out the cow pens, feeding the cows and helping milk their 45 dairy cows. She picks rocks and bales hay in the summer.

Emery Borchardt explains how working

on the family farm has helped with her academics and athletics too.

"I think working on the farm has helped me by showing up and doing what I am asked to do," she said. "It definitely helped me develop a strong work ethic."

Jason Borchardt became a fifth generation owner of the family farm in 1989. The farm started on Jan. 2, 1870, when Johann and Albertine Borchardt purchased 40 acres from the U.S. Government for one dollar. The pioneers came to central Wisconsin from Pomerania, the region sandwiched between Poland and Germany.

Emery Borchardt is proud to help out on her family's sesquicentennial farm that has been in operation for 155 years.

"I think it's definitely cool that our farm keeps going when a lot of other farms have recently shut down," she said.

Her older sister, Reagan Borchardt, also helps on the farm when she is home from attending college at UW-River Falls. Emery Borchardt plans to study dental hygiene next fall at [Northcentral Technical College](#) in Wausau after she graduates from Edgar High School this spring. For now, she is happy to be honored as the

Dairy Athlete of the Month in January by the Wisconsin Sports Network and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin.

"It feels good," Emery Borchardt said.

"I think it's cool that I am getting recognized for something that I'm already doing in life, knowing that I am one of the few dairy farmers still around."

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Advancing Healthcare Education Through Innovation

Aspirus and **NTC** Collaborate to Improve Health care Education

**FOR THE WITTENBERG
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The immersive room also allows students to tackle complex scenarios that they might not experience during their training. "We can't guarantee students will see every type of case in real life, but this technology helps fill those gaps," Champagne explained. He added that by integrating sounds, visuals, and even smells, students are better prepared to respond effectively to various situations when they enter the workforce.

This collaboration helps strengthen the community by ensuring future healthcare professionals are better trained to deliver high-quality care. Students gain more hands-on experience, which ultimately improves patient outcomes and ensures that local healthcare providers are ready to meet the needs of an ever-changing population. This partnership between Aspirus and **NTC** demonstrates the power of combining innovation with education to support both students and the communities they will serve.



❖ PART 2 OF A SERIES ❖

City of Merrill property taxes explained

BY TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

This article is part 2 of a series to help explain how real estate property taxes are calculated, why some homeowners in the City of Merrill saw their real estate tax bill increase, and why some homeowners' tax increases were more or less than others.

The value of reassessment

On the face of it, residents might think an increase in the assessed value of their home is a negative, because that new number is used to calculate their tax liability (more about that to come), but there are both pros and cons to an increased assessed value.

With a higher assessed value for a property, homeowners should ensure their home is properly insured for the current value of their home, which could mean a premium increase (a con), but this also ensures they will be properly covered in the event of a fire or other catastrophe (a pro).

Pertaining to property taxes, the new assessed values (based on and effective for Jan. 1, 2024) mean all homeowners will pay their proportionate share of the tax levy. For some, this will be a negative and for others, it will have a positive effect.

A higher assessed value also means the homeowner now has additional equity in their home, if they wish to get a loan to make home improvements or for other purposes (a pro) and increases their family's net worth (a pro). And it gives homeowners a more accurate potential sales price if they plan to sell.

What if I disagree with the reassessment?

In Sept. 2024, all City of Merrill property owners received a letter from Kitt Koski of Bowmar Appraisal, the firm that did the reassessment. The letter invited residents to call him with questions, most of which he could likely answer by phone, and said he would be at City Hall Oct. 2-4 to answer questions in person. Homeowners could come in for an "open book" to review their property record cards. "I fielded hundreds of phone calls prior to the open book," Koski said.

Koski's letter explained: "The assessor does not create a value; people set the value by their transactions in the market place. The assessor has the legal responsibility to study those transactions and appraise property based on such transactions. Valuation is based on many factors such as location, size, quality, condition, age, and so on."

Homeowners who believe their home's condition is not accurately represented in the reassessed value can ask Koski to conduct either an interior or exterior visit to take

a closer look, he said, and he will make adjustments to the value if it is warranted. If homeowners still disagree with the reassessed value, they can attend the Review Board meeting when it is next scheduled at City Hall. "It's usually end of April or early May," Koski said. While the 2025 date isn't yet set, the date and time are published in advance in multiple places, including with a published notice in this newspaper.

Property owners can also view their basic property record at assessordata.org for free to see basic information or they can see a more detailed record at assessordata.com; however, the second site does have a charge, Koski said. "Taxpayers can also come to the open book every year for free or call me at 715.577.1875 any time of the year," he said.

Once reassessments are complete, the value of all the properties within the area are totaled. This total assessed property value is called the "tax base."

Four bills in one

Residents of the City of Merrill actually get four bills in one when they get their property tax bill. (Residents of other municipalities do, too, but their taxing jurisdictions are different.)

The property tax bill they pay reflects a tax levy assessment from the four different jurisdictions [taxing authorities] they are a part of, in this case Lincoln County, the City of Merrill, Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS), and [Northcentral Technical College \(NTC\)](#). Each one of those taxing authorities/entities sets their own budget and calculates the total amount of funding needed from property taxes (tax levy) for the coming year, which sets their own tax (or mill) rate. They take their total annual budget and subtract from that any other sources of income available to them (such as state or federal aid, grants, shared revenue, etc.). The remainder is the amount they need to raise from property taxes (the tax levy). None of these entities can just decide to raise their budget by whatever they want. Each is restricted by State laws that limit them to a maximum percentage they can raise taxes without their constituents voting to allow them to do so in a special referendum. [That's why MAPS needed a referendum in recent years when they wanted to increase taxes over and above what the law allows.]

Each taxing entity divides the total amount needed by the total assessed value of all the property within its jurisdiction (tax base) times 1,000 to come up with a percentage, or mill rate. Put another way, the mill rate is the amount of tax payable per \$1,000 of assessed property value. [1 mill equals \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of property

value.] Each property owner's tax bill is calculated by applying the mill rate to their property's assessed value.

If property values increase across the jurisdiction, as they did for City of Merrill residents, the tax base grows, and the mill rate could decrease even if the tax levy remains the same. New construction added to the tax base can spread the levy across a larger pool, also potentially reducing the mill rate.

This is done four times, once for each of the four taxing authorities, so that there is a different amount of tax payable to Lincoln County, another to the City of Merrill, then to MAPS, and then to [NTC](#). The City of Merrill collects all four taxes and distributes them to the proper taxing authority. Property tax owners can see the amount of tax attributable to each taxing authority by looking at the line items in the largest box on their 2024 Real Estate Tax Bill. They will be able to see the amount of net tax payable for both current year 2024 and compare it to the amount of net tax payable for the previous year, in this case 2023, followed by a percentage of tax change. Those amounts are totaled up and then reduced by the First Dollar Credit and Lottery and Gaming Credit (for homes that are owner-occupied the majority of the year) to arrive at the Net Property Tax due. While the mill rates used for the calculations aren't shown, they are readily available from each taxing jurisdiction.

NOTE: If you live in a home you own as your primary residence and you are not receiving the Lottery and Gaming Credit, you can apply for this credit to start saving money on your property taxes at: Tiny.cc/TaxCredits.

How a property reassessment can lead to higher property taxes

A reassessment can result in higher property taxes for some residents, even if the tax levy rate remains the same. Here's how that works:

1. Increased Property Value

What happens: A reassessment updates the market value of properties, which could increase if the local real estate market has grown.

How it impacts taxes: Property taxes are calculated based on the assessed value of a property. If your property value goes up, your taxes will increase, even if the tax levy rate stays the same.

2. Fixed Tax Levy Amount

What happens: The local government sets a tax levy, which is the total amount of money it needs to collect from property taxes to fund services and operations.

How it impacts taxes: If the total value of all properties in the area increases due to reassessments, the local government might not need

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to increase the tax levy rate to meet its budget. However, some properties will bear a larger share of the levy if their assessed values have risen more than others.

3. Shifting the Tax Burden

What happens: When some properties see an increase in their assessed values while others remain unchanged or rise less, the total tax burden shifts.

How it impacts taxes: Property owners whose property values have risen the most will pay a higher share of the same tax levy. This means their individual property taxes increase, even though the overall tax rate hasn't changed.

4. Example Scenario

Before reassessment: If the total property value in a town is \$100 million and the local government sets a tax levy of \$1 million, the tax rate is 1% ($\$1 \text{ million} \div$

\$100 million).

After reassessment: If the total property value increases to \$120 million due to higher property values, the local government may still need to collect \$1 million in taxes. While the tax rate remains the same (1%), a property that was previously valued at \$200,000 might now be valued at \$250,000. As a result, the property owner will pay \$2,500 instead of \$2,000, even though the tax rate hasn't changed.

In essence, a property reassessment increases some property values, which leads to a higher tax burden for those properties, even if the tax levy rate stays constant. This process ensures that the local government can collect the necessary funds based on updated property values, but it may result in higher taxes for some homeowners.

Next week's Merrill Foto News will continue with Part 3 of this series on Property Taxes Explained.

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Wausau Times

Advancing Healthcare Education Through Innovation

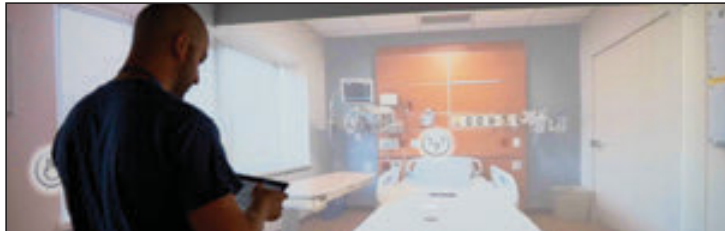
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ASPIRUS HEALTH

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Loyal, Greenwood school boards approve advisory consolidation question for April ballot

Some community members express support, others concerns about consolidation

By Valorie Brecht

The Greenwood and Loyal school boards have approved an advisory referendum question that will be placed on the April 1 ballot, asking voters if they support the consolidation of the Loyal and Greenwood school districts. The boards approved this question at their joint board meeting last Wednesday in Loyal.

