



# Geneva Lakes Area Beacon

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THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2025 • Vol. 22 No. 41

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## Walworth County Sheriff's OT budget running over

By Susan Steele  
CORRESPONDENT

The Walworth County Sheriff's Office is projected to be \$1.5 million over budget on overtime this year, however, that shortfall is being adjusted within the department's overall budget.

County Finance Director Jessi-

ca Conley and Undersheriff Tom Hausner explained to the Walworth County Finance Committee on June 19 that the overtime was a result of staff needing to cover continuing position vacancies.

Conley reported that although shortfalls were \$217,376, \$682,965 and \$628,638 for communications,

corrections, and patrol, respectively, the department's overall shortfall is \$20,000 less than it was for the same period last year.

Hausner added that the department was working in close collaboration with the Human Resources Department, anticipating three new hires for communications, two for corrections and three for patrol in

July.

The Walworth County Sheriff's Office, like numerous other Wisconsin sheriff's offices, is experiencing what some are calling the "cop crunch" (according to The Badger Project).

This term refers to the significant shortage of law enforcement officers, which is affecting the de-

partment's ability to maintain public safety.

Factors contributing to this crunch include the large number of Baby Boomers and Gen X retirements, fierce competition from other agencies offering higher pay and benefits, and the ability to recruit, train and hire replacements quickly enough.

## Red Cross issues advice to stay safe during extreme heat

Heat can be dangerous for anyone – stay hydrated, stay cool, stay connected

Recently there were dangerously high temperatures across the region. The American Red Cross urges everyone to take three critical actions to stay safe during such times:

- Stay hydrated by drinking a cup of water every hour, even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic drinks.

- Stay cool by spending time in air-conditioned places. If your home is too hot, go to a mall, library or cooling center.

- Stay connected by checking on others and asking for help if you need it. Make sure pets have access to fresh water and shade.

"Knowing what to do to protect yourself and loved ones from extreme heat can save lives," said Tony Lasher, Division Disaster Director. "We're asking everyone to check on friends and neighbors, especially older adults, people with chronic conditions, outdoor workers and athletes. You could make all the difference by sending a text, making a call or knocking on their door."

### What you should do

Drink water, even when not thirsty. Aim for a cup every hour and avoid sugary, caffeinated or alcoholic drinks. Babies should be breast-fed or bottle-fed often. Fewer wet diapers or darker urine can be signs of dehydration.

Encourage athletes and outdoor workers to take breaks in the shade. They should drink a cup of water every 20 minutes and take breaks.

Help those without air conditioning find a safe place to go like a mall, library or cooling center. They can also take cool showers or baths to help cool off. Remind people to wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothes in light colors.

Never leave a child or pet alone inside a parked car, and make sure pets have access to fresh water and shade.

### Heat illness signs

Anyone can become ill during extreme heat if their body can't cool down properly. It's critical to act fast as heat illness can be deadly.

Heat cramps are signaled by heavy sweating and muscle pain. Take action by stopping what you're doing, resting in a cool place and slowly sipping water. Don't drink if you feel sick, and get medical help if cramps last over an hour or you have heart problems.

Heat exhaustion is signaled by heavy sweating, weakness, cool and clammy skin, muscle cramps, dizziness, fainting, nausea or vomiting. Take action by stopping what you're doing, resting in a cool place and slowly sipping water. Don't drink if you feel sick. Loosen your clothes and place a cool wet cloth on your body. Get medical help if you don't feel better, vomit or have heart problems.

Heat stroke is a deadly condition signaled by high body temperature, rapid heartbeat, confusion, headache, dizziness, fainting, nausea or vomiting. Call 911. Move to a cooler place, remove extra clothing and use a wet cloth or a cool bath to cool down. Don't drink anything.

### If the power goes out

When a heat wave and a power outage happen at the same time, it can be even more dangerous. Stay in air conditioning either at home or at a mall, library or cooling center. Keep an ice-filled cooler stocked with food, water and medicine, so that they don't spoil. More information is available online at redcross.org.

Finally, download the free Red Cross First Aid app so you'll know what to do if emergency help is delayed and the free Emergency app for real-time weather alerts and heat safety information. Content is available in English and Spanish with an easy-to-find language selector. Find both apps in smartphone app stores by searching for the American Red Cross or going to redcross.org/apps.

### About the American Red Cross

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver its mission. For more information, visit redcross.org.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Southern Lakes Newspapers

Taking part in the recent golf reunion were, from left: David Sommers, Roy Siskind, Mark Venz, Paul Schenning, Ryan Schroeder, Mike Finneran, Paul Rutowski, Tyler Berdy, Charles Peckham, Anthony Donatello and Dean Kelly.

## A swing down Memory Lane for golfers

By Michael S. Hoey  
CORRESPONDENT

A group of golfers with ties to the Wisconsin School for the Deaf had a reunion on May 31 at Delbrook Golf Course and the Southern Lakes Association of the Deaf in Delavan.

Michael Finneran, currently of San Diego, California, helped organize the events along with Dean Kelly of Darien and Paul Rutowski of Austin, Texas. Finneran said the gathering was truly a sentimental occasion that brought together some special golfers who first teed off in Delavan several decades ago. Some of the golfers dated back to 1928 when students from WSD began playing.

"Over the years, deaf league players have regularly mingled with Delbrook locals, especially during the 1950s and 1960s," Finneran said in an email.

Finneran said a highlight of that era was the 1960 Deaf Regional Tournament that was organized by Waldo Cordano, a beloved figure in the deaf community.

"It was a heartwarming reunion, rich with memories, laughter, and stories that reminded us all just how deep the legacy runs at Delbrook," Finneran said.

Finneran said the group agreed it was time to reconnect and revisit the fairways of their youth. With that spirit, he said stories were shared, memories were relived, and a few gold balls were lost. Finneran said some of the golfers had not seen each other in 30 or even 40 years.

Fifteen golfers made the trip. Finneran said that group included Ed Waterstreet who began golfing at the age of nine and often snuck his way onto the golf course from his nearby home. He often borrowed clubs from kind-hearted clubhouse staff who, Finneran said, allowed the young lad to play a few holes. Finneran said Waterstreet now lives in

Arizona but made the trip.

Finneran said a relative of Rutowski played at Delbrook in the 1920s. Rutowski recently traced his family roots to Wisconsin and the east coast and is writing a book about that history.

Finneran said the group played the South and North courses and enjoyed every step, every swing, and every slice. Mayor Ryan Schroeder even came out to visit the group, proving he knows a good thing when he sees one, Finneran said.

According to Finneran, a highlight of the day was watching 97-year-old Leonard Peacock zip around the course on a golf cart spotting wayward balls for the group.

Tyler Berdy closed out his round with two birdies and carded four birdies on the day to record the low score of 77. Prizes were handed out for things like "closest to the pin" and for golfers older than 80. Finneran said sometimes age and wisdom beat out youth and distance.

After the golf outing concluded, the group met at SLAD and were joined by over 30 others who did not play golf. The larger group enjoyed a catered meal organized by Dean Kelly and spent the evening sharing stories.