The meeting began, however, with a public forum in which residents of both communities could bring up their questions and concerns. A few community members expressed their readiness for consolidation and wanting the districts to press forward; however, others expressed a variety of concerns such as where the high school would be located in a consolidated district, the financial implications of consolidation and affect on the mill rate, and others.

Hannah Olson was the first to speak in the public forum. Olson is a mother of five, middle school teacher, and coach with the Greenwood School District. She felt the districts were being stretched thin as far as staffing was concerned, and that consolidating could alleviate some of that tension to get the best educators in front of kids.

"I am concerned about where we are currently standing, and I'm asking our board, our admin, to truly consider why we are doing this work... (Our districts) are in survival mode. And that's my opinion; others may have different ones. But I would certainly argue we are not thriving where we're at. We have a lack of resources, primarily people. And that's not getting any better. We see the retirements coming up; we see the turnover that's happening on a regular basis. We can't settle. I'm not OK as a parent of five settling for the staff that are in our buildings because we don't have others available. We know based on the research out there that one of the most important factors to student success is effective instruction in every classroom. But when our staff oftentimes are underqualified, or are there because we just need somebody to fill in a role, but then we don't have the resources to support them, build them, and help them grow, that's concerning.

"Some of my best learning as a teacher has been when I've had the opportunity to

go and observe good teaching. But if we don't have subs available to cover our classes so we can do that, our students aren't getting our best. And our students deserve a lot better... The people don't want to be in survival mode; we will never be our best. I'm asking our board to really truly consider what is best for our students. Rather than argue which city the high school's going to be in — from what I understand there will be a school building in both communities. Guess what? There is a lot of traffic going through our elementary schools every day — parents, community members. I don't get the argument and why that's a concern. I don't.

"As a mom, I want effective teachers teaching our kids, that have support and are backed by good mentors and good time to devote to getting better each year."

Adam Smith, a Loyal parent who is running for Loyal School Board, also spoke. He said he would like to see Greenwood livestream its school board meetings. He also questioned what had happened with the talks between Greenwood and Granton for co-oping girls basketball and why that had fallen through. He also asked what was the cost of busing students back and forth to Greenwood for co-op sports, saying he had asked several times and never gotten an answer. He felt that parents, students, and coaches needed to be more involved in co-op decisions so board members weren't acting on their own gut feelings.

"I'm not sure why this is a conversation of where the high school and elementary should be. They should all be right here (in Loyal). That's my opinion. I'll cut things off here. I guess it's like someone wants to take a drink of cold beer, but doesn't want to drink out of a can and doesn't have a cup, so he dumps it on the ground."

In response to Smith's comments, Greenwood School District Administrator Joe Green said the district planned to have a parent meeting on Monday to hear the community's thoughts about co-oping with Granton for boys and/or girls basketball. That will also be on the agenda for

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the Jan. 29 Greenwood School Board meeting, so no decision has been made yet. He also said the decision to livestream meetings would not be his decision; it would be a board decision.

Loyal School District Administrator Chris Lindner said he could get the numbers for busing costs for co-op sports.

Shannon Toufar, Loyal parent, said she had heard at previous Loyal School Board meetings that Loyal wouldn't be able to pass another referendum. So, she wondered, if the districts were to consolidate, what makes the board think the combined district would be able to pass a referendum?

"The referendums we have now — right now Loyal and Greenwood have the highest referendums of anybody in the county, percentage-wise what is allowed for their school by the state. If we could cut those referendums to half of what the people are paying right now (by consolidating), I feel we have a better chance of passing it than for the full we are currently paying," replied Loyal board member Kirk Haslow.

Loyal board member Matt Kubista expressed concerns about what else Loyal stands to lose if it loses a school, whether the high school or the elementary.

"There will more than likely be loss of downtown businesses," he said.

He said property values would also be affected.

"Loss of your school in terms of population decline means less families moving into your town, loss of youth and vitality in your community. The loss of a school means loss of major employers in your community and reduces the sense of community cohesiveness. It also means loss of social opportunities. Why has there been no school consolidation that has happened since 2010 in Wisconsin? What have we found out about consolidations and what it does to your city?"

He said if you have less people coming into your community, major employers would have a harder time finding employees, which would hurt them.

"Loss of your school in terms of population decline means less families moving into your town, and loss of youth and vitality in your community."

— Matt Kubista, Loyal School Board member

Haslow said that based on the Baird meeting the schools had recently, one of the reasons districts hadn't consolidated since 2010 was the amount of state funding available for consolidation had dropped. Also, he said, once they hit 2020, schools were just trying to survive and weren't thinking about consolidation.

"One thing I think should be considered is, regardless of which town has the elementary school and which town has the high school, if we want people to raise their families in our towns, they need to feel good about the education and opportunities that their kids have. I think as a combined district we have a higher chance of providing more opportunities and attracting more people who want to live here, which then would also support the businesses... People who grew up here move away because they want their kids to have more opportunities than they had. So, if we can do that better together, I think we need to pursue that," said Greenwood board member Eliza Ruzic.

Loyal parent and former Loyal board member Kim Bremmer also spoke. She said she would like to see a list of the classes that Greenwood and Loyal were sharing, because she hadn't seen a list yet.

"When this discussion first started, we weren't talking about sports; we were talking about math and specifically science because at the time, Loyal was struggling with our science program. We didn't have teachers. So this was a solution... I think things that would help is if you could show us a list of examples of successes. I know we have examples of it not working. So when we have all this hesitation about details, show us some successes."

"Thanks, Kim. That's a good idea. I think we started out stronger in the beginning in communicating some of these, but there's been plenty of successes, whether in academics or the co-curricular areas," said Green.

He referenced Loyal students going to Greenwood for an AutoCAD class they wouldn't have otherwise had, as

well as a dual-credit science class through **NTC** and Greenwood students coming to Loyal for welding, building construction and college prep English classes.

"So there's been some of that. Do I wish there was more, as far as coursework? Absolutely. It's a work in progress. Schedules get in the way sometimes. We line up really nicely until lunch, and then Greenwood has two lunch periods while Loyal has three, so it throws the rest of the day off. But there is some good sharing and I think those have been really successful," said Green.

"On the other side, co-curricular, most recently has been one-act play. I know Loyal has had a handful of actors come over and they won some very nice awards... We've had some success with some of the sports we've been working on together. I do think we can do a better job of communicating those, so I agree with you on that."

Loyal resident Viki Pieper brought up a concern. "When you talk about a consolidated school district and how even a consolidated district would have to ask for a referendum, are you taking into effect that we may lose enrollment? Because even just geography, I think we'd be silly to think that people would not open enroll to other schools. Just the few people I've talked to, they're like, 'Yeah, I'm not driving that far' or 'I'm not going to put my kids on a bus that far.' So we will lose some. If we lose 50 kids, that's over half a million dollars, if you're looking at \$11,400 per student," she noted.

Loyal parent Jaime Wolf said she was disappointed in the Loyal board for not being concerned about where the future high school would be.

"It's really disheartening when you hear one of our board members say that it doesn't matter where the school is... We need to fight for our school. And I get it, with the numbers if we need that, I understand that, but to have a board member say that is disheartening from a Loyal parent's perspective. I send my kids to Loyal and yes, I want them to have more opportunities. If that means consolidation, OK. But for you to say it doesn't matter where the school is located, that's what's upsetting the community," she said.

"Sorry to hurt your feelings. I have 11 grandchildren and I've had four kids graduate this high school. It's more — it's changed. I put on my letter jacket tonight. When I wore that letter jacket in this school, there were two car dealerships, two grocery stores. Now we have neither. But the school still has the same amount of teachers per grade and the education that we did then. Sorry, I don't mean to hurt your feelings. I'm just putting reality out there," replied Haslow.

Theresa Smith also spoke. She has grandchildren in the Loyal School District. She agreed that if the districts were to consolidate, they would lose students.

"I've heard a lot of people say, 'If we're not going to Loyal when we consolidate, I don't want my kids driving 10, 15 more miles with the bus and stuff,'" she said. "I don't think we need to consolidate at this time. Down the road, I can see it. But I don't think this is the time... When you lose your high school, you lose your identity."

Trish Williams, a Greenwood parent, said it was frustrating seeing so much discussion and no action.

"It seems like this talk has been going on for 30, 40 years. I don't understand why it's not happening when every year, financially it's going to get worse. We all know that. You see it in everything — groceries, clothes, every aspect. If that's where we're headed... It's just, we're running out of time and eventually, you're not going to have schools. You're not going to have teachers that want to come here. You are going to have people that want to enroll in other schools... Personally, I don't care where the schools are; I don't care how it works. Something needs to be done. And then in the end, if Loyal's not willing to work with us, when are we going to move on?"

Sue Roehl, Loyal parent, requested to see a budget comparison for the next five years for Greenwood separate, Loyal separate, and the two combined. She wanted to know the actual amount of cost savings. Pieper echoed that sentiment in saying that people need to know the specifics of what they are voting for. She used the analogy of buying a car; a person wouldn't do so unless they knew the details. She said in speaking to community members, the main things they wanted to know were where the high school and elementary school would be, and would it be a two- or three-school model. She said it was hard to vote for something if you didn't know what it would actually look like. She also said it took the pressure off the school boards by presenting the community a more detailed plan, because then they would know what the community truly wanted.