Rutowski shared his collection of vintage golf photographs, some dating back to the 1920s. Waterstreet shared a brief but heartfelt presentation about his own experiences including how he fell in love with golf. Finneran said Waterstreet gave a lot of credit to Delbrook for sparking that lifelong passion. Waterstreet also reflected on his days at WSD weaving his personal history with community pride.

Finneran said the event was so enjoyable there has already been talk of doing it again next year, either in Delavan again or possibly at a tournament in Green Bay.

Geneva Lakes Area  
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# OPINION



## Westwords *by Dennis West*

### Would you like ice with that?

When I managed a TV station in Rockford, Ill., we experienced a weather-related problem that no one apparently foresaw when they built the facility.

The 731-foot tower on which our broadcast antenna was mounted sat right next to the building in which the studio and offices were located.

In many ways – especially for maintenance – this was handy. But when ice built up on the tower, it became a disaster-in-waiting.

As temperatures fluctuated and the ice began to melt, chunks broke off and plummeted onto the roof of the building and, much worse, into the parking lot in front of it.

It's amazing how much damage a (relatively) small piece of ice can cause when it drops from a great height.

Every summer our engineers had to spend time fixing the flat tar-and-gravel roof that had suffered punctures from ice the previous winter.

But that was nothing compared to when ice chunks hit cars in the parking lot, breaking windshields, denting sheet metal and plunging through convertible tops. Our insurance company was not pleased.

Not being completely callous, we also worried about people getting hurt. I found out how much of a problem this could be when

my chief engineer came into my office one day and said ice was falling off the tower.

We walked out into the parking lot and looked up just in time for a small (thank goodness) piece to hit him on the head and knock him unconscious.

Said insurance company told us we had to do something about it, but, aside from moving either the tower or the building, we couldn't figure out what.

Then I got a bright – well, semi-bright – idea.

I ordered a case of hardhats with the station logo emblazoned on the front.

Whenever there was an ice problem, we offered a hard hat to visitors who were leaving the building. If they didn't take one and anything happened, it was supposedly their fault and we were not liable.

Those who accepted our offer got a (false?) sense of security and a nice souvenir.

Of course, if a chunk of ice had hit anyone atop his or her hard-hat, it would have driven him or her into the ground like a greased tent peg.

I didn't say the idea was without its drawbacks.

*These columns appeared in The Beacon in Dennis West's Westwords column and were republished in his 2008 book, "Westwords – Observations from the Desk of a Small-Town Newspaper Publisher."*

## Write us!

Letters will be limited to 400 words. All others will be rejected and/or condensed because of space limitations.

City and school officials seeking to contribute an opinion piece are limited to 500 words and require approval from the community editor or managing editor.

Letters should be sent electronically – within the body of an email or as a Word document. There are no guarantees letters sent by U.S. Mail or in PDF version will be published in a timely manner, if at all.

During election cycles, we reserve the right to omit letters because of space limitations or those containing similar talking points. There could be a delay in letters publishing.

Candidates seeking office

will be allowed to submit one letter per election cycle.

Note that letters relating to an election or candidate will not be published in the two issues immediately preceding the election.

Letters should be original in nature. Those containing language or content that is blatantly offensive, include attacks of a personal nature or contain statements that are libelous or slanderous will not be published.

We do not publish anonymous letters. Please include first and last name, an address and a phone number. Only names and the municipalities of residence will be published.

Letters should be emailed to editor Jason Arndt at jarndt@southernlakesnewspapers.com.

## Slices of life

# There are so many questions some days

We live in a quirky, weird, sideways, upside-down world where some things just don't make sense – or they make too much sense to be sensible. As humans we often perpetuate the nonsense. We accept things for what they are and go about our business without question. But sometimes I wonder. About small things. Big things. Random things, like:

Why do cats have to race you up the stairs? They can come out of nowhere just to get one step ahead of you. Sometimes my cats pause to let me nearly catch up before bounding upwards to beat me. Again.

When shopping online why are we required to put certain items in our cart in order to see their price while other items have their prices posted prominently? If it's a seedless



By **JILL PERTLER**  
Columnist

watermelon, what did it grow from?

Why do we call them red cabbage and red onions when it's obvious they are purple? Red grapes are more burgundy than red. Purple potatoes are actually purple – score one for the spuds.

When the batteries on the TV remote go dead why do we continue to press the power button over and over hoping they will suddenly come to life? The same phenomenon occurs when our cell phone loses its charge.

Have you ever noticed that abbreviated is an awfully long word?

And big is not? Other words are worth contemplating – phonetically speaking. Gynecologist is a doctor for women. Hysterectomy is a procedure performed solely on women.

Hershey is word made up of two female pronouns coming together to make chocolate. I guess that last one makes perfect sense.

In the same vein, if words like "he" and "she" are pronouns, does that also make them anti-verbs?

Why do we call it the funny bone when bumping it is certainly no laughing matter?

When I am driving somewhere and get lost why do I turn the radio off, thinking it will help me find my destination?

Why do people drive around in convertibles with the top down, but the windows up?

Do they call it falling asleep because of the falling dream that sometimes accompanies the going to sleep process? Is it true you would die if you landed (in your dream) or is that just one of those urban myths?

Who makes up all the urban myths and why aren't they ever rural truths?

Is it possible to eat charred chard? Or chilly chili? Shrimpy shrimp? If words made sense,

hamburger would be made of ham and a hot dog would be made of... Never mind.

Shouldn't a pair of pants be two of something?

Why is it always just one shoe (or boot) lying in the middle of the road, but we never see the person who is walking around with the other one?

Every few years we are required to renew our driver's license. Anyone besides me keep the old ones around lying in the junk drawer – just because? Every so often I glance through them to see how much I used to weigh.

Why is it? I wish I could tell you. Some things deny explanation. It's at the core of the human paradigm; we assume logic in an illogical world.

Sort of like my cat. Who won't come when she's called but will race me up the stairs every time. Go figure.

*Jill Pertler is an award-winning syndicated columnist, published playwright and author. Don't miss a slice; follow the Slices of Life page on Facebook.*

## Odd Wisconsin

# Midsummer signs remain

Burning sun, aggressive mosquitoes, and foul lakes have always marked midsummer in Wisconsin.

In July 1721, Fr. Pierre Charlevoix wrote that on the shore of Green Bay "the sun was so hot and the water of the bay so warm that the pitch of our canoe melted in several places."

After the sun went down, "the place where we halted for our encampment proved

to be so infested with mosquitoes and gnats that it was impossible for us to close our eyes, although we had not slept for two days."

Another priest noted that so many fish died in the tepid Fox River that "it is hardly possible to approach the bank on account of the stench."

A century later, on June 28, 1820, James Doty was hiking the south shore of Lake Superior.

"I never underwent as great fatigue," he wrote. "The mercury in the thermometer stood at 90 in the canoe – on the mountains the heat was oppressive. To see the wind waving the tops of the trees without a single breath reaching us rendered the heat more intolerable. We passed several fine springs of water but our blood was so heated that we dared not taste them. At length we became so

completely overpowered with fatigue & heat, the doctor particularly, that we were obliged to rest every 90 or 100 rods..."