Haslow pushed back a little bit on that idea.

"I think the question we are putting on the referendum needs to be about the kids, and that needs to be solved later. Because things change over time," said Haslow.

He said there could be maintenance concerns that come up that affect how much it costs to run a facility.

"We're talking three years, four years? Then decisions need to be made down the road. That's the way I feel."

"And I would have to agree to disagree," said Pieper.

She said she was part of the strategic planning committee, which had been good, but "if I'm being honest, there are times when I feel like you've put in the time, but you're not going to be heard anyway, because those decisions have already been made behind (closed doors). And I'm not the only one who feels that way and I'm passionate about our school. It just feels like things aren't being resolved, and if I'm honest, I feel like we aren't being heard. I don't understand why you can't put a question on the table that says, 'Greenwood, this would be our plan moving forward; this is where the school is going to be. Are you OK with that?' And the same for Loyal."

"Is our commitment holding a closed fist over the pride of our community or is our commitment to giving our kids the best we can give them?"

— Hannah Olson, Greenwood parent, teacher and coach

Haslow said in the past when the school districts had tried consolidating, the location of the high school had been the major stopping point. He said he had questions too that he wanted answered before election time, and there needed to be ongoing dialogue between the public and the boards.

Loyal board member Tom Odeen said what he was taking out of this meeting was the school districts needed to understand the numbers and communicate those better. He gave some background information on Loyal's financials. The district's expenses have been increasing at a faster rate than income. Seventy percent of the district's budget goes to salaries and benefits. There was a large increase in the cost of health insurance lately. The school has also had more students with special needs, requiring additional staffing to cover those needs.

Odeen said there were additional challenges with needing to pay more to attract teachers. The base salary went from \$30,000 to between \$40,000 and \$45,000 without benefits. There are also less people getting into the field of education, so the school is not getting nearly as many applicants.

Odeen said the last time he looked, Loyal was spending \$245,000 to \$250,000 in sports every year, not including transportation, which was an additional \$60,000. He said if the districts were to consolidate, there would be some cost savings in that area but he wasn't sure the exact amount.

After Odeen, Ruzic chimed in again.

"I also want to say that I care about our school and our town, but I care about my kids more," said Ruzic. "I care about their education and what they do when they leave Greenwood. And I think the question on the ballot needs to make you think: does it matter where the school is if it's the right thing for our students?"

Piggybacking off of Ruzic's comment, Olson had something to say. She said many big decisions in her life such as marriage, starting a family, and taking a teaching job at Greenwood had been made without knowing all the details. But she made those decisions because she was ready to make a commitment.

"I'm asking our admin, school board and our communities to understand that most of what we do in life, we make a commitment based on what is truly important and we have to take what comes our way... Is our commitment holding a closed fist over the pride of our community or is our commitment to giving our kids the best we can give them?" she queried.

Jason Belter, who is the high school science teacher at Loyal, having just joined the staff this year, said he brought a bit of a different perspective since he didn't have strong ties to either community. He said that in

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TRG NEWS

Wednesday, January 22, 2025

Consolidation, from p. 9

looking at the class rosters for Loyal, there was a significant drop in the number of students enrolled from the upper grades to the lower grades. The senior class has 38 students this year, the junior class has 50 and the sophomore class has 45. Freshmen, eighth, seventh, and sixth grades have enrollment in the high 30s. However, below sixth grade, there are about 30 students per grade. Belter said once those students reached high school, it would be hard to sustain classes and programming at the current level, because at some point it become impractical to offer a course if only three students want to take it, for example. Or, he said, the district would have to rely heavily on virtual classes.

"My advice (to the school boards) is to stay the course while recognizing that things will keep changing. I do think the big picture is the best way to kind of communicate those financial concerns, and five years is a long time to figure out the details," said Belter.

Chris Lindner agreed with Belter that the districts needed to prepare to face that drop in enrollment and subsequent decline in revenue.

"Obviously four or five years seems like a long way out, but it will be here. But with the (ballot) question, at least it gets the direction moving forward. At least we have a defining answer that we can move forward with," he said.

The question on the April ballot is advisory only, meaning the school boards are not bound by the outcome. However, if the outcome is favorable, it would give the boards confidence to move toward making consolidation a reality. The districts had discussed two timelines for consolidation. Both boards must pass a resolution indicating their intent to consolidate. If the boards passed a resolution this December, the first year as a consolidated district would be the 2027-28 school year. Otherwise, if they passed a resolution in December 2026, the first year as a consolidated district would be the 2028-29 school year. The district administrators previously said they thought passing a resolution in December 2026 would make more sense because both school districts' operational referendums run out after the 2027-28 school year, so it would be a cleaner transition to start as a new district the following year.

After the boards pass a resolution to consolidate, a joint board is formed and all decisions go through that.

Becky Kohnert, who is secretary at Greenwood Elementary School, said she realizes consolidation could be a little scary for her position. But, she said, she feels consolidation is what's best for her kids. She said kids having the best education possible was the most important, and she didn't care where the school was.

Bucky Deegan from Loyal asked if Greenwood had a backup plan if the voters were against consolidation. He also said he would like to see the Greenwood School Board meetings livestreamed, as it would build trust in both communities. (The Jan. 15 joint meeting had 352 views as of Jan. 20.)

Nick Stieglitz from Greenwood said he was glad the boards were being proactive. He felt the boards just needed to get consolidation done.

"Having the state come in (to arrange the schools) scares me a lot more," he said.

Loyal board member Matt Kubista, who is also the police chief, said he does not have ties to the area, but cares deeply about the community. His wife and one of his officers went to school in Minnesota and both ended up losing the high school in their town. He said both those communities have struggled since then, in terms of losing population and losing students out of their district.

"It will affect one of our communities. And I liked one of the last things that was said about a plan. This is what I've been saying. If this question is on there, why are we rushing it? Why isn't there any plan? That's what I want to hear. With such a great matter, we need that plan. When I first started and went to my first co-board meeting in June, I asked those questions. What about collaboration? What about the referendum? How can we support our own schools?"

"I look at possibly with administration down the road, we've operated with two administrators before; why couldn't we go back to two administrators?"

He also suggested using attrition to whittle down the number of staff, especially with several retirements coming up over the next handful of years.

"Consolidation may have to happen, yes. It might have to. Does it have to happen right now?... I'm not against consolidation, but I'm just saying, is there possibly through our own attrition, we could possibly do it ourselves? Have we looked at that? Have we gotten the

numbers?"

He said people needed to know what they were voting for and what the referendum amount would be under a consolidated district.

Chris Lindner said he thought going down to two administrators would not work well, for meeting the needs present in the school.

"Just talking about going down to one principal and one administrator, that's a lot. I was a 4K-12 principal for seven, eight years. You talk about (student) needs — needs were a lot back then and they have gotten worse, just throughout the building. And I believe our administration, our staff, are working their tails off and doing the best they can."

Kubista said he agreed, and was not trying to say the current staff was not working hard; he was just trying to look at all the options and wanting people to realize there could be various negative ramifications of losing the school in one's town.

Loyal board member Derek Weyer said that in addition to the Baird study, the boards had talked about doing a feasibility study, which had not gone anywhere "because we wanted to see what the public wanted us to do."

"Now, if a generic question is going to be put on the ballot, I agree with Matt (Kubista) that that cannot be the final question that's asked of the general public. If this comes back with a 'Yes, we need to look at consolidation,' then the feasibility study needs to take over and then, eventually, you go back to the public with the concrete plan and then we start the process," recommended Weyer.

One community member who did not give her name said that, if she understood correctly, the basic question was if Loyal people were OK with having the high school in Greenwood, because that would be the scenario that would make the most fiscal sense — having the elementary school in Loyal and the high school in Greenwood, and eliminating the third building (the current Greenwood Elementary). Then there wouldn't be a need to renovate the current Greenwood high school building to accommodate elementary students.

"There's other options. There's other scenarios too; we just haven't talked about them. We haven't talked about them because we want to know if this is the direction the communities want us to go. And if that answer's yes, then it's the work ahead to figure out what are those other options... I think it's important for people to know those conversations haven't been had at all. That's where it's, to Derek (Weyer)'s point, the facilities study is what's to come next after the Baird study," replied Green.

After the public comment, all the board members had a chance to share their thoughts. Roehl wrapped up his thoughts by saying that the board appreciated everyone's comments and was truly listening.

"The hard part is trying to do what's right for our community knowing that someone's mad... I know we're making people upset, but we are trying to do the best for our kids. There's two ways of looking at this — one you can say, 'Boy, it's scary,' and it is. And we don't have all the answers; I don't think we'll ever have all the answers. But that's kind of a negative way of looking at it."

"Another way of looking at it is, 'What can we make of this? This could be the best, positive thing that there is.' We can come up with new classes. We can come up with new sports. There's so many new possibilities with this. And that's where I focus my energy, is what can we make of this? Instead of 'Boy, this is scary' and it is. But I think we should focus more on what we can build together."

"Yeah, I'll back you up on that, Dennis. I think it's what we can do best for our kids in both towns, regardless," said Greenwood School Board President Jamie Gardner.

Greenwood board member Dean Lindner agreed and said what would scare him most would be if one of the school districts were unable to pass a referendum and tough decisions had to be made after that. He saw consolidation as a way for the districts to chart their own destinies and set them up for a strong future.