So if you're wiping sweat and swatting mosquitoes this week, remember that your Wisconsin ancestors did that, too, and without access to air conditioning or cold drinks.

There's an old post card of a bathing beach near the tourist camping site in

Devil's Lake State Park. A diving tower appears on the right with a woman diving from the top. Several other people are climbing the tower or waiting their turn, and many swimmers are in the water. People can certainly be resourceful when needed.

*Source: The Wisconsin Historical Society. For more information, visit the website at wisconsinhistory.org.*

**THIS NEWSPAPER IS PROUDLY PUBLISHED BY:**  
**Southern Lakes Newspapers LLC**  
1102 Ann Street, Delavan, WI 53115  
**262.728.3411**  
MyWalworthCounty.com  
Publisher .....Jack Cruger  
General Manager .....David Habrat  
Managing Editor .....Heather Ruenz  
Community Editor .....Jason Arndt  
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Director .....Vicki Vanderwerff  
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# Delavan man dies in Kenosha County crash

A 19-year-old man from Delavan died from injuries stemming from a Kenosha County crash on June 24 in the Town of Randall.

The Kenosha County Sheriff's Office, which responded to three separate fatal crashes in the span of four days in late June, identified the man in the June 24 accident as Ashur D. Larson.

Sheriff's deputies as well as members of Twin Lakes Fire and Rescue responded to the 11000 block of Highway P/Richmond Road, just south of the intersection of Highway P and 110th Street, for reports of a single-vehicle crash at around 6:16 a.m.

Preliminary reports indicated the vehicle driven by Larson was traveling southbound on Highway P/Richmond and failed to negotiate curve, exiting the roadway on the west side, striking a power pole before entering an agriculture field, the Sheriff's Office said.

"The Kenosha County Sheriff's Office's thoughts are with those who were impact by this tragic crash," officials said in a news release.

According to an online obituary, loved ones described Larson as a passionate musician, adding he enjoyed sharing his talents with others.

"He enjoyed time spent outside, especially hiking and taking in what the outdoors had to offer," the obituary states. "Ashur adored his friends and cherished their friendship deeply."

Employed by VIP Services, Inc., of Elkhorn, Larson showed pride in working for the group.

"Ashur was kind, could make you laugh with his silly humor and was wise beyond his years," the obituary states.

Larson's was the first of three people who lost their lives in separate crashes from June 24 through June 27.

Other incidents happened in the Village of Bristol on June 25 and the Village of Salem Lakes on June 27.

## 3-vehicle crash in Bristol

Kenosha County Sheriff's deputies and the Village of Bristol Fire and Rescue along with the Town of Paris Fire and Rescue responded to the 18400 block of Highway K/60th Street at the intersection of Highway D and 184th Avenue for reports of a three-vehicle crash at around 8:49 p.m. on June 25.

A motorcycle driven by the 21-year-old man and vic-

tim had been traveling east on Highway K at a high rate of speed, according to preliminary reports from the sheriff's office, adding the motorcycle struck a full-sized pickup.

Authorities said the pickup was traveling west on Highway K, and as the pickup attempted to turn left south on Highway D, the motorcycle struck the pickup truck's passenger side.

"The operator of the motorcycle was fully ejected and subsequently struck the windshield of a sport utility vehicle (SUV), which had also been westbound, behind the pickup truck," authorities said in a news release.

The motorcycle rider became stuck in the windshield and front passenger area of the SUV, according to the release.

"The motorcycle struck the front of the SUV and became lodged under its engine compartment, causing the motorcycle and SUV to become fully engulfed in flames," authorities said.

The Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office pronounced the motorcycle rider dead at the scene while others involved experienced minor injuries stemming from the crash.

"They all remained on the scene and were cooperative with accident investigators. Intoxicants do not appear to have been a factor with the operators of the pickup truck and SUV. Excessive speed appears to have been a factor in the operation of the motorcycle," the sheriff's office said in the release.

## Highway 50 fatality

On June 27, sheriff's deputies and Salem Lakes Fire and Rescue responded to the 22400 block of Highway 50/75 Street on the south side of the highway at around 6:54 p.m. for a single-vehicle crash.

Preliminary reports show the involved vehicle, driven by a 69-year-old man with a passenger in it, was heading eastbound on Highway 50 before the accident happened.

The Sheriff's Office said the vehicle left Highway 50 on the south side of the road, striking a large rock before striking a striking tree, causing severe damage to the vehicle.

The truck operator was fully ejected from the vehicle and pronounced dead by the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office.

# Competency hearing set for man in reckless homicide case

A competency hearing was scheduled July 8 in Walworth County Circuit Court for a Lake Geneva man accused of shooting and killing an 8-year-old boy while showing off his guns.



Steven Merkel

Steven D. Merkel, 53, is charged with first-degree reckless homicide with use of a dangerous weapon. According to the criminal complaint, Town of Geneva police were called to Merkel's home Jan. 20 at 2:25 a.m. for a report of an 8-year-old boy who was shot.

When police arrived, Merkel was frantic and cov-

ered with blood, and directed police to a child lying on the floor in a large pool of blood. He had a gunshot wound to the front neck area.

The boy was still breathing and life-saving measures were taken; however, he was pronounced dead at 3:07 a.m.

Police spoke with the child's grandmother, who stated Merkel was married to the boy's mother, and it was planned the boy would spend the night. She said she left the residence at 10 p.m.

Merkel told police "he did something stupid and it wasn't the (child's) fault he shot him."

He said he showed the child guns to "look cool" and showed him a stun gun, "popping it" and pointing it toward

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SUBMITTED PHOTOS Southern Lakes Newspapers

The recent Tommy Purcell Memorial Golf Outing produced a pair of charitable contributions. Above, with a check to the Delavan-Darien Tech School, are (from left): Max and Paige Greco; Drew Halbesma, Superintendent, Delavan-Darien School District; Michael Rick, DD Tech Administrator, Career and Technical Education, ACP Coordinator; Delavan Mayor Ryan J. Schroeder; Ashley Duchemin, Marketing and Communications Director, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, DDHS; and City of Delavan Police Officer Brad Schroeder. Below, with a check to Albert's Dog Lounge, are (from left): Kyleigh Robinson; Terry Mumper; Mandy Lewis, Albert's Dog Lounge founder; Lorrie Mumper; Lauri Purcell, Greenie's Clubhouse owner; and Rebecca Jones.

# Memorial outing raises money for area programs

The inaugural Tommy's Memorial Golf Outing was held at Delbrook Golf Course in May.

Thirty-eight teams participated in the scramble golf outing to honor Tommy Purcell's legacy of giving, with proceeds going to scholarships to Delavan-Darien Tech School, and funds for Albert's Dog Lounge.

In June of 2024, this community lost one of its biggest and best fans, Tommy Purcell, owner of Hunter's Auto Service in Delavan. He gave everything of himself to his family, friends, and community.

His generosity seemingly had no boundaries, as evidenced by his support of numerous local charities and organizations in the past thirty years. While he was not born here, he truly considered Delavan his forever

home.