Greenwood board member Luke Smith said he also wanted the best opportunities for students and the location of the school didn't matter to him.

After everyone had a chance to share their thoughts, the boards moved on to discussing the actual referendum question.

The question will state, "Do you support the consoli-

dation of the School District of Loyal, Clark County, Wisconsin, with the School District of Greenwood, Clark County, Wisconsin?" (For Greenwood, the Greenwood School District will be listed first.)

Weyer asked if the board could put in its motion that there would be another question asked of the public afterward.

"I would love to guarantee people, 'Vote on this, but you will have another opportunity to decide, when the final plans are put in place.' And maybe that motion doesn't need to be done tonight, but..." he said.

"My thought is, every time in the past it has stopped when we did the facilities study. Why are we going to be spending money on that, if it's going to get shot down?" said Haslow. "It's been done twice already; doing something a third time over is setting us up for failure. If we're going to fail, might as well do it now."

Roehl said the board could not actually vote on what Weyer was saying, because it wasn't on the agenda, but they could put it on the agenda for a future meeting.

Kubista said he could see what Weyer was getting at.

"Are we going to come back and ask another question somewhere? Will the public be able to vote on a ballot if they don't like where the school is going to be? Is there going to be another question on the ballot, where they can say no to that when they find out where the school's going to be?" said Kubista.

"I think we have to bring that up at our next regular board meeting and discuss it there, and if we want to do that, make a separate motion for that. We can do that," said Roehl.

Kubista said because of the concern he brought up, he had voted no on last month's item about putting a question on the ballot and would probably vote no again this time.

The Loyal board passed a motion 6-1 to have the question put on the April ballot; Greenwood passed the motion 5-0.

Background information

Greenwood has been under an operational referendum since 2005. Chris Lindner wasn't sure of the exact year Loyal first started operating under a referendum, but believed it was 2005 or 2006.

Green made the point that due to the inadequate state funding formula, 80% of the school districts in Wisconsin are currently relying on referendum dollars to operate. Even under a consolidated district, the district would still need to go to referendum to balance the budget.

Both school districts plan to post information about the consolidation question on their school websites, along with a Q&A portal in which a user can submit a question and the school district will do its best to answer that question within 48 hours.

County health dept.: Protect your family from radon

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that is radioactive. You can't see or smell it, yet it is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Radon seeps into homes and buildings from the surrounding soil. Fortunately, the risk from radon can be reduced.

The Clark County Health Department (CCHD), along with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recommends that every home and building be tested for radon levels. For more accurate testing, it is suggested to test for radon during the winter months when homes are closed up. The CCHD has short-term radon test kits available to test homes or buildings in Clark County. The test kit can be picked up at the department for \$10 or mailed to you for \$10 plus a mailing fee. To receive a test kit, call 715-743-5112 or email paige.lindner@co.clark.wi.us.

If a high level of radon gas is detected (the unsafe level of radon exposure set by the EPA is 4 pCi/L-pico-curies per liter of air), simple steps can be taken to decrease the problem. A certified contractor can install a radon mitigation system to greatly reduce the radon concentration in your home.

For more information about radon, including a list of certified radon mitigation contractors, visit the CCHD website at <https://www.clarkcountyiwi.gov/ph-radon>.

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SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS - The Curtiss Lions Club presented two scholarships at their January meeting in the amount of \$600 each to two students. Briseida Escalera, pictured left, is an Abbotsford high school graduate and plans to attend Northcentral Technical College to become an EMT. Paris Ackerman, pictured right, is from Owen-Withee high school and plans to attend UW - Stout for psychology. Scholarships were presented by President Lion Dawn Brossow.

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Special Needs Virtual Resource Fair planned

A Special Needs Virtual Resource Fair will be held on Monday February 3 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

People access it at the following Zoom address: <https://medford-k12-wi-us.zoom.us/j/8532427907?pwd=TVhQWUt3Nk80V1kyT1JMR3JHQVJKdz09>

The event will be an evening of learning about school and community resources to help you and your family, learn what is available here in Taylor County, and be a part of Our Special Family and Friends Workshop.

Each agency will provide resources and information in a 5 minute presentation learning format, follow-up resources will be shared through links, and much more.

Parents, community members, and school staff are invited to attend.

Community Resource Agencies and Representatives include: Aging and Disability Resource Center, Aspirus Therapy and Fitness, Black River Industries, DVR and Department of Workforce Development, Inclusa, Midstate Independent Living Choices, **Northcentral Technical College**, Opportunity Development Center, Taylor County Autism Support Group, Taylor County Birth to Three, Taylor County Human Services, Taylor County Literacy Council, and more.

❖ PART 3 OF A SERIES ❖

Part 3: City of Merrill property taxes explained

BY TINA L. SCOTT
EDITOR

This article is part 3, the final installment in a series to help explain how real estate property taxes are calculated, why some homeowners in the City of Merrill saw their real estate tax bill increase, and why some homeowners' tax increases were more or less than others.

Four jurisdictions on one bill recapped

As mentioned in part 2 of this series, the Real Estate Property Bill City of Merrill residents receive reflects tax levy assessments from four different jurisdictions: Lincoln County, the City of Merrill, Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS), and [Northcentral Technical College \(NTC\)](#). Each one of those taxing authorities/entities sets their own budget and calculates the total amount of funding needed for the coming year; then subtracts from that any other sources of income available to them (such as state or federal aid, grants, shared revenue, etc.); and the remainder is what becomes their tax levy amount, an amount which is restricted by State laws to a maximum percentage of increase; and this is used to set their tax (or mill) rate.

Clarifying examples

One astute reader pointed out there was a flaw in the example I used in part 2 of this series, explaining how a property reassessment alone can result in higher property taxes. He's right. My example kind of mixed apples and oranges.

My original example said: After reassessment: If the total property value increases to \$120 million due to higher property values, the local government may still need to collect \$1 million in taxes. While the tax rate remains the same (1%), a property that was previously valued at \$200,000 might now be valued at \$250,000. As a result, the property owner will pay \$2,500 instead of \$2,000, even though the tax rate hasn't changed.

It should have said simply: After reassessment: IF the tax rate remains the same (1%), a property that was previously valued at \$200,000 might now be valued at \$250,000. As a result, the property owner will pay \$2,500 instead of \$2,000, even though the tax rate hasn't changed. That would be correct. The tax rate remaining consistent, multiplied by a new higher property value, will result in said increase in taxes.

However, to the reader's point, my original example said: After reassessment: If the total property value increases to \$120 million due to higher property values, the local government may still need to collect \$1 million in taxes. In that case, if the taxing entity did not need to raise any additional amount for an increased budget, the tax rate would actually decrease (not remain the same as I originally stated) to .8%. And in that case, even though a property that was previously valued at \$200,000 might now be valued at \$250,000, the property owner would still only pay \$2,000 in taxes (the same as the previous year) because,

even though his property value went up, the overall tax rate went down.

So that would be the scenario in the case of increased values due to reassessment where the tax levy amount stayed the same, bringing the tax levy percentage down.

So let's recap to clarify with a couple more examples.

Let's say a property's assessed value doubles, like some properties that were previously valued on the low end in the City of Merrill did this past year. If a property was previously valued at \$50,000 and it doubled to \$100,000 in assessed value, but the tax rate stayed the same, and for the sake of simplicity, let's stick with that 1%, then a property valued at \$50,000 x a 1% tax rate would have had a \$500 tax bill previously, and with the new assessed value having doubled to \$100,000, the tax bill would increase to \$1,000 (\$100,000 x 1%). That is, all things being equal.

However, if the tax rate decreases, because the entire tax values of a municipality did not double—only some of those on the lower end of the spectrum—so the tax rate would go down to generate the same overall tax levy for the budget, and let's go with that same .8% again to keep things simple, then the amount of the new year's tax bill would be \$100,000 x .8% or \$800. So the taxes would increase (because of the increased value) but not in direct proportion to the increase in value. In other words, the taxes wouldn't double, even though the assessed value of the property doubled.

City of Merrill 2024 tax levy

Moving on to the specifics of our local taxes, the City of Merrill increased their overall annual budget for 2025 by just 2.1%, the maximum allowed amount, from \$5,849,296 in 2024 to \$ 5,972,666 for 2025. "The City of Merrill Held the levy at 2.1% which is below the average increase of inflation," said Merrill Mayor Steve Hass. This allowed for a 2.5% increase for City of Merrill employees, which is still below the cost of inflation, he said, but did provide City employees with some relief.

However, after factoring in adjustments for the Tax Incremental Districts and the increase in the assessed values of all properties within the City of Merrill, based on the recent reassessments, the overall City of Merrill mill rate actually went down, from 16.78% in 2023 to 10.06% for 2024. That's because the total assessed value of properties within the City of Merrill increased from \$423,537,330 in 2023 to \$683,425,200 in 2024, an increase of nearly \$260,000,000.

Factoring in the rates for the other taxing jurisdictions (Lincoln County, MAPS, and NTC), the total levy taken against residents within the City of Merrill actually decreased from 7.7% in 2023 to 0.8% in 2024.

Median home values in Merrill increased with reassessment

Prior to the reassessment, "the median home value in Merrill was \$80,000," said Emily Ley, Finance Director for the City of Merrill, "and it is now [with the reassessment] \$150,000." The increase in value was significant due to the housing shortage. "That's an 87.5% increase in the value [of

the property], and it was an 11% percent increase for the median home value that [the taxes] went up," she said. So even though home values increased significantly, taxes did not increase by the same rate.

Rather, the reassessment to set the assessed values of properties much closer to the fair market value means that now property owners are "paying their fair share," said City Administrator Rod Akey. "The reevaluation tries to make everything equal," he said. It is more equitable to all property owners.