Tommy was supportive of our local high school's program for students who wish to go into the trades, specifically the automotive industry. He was fond of hosting hands-on classes at his shop, Hunter's Auto Service.

Albert's Dog Lounge is a foster-based rescue focused on providing loving homes to senior, special needs and hospice dogs. We all know of Tommy's unconditional love for our canine friends.

The day was filled with fun and challenges on the course, with breakfast and dinner provided by Greenie's Clubhouse in the Connie Schulte Pavilion. Purcell's Towing sponsored t-shirts for the outing, as Tommy was a big fan of all types of

promotional t-shirts.

Many prizes were donated by local businesses, with more than 25 sponsoring a hole as well. Kevin Hibel of Hibel's Real Estate and the Wagon Wheel exceeded the Kentucky Derby horse auction. Mayor Ryan J. Schroeder coordinated the chipping challenge golfers could choose to participate in before the teams teed off.

Photographer Rocky Feeney was on hand to photograph the event.

Going forward, the Purcell family is working with Delavan-Darien Tech School to establish two annual scholarships for students who will be pursuing work in the automotive field, knowing this would make Tommy very happy.

Next year's outing is planned for Saturday, May 2, 2026.



# CCHS tabs new principal to lead school

Catholic Central High School has appointed Nicholas Kelly to serve as the new president/principal, effective on July 14, according to a release from school officials.

Kelly, who succeeds Brian Shimon, will be the third principal to lead the school within the last five years.

Formerly the President of School Choice Wisconsin, where he served since 2021, Kelly carries more than a decade of leadership in Catholic



Nicholas Kelly

education and brings a wealth of experience to the position.

"We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Kelly to Catholic Central," said CCHS' Acting CEO Marikris Coryell. "His strong leadership background, his commitment to Catholic values, and

his ability to connect with students, families and the broader community make him the ideal person to lead Catholic Central into its next chapter."

Kelly received an undergraduate degree in public policy and administration from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater before obtaining a master's in educational leadership at the former Cardinal Stritch University in Fox Point, just north of Milwaukee, the release states.

He has served as dean of students, department chair, and director of servant leadership.

At School Choice Wisconsin, Kelly played a key role in helping private schools increase enrollment during his tenure.

"During his tenure, statewide student enrollment grew by 9,704. The number of participating schools has grown by 46, largely thanks to his

See PRINCIPAL, Page 4

# The time is now to help

## Dying car puts major stress on family

Dear W.C.,

I am writing in the hope you can help my 20-year-old granddaughter.

She needs help with transportation to get to work and driving me and her mother to our medical appointments.

I am 76 years old, and I raised her since she was a child when her mother became permanently disabled in a car accident. I also am the caregiver for her mother.

It has been very difficult for her to see what her mother goes through and now me as I have been struggling with my own health. My car is old and recently broke down on the highway as she was returning from work at night.

She had no choice but to have the car towed and they did just enough repairs to keep it running. Without my knowledge she got a payday loan to pay for the expense, at an extremely high interest rate of 36%, and now finds herself falling behind even more.

She is trying to save her tips to pay off the loan, but other household expenses always come first. My car is on its last leg, and it is only a matter of



By  
**SAL  
DIMICELI**  
Columnist

time before it breaks down for good, hopefully not leaving my granddaughter on the side of a dark road like last time.

Dear readers,

I paid a visit to this grandmother and her family. When I arrived, all three women were there to greet me. The grandmother looked tired as she stood beside her daughter, who was in a wheelchair. The granddaughter introduced herself and her mother and grandmother.

The mother spoke slowly, and I could tell it was a struggle for her. It had been years since the accident, but it had left a permanent disability that had affected all three women. The granddaughter showed me their car, and it was definitely on its last leg. I could easily see it would need many more costly repairs to

make it safe, so right there decided a newer vehicle would probably be the best option.

We went inside the rental home they shared, and I began my review of their budget and expenses. The recent combined household income was barely at the poverty level. The granddaughter could not work full-time since her grandmother had become ill, as both her mother and grandmother needed her help. She took as many shifts as possible to help with the household expenses.

I made some suggestions to improve their budget, but even with that it was obvious they really needed a reliable car and to pay off the payday loan the granddaughter had taken out to pay for the car repairs.

This predator loan with its extremely high interest rate was greatly affecting their budget. We would provide both a reliable used car and pay off the payday loan. We also would pay one month's rent and the utility bill to help offset the recent loss of income due to the granddaughter's reduced hours.

With the assurance from the grandmother that her health would soon be improved enough to allow her granddaughter to resume working full-time, I felt this extra assistance would keep them from declining further into poverty.

Several days later the granddaughter was thrilled to be picking up the used vehicle we had purchased for these three wonderful women. She cried tears of happiness and relief as this gift of reliable transportation would make a world of difference for them.

The additional assistance we provided did not go unnoticed, as the granddaughter called and all three women tearfully shared their gratitude.

Thank you and God Bless you for making this and all our poverty relief efforts possible.

*Health & Happiness,  
Love and God bless everyone,  
Sal*

Please help: There are many coming to us in desperation. Our good fellow creations need our compassion. Together we

make a big difference. Make checks payable to: The Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 1, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank you receipt showing how 100% of your donation was used for providing poverty relief. Please visit our website for more information, to read more columns and/or to make a donation.

A very special thank you: Family Foundation, Kunes Family Foundation, Ziegler Charitable Foundation, Paul Ziegler, United Way of Walworth County, Jeff Martin, Jim and Lynette Heimann, Joseph and Sharon Symoens, William and Susan Mackey, The Chuck and Barb Taylor Charitable Fund, Paper Dolls, Lake Geneva Area Realty, Allen Hermansen, Sharon Jardas, Dr. Mark and Cynthia Brower, Elizabeth Knoth, Rita's "My Salon", Joseph and Karen Cerniglia, Michael and Kathe Beach, Doris Wiechmann, Gene and Linda Krauklis, Aileen Hodges,

William Antti, Dennis and Carol Gilhooley, Jeffrey and Helen Harold, Duane and June DeYoung, J.N. Hackman, Carol Hanners, Anton and S. Kapela, all of our anonymous donors and ALL of you who support The Time Is Now to Help Donation boxes. Anyone who would like a donation box in their business, call 262-249-7000.

Prayer chain: The power of prayer and positive thoughts comes from the true healer, our Lord answering our prayers. Please pray for healing for the following people: Bill, Brian, Mike, Sylvia, Megan, Kayla, Maria C., Judy, Scott, Annie, Marilyn, Brandon, Helen, Dennis, Mary, Joseph, Jordan, Jean, Tom L., Dr. Peter, Matthew, Pam E., Jenene B., John S., Patricia H., Wendy, Eric, Anthony, Mary, Charlie, Tom P., Christina, Billy, Mike, Cheryl, Bryan E., Betty, Ellie, Concetta, Cheryl, Kirubel M., Wanda L., Joan, Bruce and Andy.

Memorial: LuAnn Himebauch in memory of Nils McDermott.

For more information, visit [timeisnowtohelp.org](http://timeisnowtohelp.org).

## In my opinion

# America's farm legacy is fast disappearing

Farming is not a job for the timid.