What does all of that mean?

In a nutshell, this means taxes increased for properties where assessed values increased from 2023 to 2024. But for properties where the values were already close to fair market value in 2023, so their assessed value remained the same upon reassessment in 2024, those properties' real estate taxes actually went down.

Consider this: A property already with an assessed value of \$150,000 within the City of Merrill in 2023 would have paid \$4,866.09 in net tax (prior to any lottery credit or first dollar credit). Let's say that assessed value was spot on because the home was purchased in 2023 for \$150,000, so it didn't change in value due to the 2024 reassessment. That same property with an assessed value of \$150,000 in 2024 would now pay \$2,873.64 in real estate taxes.

Their tax bill would have decreased significantly this year because all properties (based on the reassessment) were paying their equitable share" of the tax burden.

A property with an assessed value of \$80,000 in 2023 (which was the median home value prior to this reassessment) would have paid \$2,595.25 in net tax (prior to any lottery credit or first dollar credit), but now with a reassessed value of \$150,000 (which is the new median home value) in 2024, that same property would pay \$2,873.64 in real estate taxes. So the home's value increased 87.5%, but their property tax obligation only increased 11.2%.

Last year, the first homeowner was paying more than his fair share of property taxes, but now that properties were reassessed, each property owner's share of the tax burden has been reset to level the playing field again, so to speak.

We sincerely hope that this series has helped better explain how property taxes are calculated and why property taxes may have changed this year. If not, additional resources are available. For links to public information or to learn more about taxation and assessment (DOR's 2024 Guide for Property Owners); your property assessment, tax bills, and payment history (Lincoln County Land Records); or City of Merrill tax rates compared to other Lincoln County municipalities (Lincoln County Mill Rates), go to: ci.merrill.wi.us/taxcollection. For questions on your property's assessed value or to learn how to dispute that assessed value, contact Kitt Kostki at 715.577.1875. For questions about the City of Merrill annual budget or this year's tax levy amount, contact City of Merrill Finance Director Emily Ley at 715.536.5594.

Jan
29

2025

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resized
52%

School District Offers Exciting New Club With Esports

Video games have been a part of Americana for over five decades. From the early origins of Pong and the arcades of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to in-home gaming consoles like Nintendo, Sega, PlayStation and the X-Box that dominated the 1990s and 2000s, generations have grown up as gamers.

The gaming industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry that makes more money than Hollywood and thousands are employed by the industry in the United States. Clubs across the country are springing up to introduce a new generation to online gaming.

Bryce Connor, a first-year social studies teacher at Thorp High School, is proud to be the district's Esports head coach. Esports, short for 'electronic sports' is a term used to describe organized, competitive game play. This can be individuals or teams competing in leagues or tournaments and is similar to traditional sports with prizes available for top players.

"Esports is an extracurricular organization that is run through our after-school program," Connor explains enthusiastically. "It's an exciting opportunity for a lot of kids who aren't typically in a lot of extracurriculars to be in extracurriculars and to compete at a high level. The games that we play are Mario Kart, Fortnite and Rocket League right now."

In the state of Wisconsin, Esports is organized and run

through the Wisconsin Esports High School Association (WIHSEA). WIHSEA began in 2018 with less than 30 charter members but has exploded to include over 100 schools from every corner of the state.

"The WIAA handles sports and there's a different organization called the WIHSEA," Connor explains. "The phonics for that would be 'Wee-sa' and they are the organization that all Wisconsin teams fall under since Esports is an activity and not under the athletics."

Students from the School District of Thorp who wish to compete in Esports are still held to the same high standards as any WIAA student-athlete. This includes maintaining a passing grade point average and abiding by a code of conduct.

"Since we are affiliated with the after-school program, students with grades lower than 65% are forced to get their grade up through homework help that is also part of the after school program, Connor said. "This helps secure their grades and secure their educational future. Esports serves as an incentive to make sure they are passing all their classes."

Much like the WIAA, Esports is broken into divisions, which is based on the number of students enrolled within a high school. Thorp's Esports team is Division 3 in Mario Kart and Rocket League, but the Cardinals step up in class during Fortnite and often compete against Division 1 and

Division 2 schools in Wisconsin.

"Fortnite is kind of a unique one because that's broken up in time slots. We play varsity on Wednesdays at 5 pm," Connor explains. "We meet every day, and we compete in several different competitions throughout the week. We compete on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays the varsity plays Rocket League and on Wednesdays we play varsity Mario Kart and Fortnite and then on Thursdays we have JV Fortnite and Rocket League."

Thorp's Esports team currently has 16 members, and is a co-ed activity. Esports is only available to high school students, but Connor is hoping to branch out and add middle school students in the future.

Connor said because the program is in its first year, it was important to prioritize high school team competition. His focus is paying off as Thorp is ranked first in Division 3 in Mario Kart and fighting for the top spot in Fortnite. These results are impressive, but don't surprise Connor.

"We have incredible players who are very skillful," Connor said. "Of course you're happy they're playing at that high level, but when I first saw some of our guys playing, I was amazed. We're very proud of our team."

Games are conducted in a Two-versus-Two format – two players going at each other at the same time. Like WIAA sanctioned sports, there are state competitions for Esports, with statewide events taking place at UW – Madison or NTC in Wausau.

Esports is not only gaining in popularity in high school campuses across the state and country, it's gaining adherents at the collegiate level. Multiple institutions of higher education even offer scholarships for Esports.

"WIHSEA has a college recruitment aspect to it," Connor noted. "The organization helps students get recruited to Esports programs in college to give them secondary education opportunities at a lower cost through scholarship opportunities. So, there is a financial gain students can make by playing Esports at a collegiate level."

Connor is quick to point out that the biggest benefit to Esports is that students are not only doing better in class, but the club is also helping break down stereotypes about the gaming community and is fostering strong bonds of community within the district.

"Video games cut across all boundaries; we have star athletes that you see on the football field scoring touchdowns and sacking the quarterback and then they're playing Fortnite at a high-level week in and week out," Connor said. "So, not only is it breaking barriers of traditional athletes versus non-athletes, you now have an interconnected community where they are working together for a common goal and that goal is to win for the school."

That's not to say that there's not a physical and mental component to Esports. Esports requires quick decision making, excellent hand-eye coordination, fast reaction time and staying mentally focused. Connor says there's even real-world benefits to being involved in Esports.

"Video games challenge reaction times and decision making aid in both of those processes. Our players are making split second decisions that can affect an outcome positively or negatively. I read a research article when I was in college that said that people who play video games track movement twice as much as the average person. So, if you really want to make an argument, we're making safer drivers by having an Esports program and better traditional athletes."

Connor is not the only one singing the praises of Esports. Those students who are involved in the club are enjoying their time and discovering skills they never knew they had – and that Esports has the potential to open new opportunities.

"I love being part of it. It's great to play games with my friends after school and get practice in for competitions," says Thorp High student Anton Kitchen. "We have a blast after school, and I like that I can use this to grow my future and that it could be a really great way to help pay for my education. It would also be cool to be able to represent my school at a higher level."

Connor hopes more students join, and he says he's happy to teach at a school district that supports an activity like Esports. He says he is thrilled his players are putting Thorp on the map in a positive way and is eager to see what potential opportunities await his players.

"I am thrilled, and I cannot be more excited for the future and the opportunities it provides for students here at Thorp. I have been so amazed that we have grown this much in one year and the sky is limit."



Thorp High school sophomore Anton Kitchen, left, and Thorp High junior Roc Raether take part in a recent Esports competition. Raether competes on Thorp's varsity Fortnite team while Anton plays varsity Mario Kart 8 and JV Fortnite. The School District of Thorp is offering Esports for the first time this year as part of their after school program. The club is co-ed and currently has 16 members.

Candidates File For Local Offices On School Board, City Council In Spring Election

Candidates for Thorp's City Council and the School District of Thorp's Board of Education have filed for placement on the April 1, 2025 election ballot.

Residents of Thorp will have several options for the Board of Education, which includes incumbent Jason Maier. Incumbent Kristy Sterling has moved out of the area

and is no longer eligible to run for the Board of Education. Lana Ciolkosz, Kari Bielecki and Angela Hertz have all filed papers to run for Board of Education this spring.

Thorp's City Council has three open seats with incumbent Brian Abramczak running unopposed for Ward 3. Incumbent Joshua Rosemeyer is also running unopposed for Ward 4.

Alderson at Large Dave Korn is not seeking reelection. Rodney Enkers is seeking the open Alderson at Large seat vacated by Korn.

The deadline to file papers has passed, but voters will still have the option of voting for write-in candidates. At the state level, there will be a race for Supreme Court justice between former Attorney General Brad Schimel and Dane County Judge Susan Crawford. Incumbent Justice Ann Walsh Bradley is not running for reelection.





Lallemand Animal Nutrition Awards \$14,000 in Scholarships

One recipient is a dual-degree veterinary student at the University of Minnesota, pursuing both a doctorate in veterinary medicine and a doctorate in population medicine.

INDUSTRY PRESS RELEASE · January 21, 2025 09:49 AM

The Lallemand Animal Nutrition Scholarship Committee awarded five scholarships to up-and-coming students and established scholars within agriculture. This is the tenth year the company awarded the scholarships, which reward students for their exceptional achievements and dedication to the field of agriculture.

“We are proud to support the next generation of agricultural leaders,” says Jeff Ast, commercial director for Lallemand Animal Nutrition, North and South America. “This unique program seeks both undergraduate and graduate students because our judging panel recognizes that dedication to agriculture can be found at all educational levels.”

The five students receiving scholarships are:

- * Mary Lewandowski, who is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in organizational leadership at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay
- * Sydney Wyman, who is majoring in animal science at Morehead State University
- * Michael Starnes, a graduate student studying food safety at Texas Tech University
- * Grant Fincham, who is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- * Mikayla Schlosser, a dual-degree veterinary student at the University of Minnesota, pursuing both a doctorate in veterinary medicine and a doctorate in population medicine

Students’ Future Goals

Mary Lewandowski – Undergraduate student recipient Lewandowski hails from a sixth-generation, 50-cow dairy farm in Bevent, Wisc. She recently graduated from **Northcentral Technical College** with associate degrees in agribusiness and dairy science. Lewandowski aspires to bridge the gap between consumers and agriculturists through a career in agricultural advocacy.

Sydney Wyman – Undergraduate student recipient Wyman has been immersed in the livestock industry her entire life, growing up in a small town in the Sierra Nevada mountains. She plans to pursue a master's degree in ruminant nutrition and eventually become a dairy nutritionist.

Michael Starnes – Graduate student recipient Starnes already holds a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University and has interned with the National Farmers Union in Washington, D.C. With a long-term goal of working in food safety legislation, his current research at Texas Tech University focuses on Salmonella and E. coli mitigation strategies in beef and pork.

Grant Fincham – Doctoral student recipient Fincham grew up on a 200-cow Holstein dairy farm in northeast Kansas. He holds a bachelor's degree in animal science from Kansas State University and a master's degree in ruminant nutrition from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Fincham is focusing on dairy cattle whole animal energy utilization in his doctoral program.

Mikayla Schlosser – Veterinary medicine student recipient Schlosser's passion for poultry production and commitment to global food security drive her studies and career aspirations in population medicine. She is deeply committed to advancing the sustainability and security of global food systems.

For more information about Lallemand Animal Nutrition and the Lallemand Scholarship program, visit www.lallemandanimalnutrition.com.



Advancing healthcare education through innovation



Posted Monday, January 13, 2025 2:13 pm

For City Times

FOR CITY TIMES MARSHFIELD--Aspirus and [North Central Technical College](#) are working together to bring immersive reality technology into healthcare education. This partnership is giving students a chance to experience clinical scenarios like never before, helping them feel more prepared for real-world challenges.

[NTC's](#) new Simulation Center features an immersive room funded by the Health 4.0 grant. "With immersive reality, we can create scenarios students might not encounter during traditional training," said Reed Champagne, [NTC's](#) Manager of Education Technology. "We change the room's background, add sounds, and even smells to mimic real clinical settings. It gives students a much deeper understanding than they would get from just sitting in a classroom."

Aspirus employees, like nursing student Aspen Gunnlaugsson, are already seeing the benefits. "The realistic structure is so like clinical settings. It's helped me feel more confident in my skills and ready for patient care," Aspen shared. She also noted that the immersive technology made it easier to refresh her knowledge after taking time off, which prepared her for clinical rotations.

The immersive room also allows students to tackle complex scenarios that they might not experience during their training. "We can't guarantee students will see every type of case in real life, but this technology helps fill those gaps," Champagne explained. He added that by integrating sounds, visuals, and even smells, students are better prepared to respond effectively to various situations when they enter the workforce.

Aspirus looks to innovate health care education with new partnership

WKOW Jan 8, 2025 Updated Jan 8, 2025 0



WAUSAU, Wis. (WKOW) -- Aspirus and **North Central Technical College (NTC)** are working to bring new technology into health care education.

This partnership seeks to better prepare students for real-world challenges by immersing them in realistic clinical environments.

Reed Champagne, **NTC's** Manager of Education Technology, emphasized the collaboration's impact on the community.

"With immersive reality, we can create scenarios students might not encounter during traditional training," Champagne said. "We change the room's background, add sounds, and even smells to mimic real clinical settings. It gives students a much deeper understanding than they would get from just sitting in a classroom."

According to Champagne, this hands-on experience will ultimately enhance patient outcomes and ensure local health care providers are equipped to meet the needs of a dynamic population.

Skye Mucha Bridges the Gap, Connecting NTC Students to Helpful Resources

BY KALEY FECH JAN 24, 2025



Students often face struggles outside of the classroom that inhibit their ability to learn and do well in school. Skye Mucha, Student Resource Coordinator at [Northcentral Technical College \(NTC\)](#) works to address those barriers with students.

“They had seen that nonacademic barriers were a big factor in students not being able to continue school,” she said. “They brought me on to help students with those needs with the goal of helping to retain students semester to semester.”

Nonacademic barriers are any obstacles students face outside of school that have a negative impact on their education. This can include basic needs like housing and food, finances, transportation, childcare, mental health and general healthcare.

“It’s really anything you can think of that people have to worry about on a day-to-day basis that have nothing to do with school but can definitely get in the way of students being able to focus on school when they don’t know how they’re going to meet their needs,” Skye said.

Skye’s job is to connect students with resources that already exist, whether that’s at [NTC](#) or through the community where they live. Although this community and many others have resources, she said they can be hard to find and even more difficult to navigate.

“That’s where I come in, and I help connect students to those resources,” she said. “I have a lot of background and knowledge, know all the little nuances and help navigate the red tape.”

She can help students determine which resources they are eligible for and how to apply.

Because funding is a limited resource, eligibility requirements tend to get tighter, which can leave a lot of people in a grey area. They may have a job and are still struggling to meet their needs.

“I give a disclaimer to everyone that I don’t have any magic wands to fix problems,” Skye said. “If someone has a need where a resource doesn’t exist or they don’t qualify, I do my best to problem solve with them and get creative with how to meet that need with what they do have.”

Skye’s position is new at NTC, so she has been able to help build it from the ground up, and she said it’s been going well so far. She added that staff and students alike have been excited to have this role on campus.

“From my very first day, it’s been very apparent that this is a need here and that staff were going to utilize me in my role,” she Skye said. “I can tell that staff and faculty truly care about their students succeeding.”

Students can seek out assistance on their own, but that can be hard, especially when they have a lot on their plates. Staff and faculty can also refer students to Skye.

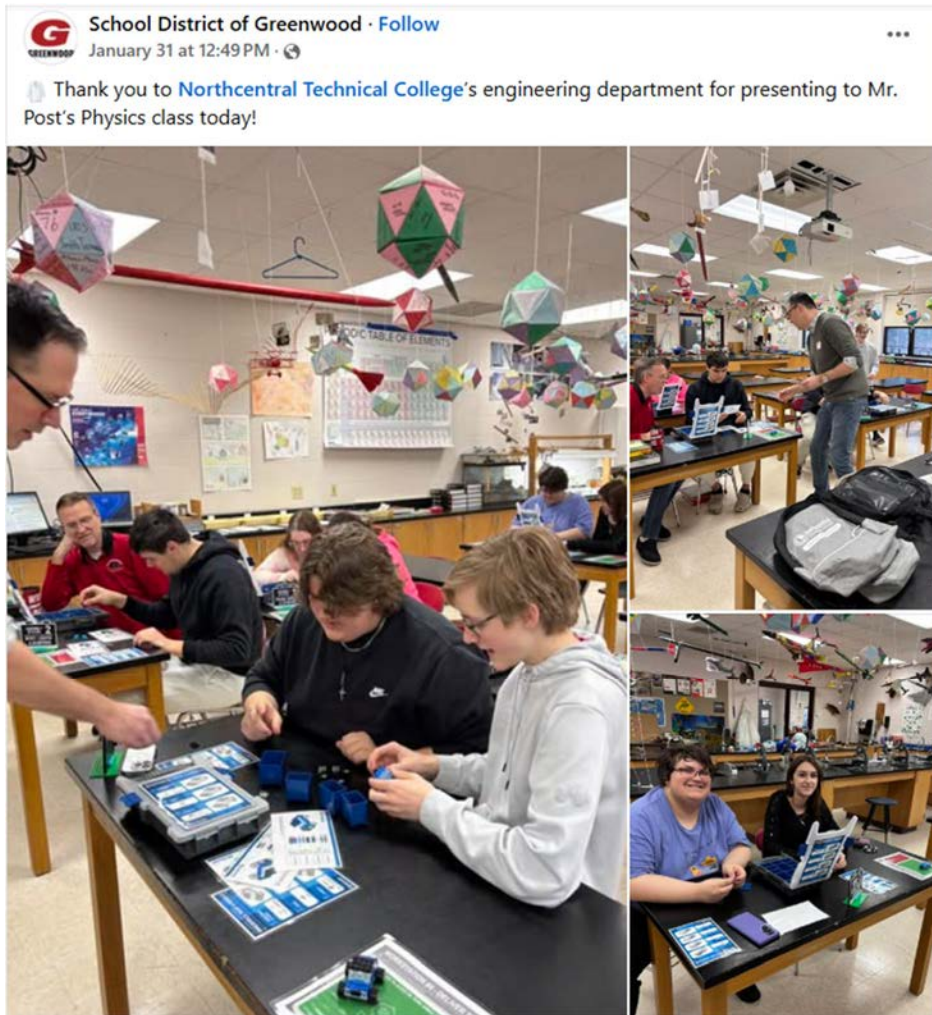
“I really advocate for that warm hand off so that it’s not the student’s responsibility to reach out to make that connection,” she said. “It’s intimidating, especially when they have 100 things going on and maybe have never asked for help before. Sometimes us reaching out really opens that door for them.”

Skye said she is looking forward to connecting with more students and looking at what kinds of larger outreach can be done to reach students, especially those who wouldn’t come on their own.