Which, apparently, means it's a job for gray old men.

And that is a growing problem in America, though it seldom gets much attention because so few people these days have ties to the land.

First, some disclosures. I grew up a farm kid. My family has been on the Illinois land since the mid-1800s. In the years since the passing of my parents I have managed business affairs on behalf of my sister, Kathi, and myself. My father's brother, Lee – 20 years dad's junior – farms the ground. Despite the "uncle" relationship, the three of us



By  
**BILL  
BARTH**  
Contributor

are contemporaries, all in our 70s.

That places us solidly in the normal range. The farm, at just under 500 acres, matches the U.S. average size of 463 acres. Likewise, two-thirds of American farms are associated with senior citizens, most with succession problems for the future as family farms.

Consider some statistics:

- The most recent numbers show there are around 3.4 million agricultural producers in the country. Most are over 55, including a half million aged 75 and up.

- There are 1.9 million farms encompassing 880 million acres nationally, which is more than twice the size of Alaska.

- Smaller family farms are disappearing. To survive economically farms are getting larger and increasingly concentrated with big operators. Sixty percent of U.S. farms exceed 2000 acres. (Fact: America's largest farmland owner, at

242,000 acres, is Bill Gates of Microsoft fame.)

- The number of farms has dropped 14% since 1997. Cattle farms are down the most, with a 17% decline. But we like chicken. Poultry and egg farms are up 71%. Go figure.

- Here's a good reason there are fewer farms. About 815,000 farms made a profit in 2022, while 1.1 million racked up losses.

When the United States was founded the fledgling nation was mostly agrarian. It's worth noting that Thomas Jefferson, the author of the 1776 Declaration of Independence – next year will mark 250 years since its signing in Philadelphia – believed the country's future depended on the rugged individualism of farmers.

"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens," Jefferson stated. "They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."

Here's another, one that goes more directly to the benefit of common folks owning their own piece of America without being beholden to wealth concentrated among the few.

"Whenever there are in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as

to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on. The small landowners are the most precious part of a state."

In my own view, time has proven Jefferson both right and wrong. I agree the folks who work the ground belong to a singularly hardy and independent breed. They are tough and resilient because, if they weren't, they would fail. But times change, and America didn't become the most powerful and wealthy nation on the planet by keeping everybody on the farm. The Industrial Revolution, the urbanization of the people, brought about expansion even Jefferson couldn't foresee.

In his day everybody farmed. As late as 1900, 40% of the population engaged in agriculture and 60% lived in rural areas. Today, just 3% of the population operates the farms.

The efficiency of the American farmer is astounding, and it allows 97% of the people to pursue their dreams without worrying about food insecurity. In a very real sense, U.S. farmers feed the world, shipping hundreds of millions of bushels overseas annually.

Look at that in perspective, though. Smaller farms are going out of business. The farmers themselves are graying at an alarming rate, with no succession plan in place. More than half the

farms are not profitable.

International competitors – Brazil in particular – are catching up and eating away at American exports, further pressuring profits. Tariff uncertainties have hampered commodity prices. Costs for seed, fertilizer, herbicides and other inputs are always rising. A brand new combine can cost a half million dollars or more.

Government often makes the problems worse for family farmers hoping to pass the ground along to the next generation.

Illinois, where our farm sits, has a tough estate tax, allowing only about a third of the none-too-generous exemption set by the federal government. A legislative fix – called the Family Farm Preservation Act – was just dropped from the Illinois budget plan, continuing the trend of taxing heirs off the land.

Wisconsin, by the way, does it right, by not levying a farm estate tax.

For the non-farmers out there – all 97% of you – this is probably more than anybody cares to know. But here's my point. If America still values the legacy of its independent farm past, it will take more than nostalgia to preserve it.

*Bill Barth is the former Editor of the Beloit Daily News, and a member of the Wisconsin Newspaper Hall of Fame. Write to him at [bbarth@beloitdailynews.com](mailto:bbarth@beloitdailynews.com).*

## •Principal (Continued from page 3)

outreach across the state," said School Choice Wisconsin Board Chair Brenda White in a release announcing Kelly's departure from the organization, adding that he "has served as a leading voice for parental choice, and his commitment to education freedom has made a difference for families and students."

Before joining School Choice Wisconsin, Kelly

served as principal at St. Thomas More in Milwaukee, leading curriculum development, faculty mentoring, student leadership and school culture initiatives, according to CCHS officials.

In 2021, Kelly was presented the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Principal Leadership Award.

He said he's looking forward to joining CCHS.

"I am deeply honored and excited to join the Catholic Central High School family," Kelly said. "This school has a rich tradition and a promising future. I look forward to working alongside faculty, staff, families, and community leaders to build on that legacy – strengthening our academics, growing our enrollment, and forming students in mind, heart, and spirit."

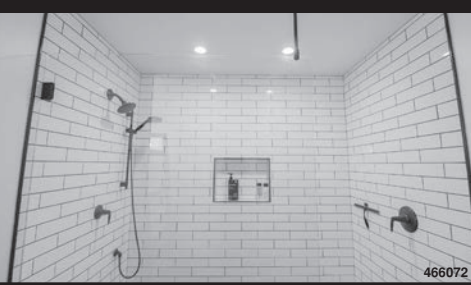
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# Routt found guilty of homicide

## Jury also convicts him on all charges he was facing

By Jennifer Eisenbart  
STAFF WRITER  
After maintaining his not guilty plea since making a confession a year and a half ago, Elkhorn resident Thomas Routt stayed silent during a five-day jury trial that started June 23.

Routt spent most of the trial looking down at the notepad in front of him as the case of first-degree intentional homicide in the deaths of Gina and Emerson Weingart was made against him in the Walworth County Courthouse.

His only words during the trial? Confirming on Friday, June 27 that he would not testify in his own defense.

Then, after roughly two hours of deliberation by the jury, Routt stayed silent – and stone-faced – as a guilty verdict came back against him on both charges as well as four other counts.

Routt, who had been accused of shooting and killing Gina and Emerson Weingart at the Sports Page Barr in Elkhorn Feb. 1, 2024, was found guilty on the first-degree intentional homicide charges brought by Walworth County District Attorney Zeke Wiedenfeld in the deaths of the young couple.

Routt was also found guilty on the charge of attempted first-degree intentional homicide after attempting to shoot a witness fleeing the bar after the Weingarts were shot, as well as armed robbery, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession



JENNIFER EISENBART Southern Lakes Newspapers  
**Thomas Routt Jr. (far right) sits with his attorneys as the verdicts are read in his trial June 27. Routt was found guilty on all six counts, including two counts of first-degree intentional homicide.**

of methamphetamine – which was found on Routt’s person when he was stopped by police Feb. 4.

Following the announcement of the verdicts on the six counts Routt’s bond was officially revoked. He has been an inmate at Dodge County Correctional Institute since the summer of last year.

Routt’s sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 26 at 8:30 a.m., where the victim’s families and others are expected to give statements before Judge Kristine Drettwan sentences Routt on the six guilty verdicts.