Students she’s been able to help so far have reached out to thank her, and that has meant a lot.

“I can tell they weren’t expecting this level of support,” Skye said. “Even if I wasn’t able to pull out a magic wand to fix it, it meant something that NTC cared enough to ask them if they needed help.”

Students can connect with Skye at mucha@ntc.edu.



Energy Central Jobs · Follow
January 30 at 1:00 PM · 🌐

Are you ready to forge the future leaders in the energy sector? Click the link to learn more! An opportunity as a Gas Utility Educator at Northcentral Technical College could be your next career move! Faculty, Gas Utility Instructor

Northce TECHNICAL CO

ENERGYCENTRAL.COM

Faculty, Gas Utility Instructor

This full-time faculty position will support instruction for Northcentral Technical College's (NTC...



Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

Yesterday at 11:17 AM · 🌐

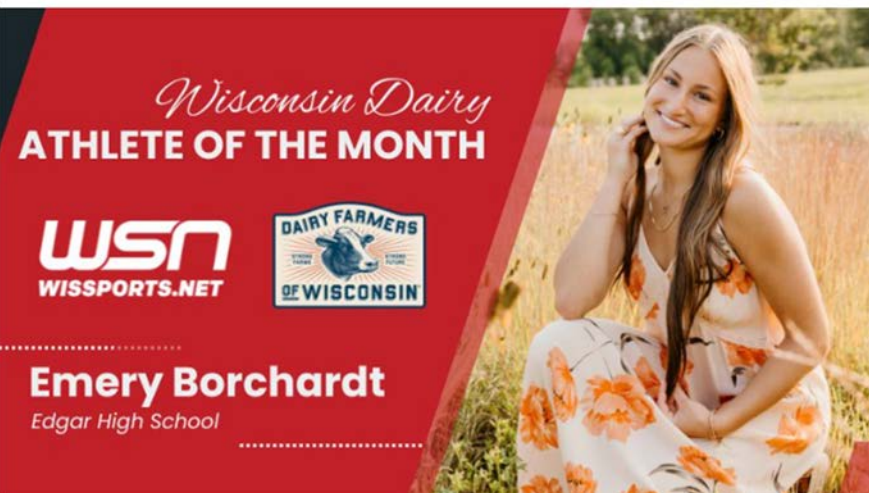
...

Emery Borchardt from Edgar High School is this month's Wisconsin Dairy Female Athlete of the Month, sponsored by [WisSports.net](#) (WSN) in partnership with Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin! 🏆

Emery, a senior and three-sport athlete, leads her volleyball, basketball, and softball teams as a team captain. Off the court, she's a dedicated farmhand on her family's multi-generational dairy farm, assisting with feeding cattle, milking cows, cleaning barns and bedding, and seasonal fieldwork. Her family farm, now in its 154th year, is a testament to the hard work and commitment of generations before her.

Beyond sports and farming, Emery lives out [#EdgarExcellence](#) as she is involved in FFA, FCCLA, National Honor Society, and Student Council. She loves the sense of purpose that farm life brings, seeing it as a way to give back to her family and community. After graduation, she plans to attend [Northcentral Technical College](#) to study Dental Hygiene.

[Nelsonville Dairy Edgar FFA Edgar School District Wisconsin Association of FFA Wisconsin FFA - Section 7](#)



Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin

17h · 🌐

...

This will come fast, nonprofit leaders! So register soon 🙏

We're thankful for the continued partnership with [Northcentral Technical College](#) to make educational opportunities like this possible!

WORKFORCE TRAINING + PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MARCH 5 • APRIL 2 • APRIL 30

Wed, Mar 5 at 10:30 AM

Nonprofit Board Development Training Series

Northcentral Technical College, A165 · 1000 W Campus Dr, Wausau, WI 54401

1 person going

☆ Interested



Hardwood Manufacturers Association · Follow

18h · 🌐

...

Northcentral Technical College is offering their Band Saw Filer Certificate program, March 25 – April 17, 2025.

This program provides hands-on intensive training that prepares learners for careers in the saw filing profession. Over four weeks, students will learn proven procedures to effectively bench, fit, and repair saws while learning to properly align band mills to increase saw longevity and sawing accuracy.

Learn more here: <https://www.ntc.edu/academics-training/progra...> See more



BAND SAW FILER CERTIFICATE



- ✓ FOUR WEEK COURSE
- ✓ BENCH, FIT, AND REPAIR SAWS
- ✓ ALIGN BAND MILLS TO INCREASE SAW LONGEVITY AND SAWING ACCURACY
- ✓ NTC OFFERS THE ONLY ACCREDITED BAND SAW FILING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES.

Check out <https://www.ntc.edu/> for more information!



March 25-
April 17, 2025



Antigo, Wisconsin
NTC, Wood Technology Center of
Excellence

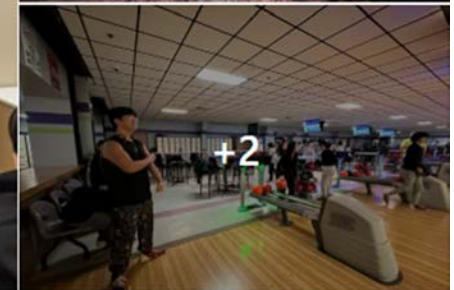


Hmong American Center, Inc. · Follow

January 24 at 10:47 AM · 🌐

...

Thank you to [Northcentral Technical College](#) for allowing us to come in and have a tour of the facility yesterday! The tour was both fun and educational to be a part of! Thank you to our tour guide! And thank you to our youths for attending!





Ken Cerney

Yesterday at 11:04 AM · 🌐

If you are in central Wisconsin and don't find Medford to far away to take a class once a week here is what I hope to be a great class on leadership through NTC. As the title says this is a class on building foundations of leadership and especially discovering your preferred way to lead. Far too many young or new leaders are not given enough training to even know what their preferred leadership style is.



NTC.EDU

Foundations of Leadership Program - Conferences, Seminars, and Workshops | Northcentral Technical College



Taylor County - Human Services · Follow

23h · 🌐

Northcentral Technical College is offering Free Basic Technology Help Sessions (No registration required) March 12, 2025, at the following times and locations:

10am-11:30am Ogema Public Library, W5005 State Road 86, Ogema, WI 54459

12pm-1:30pm Westboro Public Library, N8855 Second Street Westboro, WI 54490

2pm-4pm Rib Lake Public Library, 645 Pearl Street, Rib Lake, WI 54470

Contact Northcentral Technical College Medford Campus with any questions by calling 715-748-3603



Community Tech Time

Basic Technology Help Sessions

Free | No registration is required

March 12, 2025

10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Ogema Public Library	Westboro Public Library	Rib Lake Public Library
W5005 State Road 86	N8855 Second Street	645 Pearl Street
Ogema, WI 54459	Westboro, WI 54490	Rib Lake, WI 54470

Not sure how to use your new electronic device? Need help setting up a device or interested in learning more about technology? Let's learn together.


Our instructor, Kathy, will teach you how to use your smartphone, tablet or computer including how to setup your device, basic maneuvering and how to download apps. Bring your own device to this class for personalized technology support.

CONTACT


NTC's Medford Campus with any questions by calling 715.748.3603.

Northcentral Technical College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in employment, admissions or its programs or activities. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the College's nondiscrimination policies:


Equal Opportunity Officer
Northcentral Technical College
2000 W. Campus Drive
Medford, WI 54455
Phone: 715.822.2017

 **Hugh Jones**
January 24 at 1:27 PM · 🌐

Open season for scholarship applications! Share the word to all those interested in a fine educational experience and a bright future.



NTC.EDU
NTC Foundation Scholarships | Northcentral Technical College
NTC Foundation scholarships are made possible by hundreds of generous donors each year. S...


 **American Dental Therapy Association** · Follow
23h · 🌐

Northcentral Technical College is hiring a Dental Therapy Instructor!

This full-time faculty position will support instruction for NTC's Dental Therapy program, and supervise and teach Dental Therapy students at NTC's on-site dental clinic.

Requirements: Minimum 2 years experience, bachelor's degree or higher, and completion of a CODA-accredited Dental Therapy program. Application deadline is February 17, 2025.

Learn more at <https://conta.cc/4avtSNr>.





Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area · Follow

10h · 🌐

...

LEARNING WITH LEGOS: Thank you to Tom Rodemeier and Heidi Latendresse from [Northcentral Technical College](#) for coming to the Club and teaching teens about production and engineering practices! Members assembled LEGO cars while Tom and Heidi kept them on their toes, teaching them to adapt quickly to changes in the manufacturing process. NTC's Intro to Engineering Technology Mobile Workshops are a great resource for community young people that make education fun! [#GreatFuturesStartHere](#)



Northcentral Technical College

Yesterday at 10:00 AM · 🌐

...

Students from the [School District of Mishicot](#) and [Two Rivers Public Schools](#) participated in Wood Discovery Wednesdays at [NTC Antigo Campus](#)' [NTC Wood Technology Center of Excellence](#) in December.

Wood Discovery Wednesdays is an opportunity for high school students to experience NTC's state-of-the-art Wood Technology Center of Excellence and explore different areas of the industry. To learn more, visit: www.ntc.edu/calendar/2024/10/16/wood-discovery-wednesdays



🔥 Exciting News from Colby High School 🔥

Through an incredible partnership with NTC, Colby High School is offering the Firefighter 1 class right here on campus! This class, with 7 dedicated students, is an amazing opportunity to prepare the next generation of firefighters.

Today, the students took on their first challenge with the state-required Two-Minute Drill! 🕒💪 This drill tests their ability to get fully geared up in under two minutes—a vital skill for real-world eme... See more



The SPASH Computer Graphics class went to Northcentral Technical College (NTC) to print SPASH notepads on the offset presses with the NTC Instructor (former SPASH student Andy Somers). The project is part of their Dual Enrollment requirements to receive college credits through NTC. The students also toured the campus and did a STEM activity with two of the Engineering instructors. Thank you to CTE Instructor, Todd VanderLoop, for sharing what is happening in the classroom!... See more





Representative Calvin Callahan · Follow

3h ·

I enjoyed meeting with our area technical colleges yesterday. They have had a lot of great successes in recent years, and it was awesome to hear about some of those student success stories and how we can continue to support them in the upcoming state budget. [Wisconsin's Technical Colleges Northcentral Technical College Nicolet College](#)



Hmong American Center, Inc. · Follow

17h ·

Hello! On January 23rd we will take youths to tour NorthCentral Technical College then afterwards take youths to go bowling to end the day! Please join us!

Ages: 6th grade - 20 years old

Sign up here:

<https://forms.gle/d8WiAKnkP5v2JFp9>



The poster features a photograph of the Northcentral Technical College main entrance. Below the photo, the college's logo is displayed next to the H.M.O.N.G logo. The text 'H.M.O.N.G NTC TOUR' is prominently shown. A yellow banner provides the college's location: 1000 W Campus Dr, Wausau, WI 54401. A list of event details includes tour and bowling times, age restrictions, and transportation. Contact information for the Hmong American Center is provided, including a pick-up location and travel time. A QR code for sign-up is included, along with a contact person, Kim Vue, and her phone number and email address.

Northcentral TECHNICAL COLLEGE **H.M.O.N.G**

NTC TOUR

Location of College:
1000 W Campus Dr,
Wausau, WI 54401

Tour time: 5:00 Pm - 6:00 Pm
Bowling time: 6:15 Pm - 8:00 Pm
Ages 6th grade - 20 yrs old
Rides will be provided To and Back

Tour of North Central Technical College! Come and join us! Afterwards will head over to Dales Weston lanes to end the day!

Hmong American Center:
Pick Up 2821 8th Street S.,
Location: Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
Wis. Rapids travel: 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

SIGN UP HERE:

For more information Contact:
Kim Vue
(715) 869 3102
Kimvue@hmongamericancenter.org



Mosinee Area Chamber Of Commerce · Follow

January 15 at 6:00 AM · 🌐

For more information about the new AI Center, contact [Northcentral Technical College](#) or [UW-Stevens Point](#) as they will be holding another AI conference in 2025!

#CommunityAdvocacy #communityeducation #communityinformation #communityinvolvement #mosineechamber #mosineewi



CENTRAL WISCONSIN
AI CENTER

Community
Advocacy



The new AI Center at Northcentral Technical College's Wausau campus is designed to support students, educators, and industries in gaining practical experience and knowledge in artificial intelligence. This collaborative initiative draws on expertise from UW-Stout in manufacturing and automation, and UW-Stevens Point, which will focus on training educators to integrate AI into the classroom. The center aims to assist businesses and organizations with AI research, training, and policy development to help them incorporate AI into their operations. While currently operating online, the center will soon serve as a physical hub for workforce development and AI research in the region.



The Neighbors' Place · Follow

January 13 at 5:06 PM · 🌐

Community partners are coming together to better support our multilingual families. Spot our More Than Food Specialist, Kate, who's been busy networking and orchestrating this gathering. Good things to come!

[Northcentral Technical College H2N Community Announcements](#) [McLit](#) [Marathon County Literacy](#)





Amy Kraemer Sapinski · Follow

January 9 at 10:06 PM · 🌐

College tour at NTClunch at Wausau Mine Co - fun day. So excited for your future, my son. 🙌❤️



School District of Tomahawk · Follow

January 10 at 11:00 AM · 🌐

The Hatchet Innovations classes spent the day learning from Andy Somers, a professor at NTC Wausau, about the commercial printing process of offset printing. THS students experienced what a college class or lab would be like and learned about potential career options that align with Graphic Communications. Additionally, this puts Hatchet Innovations students one step closer to gaining a dual credit for Intro to Printing.

Walter Horabik, Jack Derleth, and Ethan Gibeault made ... See more





Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area · Follow

17h · 🌐

...

STEM WORKSHOP: Join the LEGO-building fun on Monday, January 13th, when Northcentral Technical College brings their Intro to Engineering Technology Mobile Workshops to the Club! Teen Members will utilize LEGOs to simulate a real automotive assembly line. Call or sign up in person at the Caroline S. Mark site. #GreatFuturesStartHere



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF THE WAUSAU AREA



Northcentral
TECHNICAL COLLEGE



NTC Intro to Engineering Technology

Join us for this hands-on LEGO Mobile
Workshop: Getting Lean With LEGO
Mobile Workshop

**Monday
January 13th
4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**

**CAROLINE S. MARK SITE
TEEN CENTER**
1710 N. 2nd Street
Wausau, WI
54403

Please call the
Boys & Girls Club
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FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE MEMBERS



Bluff Country Master Gardeners · Follow

23h · 🌐

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Hello Wisconsin Master Gardener's,

The North Central Master Gardener's will hold their annual Garden Visions conference on Saturday, January 18, 2025 from 8am-3:30pm at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau. The keynote speaker is Melinda Myers. There will be other speakers, vendors, and lunch. 🌱



Northcentral
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

NTC.EDU

Garden Visions 2025 - Conferences, Seminars, and Workshops, Community Events
| Northcentral Technical College



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WQOW (ABC) 1/8/2025 10:17:13 PM

La Crosse, WI

10 pm News Report

easier enrollment process. open enrollment ends on january. 15th in most states including wisconsin aspire u.s. in northcentral technical college are working to bring new technology into health care, education. they're looking to get students experience in clinical scenarios that they might not get during traditional training. hopefully allowing them to feel more prepared for real world challenges. re champaign, the manager of ucation technology at northcentral technical college says this collaboration help strengthen the community. >> but now with the challenging aspects of being a new grad in the clinical setting, innovative teaching strategies are really needed to help bolster prepare the students and nurses too care



WAOW (ABC) 1/8/2025 10:17:14 PM

Wausau, WI

News 9 WAOW at 10PM

Local Viewership: 3,093

Local Publicity Value: \$219.30

tight and outreach and an easier enrollment process. open enrollment ends on january. 15th in most states including wisconsin. aspire u.s. in northcentral technical college are working to bring new technology into healthcare, education. they are looking to give students experience in clinical scenarios that they might not get during traditional training, hopefully allowing them to feel more prepared for real world challenges reaching pain, the manager of education technology at northcentral technical college says this collaboration help strengthen the community. >> but now with the challenging aspects of being a new grad in the clinical setting, innovative teaching strategies are really needed to help bolster prepare the



WKOW (ABC) 1/8/2025 10:17:16 PM

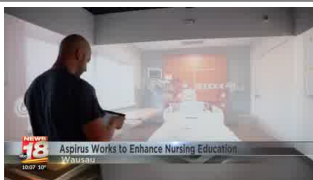
Madison, WI

27 News @ 10

Local Viewership: 18,809

Local Publicity Value: \$2,056.05

heightened outreach and an easier enrollment process. open enrollment ends on january. 15th in most states, including wisconsin. aspire u.s. in northcentral technical college are working to bring new technology into health care, education. they are looking to give students experience in clinical scenarios that they might not get during traditional training, hopefully allowing them to feel more prepared for real world challenges. re champaign, the manager of education technology at northcentral technical college says this collaboration help strengthen the community. >> it now with the challenging aspects of being a new grad in the clinical setting, innovative teaching strategies are really needed to help




WQOW (ABC) 1/12/2025 10:07:25 PM

La Crosse, WI

WI News Now AT 10

additionally, he says people are being exposed to smoke, whether they can smell it or not. he says this causes inflammation of the lungs. virus and northcentral technical college in wausau are teaming up to provide health care education in a brand-new way with a simulation center. this immersive reality allow students to encounter scenarios they might not encounter during traditional training, giving them a much deeper understanding than a typical classroom. >> realistic aspect of it. and the structure to it is so similar to clinical. so it's allowing me to be more comfortable with what i'm doing. as a nurse and preparing myself for clinical.



WAOW (ABC) 1/13/2025 6:55:14 AM


Wausau, WI

Wake Up Wisconsin 6AM on News 9

Local Viewership: 1,866

Local Publicity Value: \$125.82

struggle. the male suspect ran away to another nearby residents leaving one of the guns at the scene. people were ordered to evacuate and shelter at the village hall. pilot is in northcentral technical college and was opened up a new simulation center. this immersive reality allow students encounter scenarios they might not during traditional training, giving them a much deeper understanding that a typical classroom would. ali olaf and dozens of his fairytale. friends were in wisconsin saturday for a fairytale ball. kids of all ages were able to meet the characters, get autographs and have a dance party with them. >> it was all part of a fundraiser for the playhouse group, a nonprofit children's



WSAW (CBS) 1/30/2025 6:17:32 PM

Wausau, WI

NewsChannel 7 @ 6

Local Viewership: 20,407

Local Publicity Value: \$1,013.58

page. the name will be announced on march 10th. people can submit their ideas about the rib mountain state park trail concept. next month, there's an in-person meeting at northcentral technical college in wausau. the trail concept is part of the park's property master plan. it includes a multiuse community path, a trail for bikes, and more. if you want to submit

Items in this report: 6

Total Local Viewership: 44,175
Total Local Market Publicity Value: \$3,414.75

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