### Making the case

After an extensive voir dire process June 23 – the intent of which was to seat the most unbiased jury as possible – 15

jurors were selected for the start of testimony on June 24.

Wiedenfeld’s case started with eyewitnesses to the shooting – both the witness in the bar who fled and called 911 – a security guard who was in the bar until shortly before the shooting and residents of the Nickel Plate Hotel in Elkhorn.

The eyewitnesses testified, from various perspectives, seeing Routt shoot the Weingarts, chase the witness from the bar – shooting at her in the process – and then flee the scene in a vehicle.

Routt’s path from that point forward was painstakingly tracked by evidence and testimony, presented by the state at the five-day trial. Routt was detained Feb. 4, 2024, on a probation and pa-

role violation, as police found “contraband” on his person.

In two separate interviews Feb. 4 and 6 – which were played in almost their entirety to the jury and court – law enforcement officers Grady Worland of the City of Elkhorn police and Walworth County Sheriff’s Department Detective Kirk Dodge were shown questioning Routt after he was taken into custody.

In the second interview, Routt finally confessed to the crime, sobbing that he hadn’t meant to hurt anyone and that Gina Weingart had attempted to slap the gun out of his hands when he told everyone to get on the floor so he could remove the cash-out machine for the bar’s video gaming devices. He also took a little more than \$100 from the bar’s cash register.

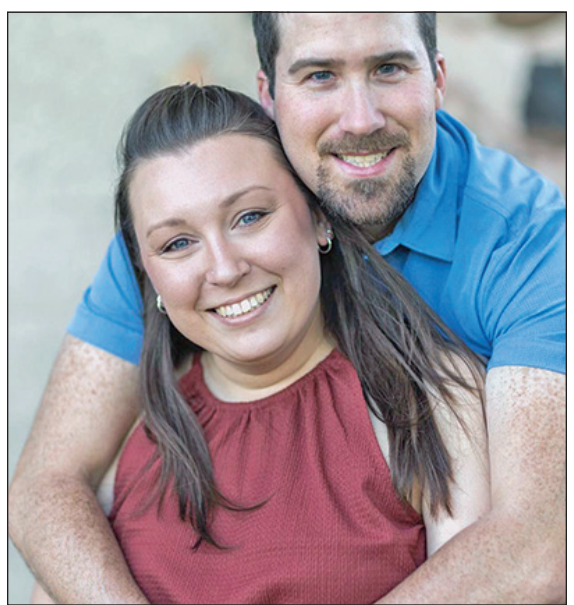
Routt led police to where he dumped the gun and the magazine from that gun – a Taurus 9-millimeter – later on the day he confessed. After that, he made three phone calls to his mother, repeating the confession and telling her to cancel his lawyer.

Routt’s words were played before the court June 25:

“Help these victims’ families. I did this. I ruined my life.”

Wiedenfeld presented three full days of testimony, covering everything from the eyewitnesses to evidence collected and analyzed by the Wisconsin State Crime Lab. In addition to the video and audiotapes of Routt’s interviews and telephone calls, the

See ROUNT, Page 11



SUBMITTED PHOTO Southern Lakes Newspapers  
**Gina and Emerson Weingart were murdered Feb. 1, 2024, in a robbery at the Sports Page Barr in Elkhorn. Thomas Routt Jr. was convicted of their murders and other charges last week.**

## Time to start the healing process

### Emerson Weingart’s father sums up a year and a half of grief and pain

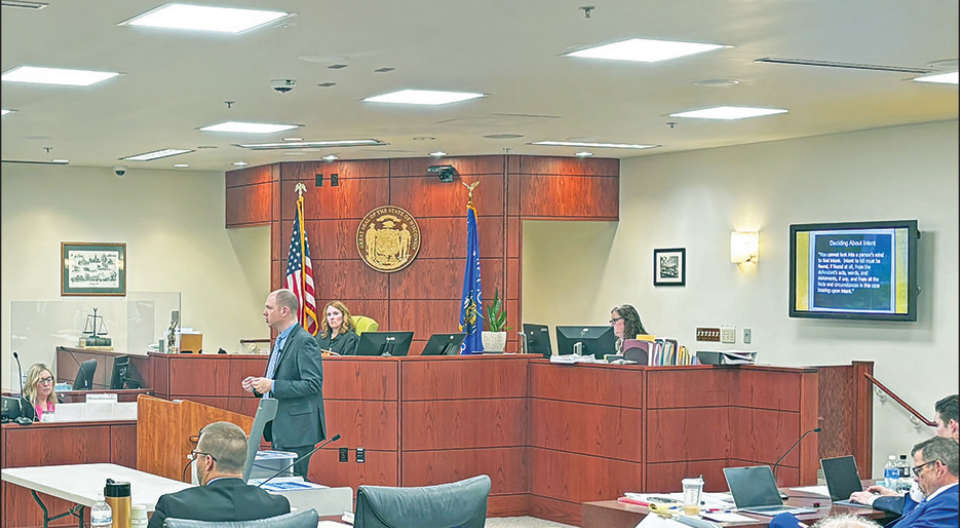
By Jennifer Eisenbart  
STAFF WRITER

Trying to put into words the space of time between Feb. 1 of 2024 and June 27 of 2025 seemed like a difficult task for Jeffrey Weingart Sunday.

But two days removed from the conviction of Thomas Routt Jr., who killed Weingart’s son, Emerson, and Emerson’s wife, Gina, Jeffrey admitted some healing had already begun.

At the very least, some of the stress and grief that have permeated the lives of the Weingart and Gennara families started to ease with six guilty verdicts returned on Routt June 27.

See HEALING, Page 11



JENNIFER EISENBART Southern Lakes Newspapers  
**Walworth County District Attorney Zeke Wiedenfeld makes his closing arguments in the Routt trial June 27.**

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# LIVING



# These kids will jump for a job

## Mail delivery on Geneva Lake courtesy of a talented crew

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**  
CORRESPONDENT

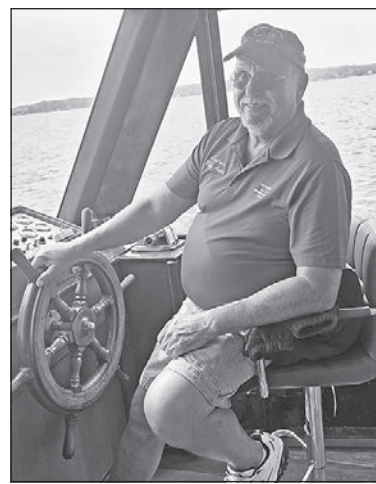
**On** a sunny but cool recent morning, the Walworth II, also known as the mailboat, was readied to make a trip out on Geneva Lake. The Walworth makes the run daily in the summer to deliver the mail and newspapers to lake residents who choose to have the items delivered via boat. This was not the usual run, however. It was the day a group of hopeful applicants would show off their skills in an effort to be chosen as part of the crew of mailboat jumpers for the 2025 season.

Delivering mail from boats in the summertime on Geneva Lake goes back to 1916 when the first Walworth boat was commissioned as the official mailboat. Mail was delivered by boat at that time because it was more efficient than trying to do so by automobile on the poor roads around the lake.

Most of the homes in the early days were summer cottages that were closed in the winter. As a result, mail delivery was only needed in the summer when they were in residence.

In 1958, the mailboat and its route were purchased by the Gage Marine, and today the Walworth II continues the unique but important task of operating as the mailboat.

On the day of this year's tryouts, the applicants, all young women – in navy blue shorts, athletic shoes with good grip, and red, golf styled shirts with the Gage insignia – were ready to go.



SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ

**Captain Ray Ames makes certain that the boat is in the correct place to allow the jumper to safely jump off the boat and get back on. Among his duties as captain is to keep the jumpers, the boat and the piers safe**

Becoming a mail jumper is one of the most sought out jobs in the Geneva Lake area and there are restrictions for who is eligible apply for it. Those who are allowed in the tryouts sometimes have to do so for several years before making the cut.

"You have to have worked for Gage for at least a year," shared Annie McEneaney, who has served as an alternate jumper in both 2022 and 2023. "To be considered for the tryouts, a profile of your activities and your experience working on the boats is taken into consideration."

### Taking a leap

There is no formal training for

the position. The candidates appear to learn what to do by watching current members of the jumping crew.

All the girls trying out for the positions are in good physical shape and athletic, with many of them participating in sports such as hockey, tennis, track and skiing at the college or university they attend or will be attending.

The girls begin to loosen up with some stretching exercises. Once they board the Walworth II – with Captain Ray Ames at the wheel – begins to move along the shore. He stops at one pier and all six get off the boat and take a short run along the Shore Path to finish loosening up.

They are picked up by the boat at a pier further along the shore and then it's time for the tryouts to officially begin.

Having a competent captain running the ship is important for the mail jumpers to be successful and to keep all involved safe.

"When we pull up to a pier, it's important to leave adequate space between the pier and the boat, not too much or too little, to allow the jumper to make the jump successfully and to be certain that the boat does not hit the pier," Ames explained.

"Hitting the pier may cause extensive and expensive damage," he added.

### Speed, timing vital

As the boat lines up with the pier, whichever jumper is up in the lineup grabs the mail to be



SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Southern Lakes Newspapers

**Above: Making it around this large u-shaped pier and back to the boat before it passes by is a difficult task. Top: Ready for 2025 tryouts is this group of girls, shown standing on the 12-inch ledge they jump from and return to – all while the boat is in motion.**



SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Southern Lakes Newspapers

**As far as deliveries go, this one is easier than many – into the goose shaped mailbox located at the front of the pier.**

# Just take it easy



The Eagles tribute band Take It Easy performed on June 28 at Phoenix Park in Delavan. A large crowd gathered in spite of the warm weather, as the group performed the hits of the 1970s band.

DAVE DRESDOW  
Southern Lakes  
Newspapers



## PUZZLE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 10

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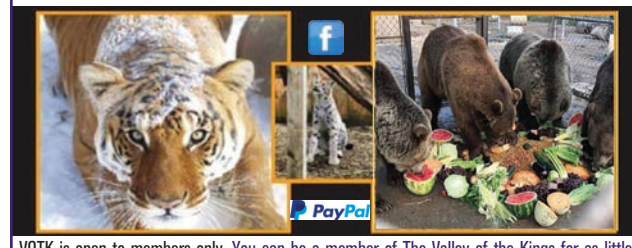
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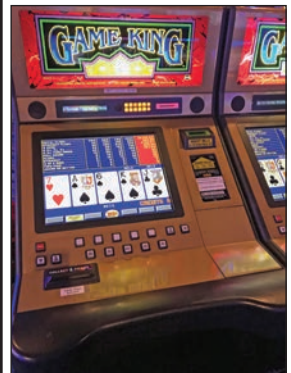
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Best Health/Fitness
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Best Auto Repair
Best Golf Course
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# • Mail delivery (Continued from page 6)

delivered, exits the boat from the front side window, stands on the 12-inch ledge on the side of the boat and when close enough, makes the leap onto the pier.

Once on the pier, the jumper has to locate the mailbox – they vary greatly in location including the distance they are from the lakeside part of the pier. Some mailboxes are very close to the water side while others are much closer to shore.

The mailboat jumper runs to the mailbox, removes any outgoing mail and leaves the new mail in the box and then heads back to the boat. A leap back onto the 12-inch ledge but now near the rear of the boat, followed by a walk along the ledge to the front and then a climb back into the window.

Timing is important. The boat does not stop and wait for the jumper – it continues to glide along, forcing them to complete their tasks and jump back on the boat before it's too far away.

Once in a while, the timing is off ever so slightly and the attempt to return to the boat results in a jumper landing in the water. On a hot day, a dip in the lake is likely refreshing but on a cool day, not so much.

## Off boat duties

The job of the mailboat jumper includes more than “just” jumping from and back onto the boat delivering the mail. The jumpers begin their shift with a trip to the post office between 7 and 8 a.m. to pick up the day's mail along with a stop to pickup the newspapers that need to be delivered.

Once back at the pier, the mail is then sorted into individual packets to be delivered to lake residents on the route.

“We deliver five major newspapers so they must be rolled to fit in the mailbox,” Marie Nickolette explained.

She was a mailboat jumper in 2023 and 2024 and tried out again this year.

Part of the tryout process is for applicants to read a descriptive history about the Geneva Lake area including some of the huge homes on the shore. Reading the script for the mailboat tour to passengers is also part of the duties of the jumpers.

When it was time to begin the tryouts, the camaraderie was as inspiring to observe as the actual jumping and deliver of mail. They cheered



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**From above: Mia Fiscelli dries off after a jump that landed her in the water. This dip was done on purpose but occasionally, the jumpers do take a spill; The judges, Ellen Burling, Jeff Clapp and Kyle Foulke gather and go over their thoughts of the prospective jumpers.**

for each other, wanting whoever's turn it was to be successful in their attempt.

Considering many of them have worked together for Gage – some for years – it's not surprising as the summer employees of the cruise line are a team and have developed friendships with each other. But it was still a joy to witness.

## Times have changed

For this year's competition the six competitors were all women. Last year there were three young men in the mix of the tryouts although none of them were selected to be jumpers.

In the early days, all the mailboat jumpers were men. That is until 1974, when Elaine Kanelos who lived on Geneva Lake decided she wanted a summer job and the job she wanted was that of mailboat jumper, even though there had never been a female one.

Kanelos once shared that as a spunky 18-year-old, she wrote a letter to Bill Gage Sr. who was head of the company and told him that she wanted to be the mail jumper. To her surprise, he hired her without a tryout.

According to her book, “Mail Jumper! The Story of the First Mail Girl,” her first jumps were taken and photographed on her family's

pier, where she had watched the mail being delivered during her childhood and developed her desire to be a mail jumper.

Back to the 2025 tryouts, the judges who would make the final decision watched the performances of this year's competitors.

The judges – Ellen Burling, Captain Jeff Clapp, and Captain Kyle Faulke – are all well qualified to choose the next crew.

Burling is the General Manager of Gage's Lake Geneva Cruise Line. She has a long history with the company, having worked there since 1983 in a variety of jobs including having been a former mailboat jumper herself.

“One of the problems that occur each year, is that most of the jumpers are college students and they leave the area to return to school around the middle of August,” Burling said.

“Unfortunately, our season goes into the fall so we have to find some substitutes. Fortunately, there are employees who have been mail jumpers in the past and are willing to be a temporary mail jumper,” she explained.

Kyle Faulke is also a longtime employee and former mailboat jumper.

He said he has occasionally been pulled back into the role in the fall to help cover the



duties once the summer crew is off to college.

## This year's jumpers

The judges watched and graded each jumper during the tryouts and came to agreement about who has been selected for 2025.

“The two chosen to be the main jumpers were Marie

Nickolette and Michela Fletcher,” Burling said.

“There will also be three new jumpers – Mia Fiscelli, Ryann Grunow and Annie McEneaney.”

All who attended the tryouts deserve kudos for their efforts as this is not a job many would attempt to do.

It's fairly easy to see the jumpers in person – simply go on a Lake Geneva Cruise Line mailboat cruise this summer. The Walworth

II (the mailboat) leaves from the Riviera Docks in downtown Lake Geneva daily at 10 a.m. with boarding beginning at 9:30 a.m. The tour wraps up when the boat returns to the docks by 12:30 p.m.

For more information including the other offerings by the cruise line outside of the mailboat or to purchase tickets, visit [cruiselakegeneva.com](http://cruiselakegeneva.com) or stop by the ticket office at the Riviera Docks.



SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Southern Lakes Newspapers

**Leaving the boat for a quick run before the tryouts begin. At right: In addition to actually delivering mail, jumpers must be proficient in the history of the area and as such need to read a portion of the tour's script.**



# FUN & GAMES

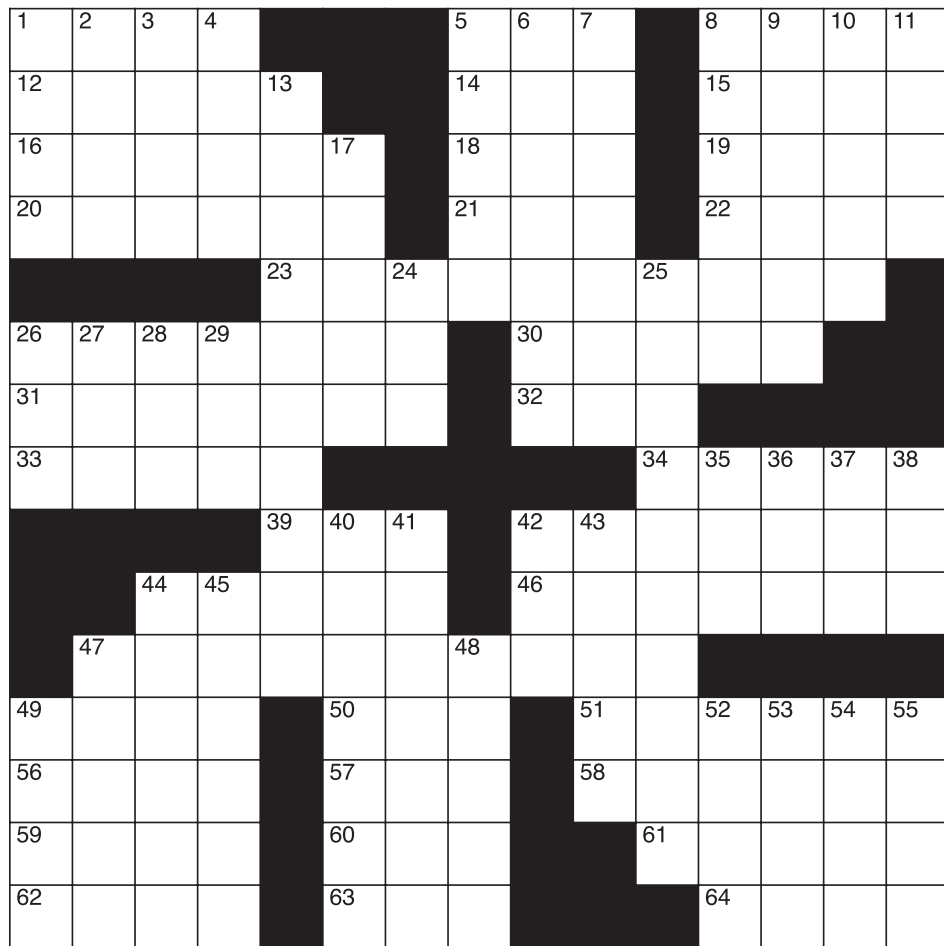
## CLUES ACROSS

- 1. 50 percent
- 5. Records electric currents
- 8. Charlize Theron flick “\_\_\_ Flux”
- 12. More frosty
- 14. Disfigure
- 15. Sky color
- 16. A thoroughfare in a town or city
- 18. Actress de Armas
- 19. Spend time in a relaxed way
- 20. California peak
- 21. Lodging option
- 22. Small amount of a thing
- 23. Expresses sorrow
- 26. Keeps an ear warm
- 30. Babies (Spanish)
- 31. A conceited and self-centered person
- 32. No seats available
- 33. Pouches
- 34. Hip joints
- 39. A place to bathe
- 42. Evading
- 44. Minute, one-celled unit
- 46. Losing one's hair
- 47. A country in W Africa
- 49. One point north of northeast
- 50. Pointed end of a pen
- 51. Extreme
- 56. Norse personification of old age
- 57. Doctors' group
- 58. Member of U.S. Navy
- 59. Mens' fashion accessories
- 60. A way to allow
- 61. Gloomy
- 62. Grads wear one
- 63. Between south and southeast
- 64. Jaguarundi cat

## CLUES DOWN

- 1. Snakes do it
- 2. Hormone
- 3. The standard monetary unit of Turkey
- 4. Fixed charges
- 5. Electronic communication
- 6. Artilleries
- 7. “Strangers on a Train” actor Farley
- 8. Burning
- 9. Makes ecstatically happy
- 10. Greek liqueurs
- 11. Tropical Old World tree
- 13. Someone who takes vengeance
- 17. Style of cuisine
- 24. Select
- 25. Immunized against disease
- 26. Old world, new
- 27. Honorable title (Turkish)
- 28. Court case: \_\_\_ v. Wade
- 29. Supervises interstate commerce
- 35. Not divisible by two
- 36. Twelve
- 37. Commentator Coulter
- 38. Encourage
- 40. Plumbing fixtures
- 41. Early
- 42. One point north of due east
- 43. King of Thebes
- 44. Short-tailed martens
- 45. Impose a penalty on
- 47. Consort of Poseidon
- 48. A way to lessen
- 49. Brooklyn hoops team
- 52. Female of a horse
- 53. Do as one is told
- 54. A way to prepare meat
- 55. Unit of measurement

## CROSSWORD



PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

## STAY COOL WORD SEARCH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards.



- AIRFLOW
- DUCTWORK
- HVAC
- CAPACITY
- EFFICIENCY
- REFRIGERANT
- COIL
- EVAPORATOR
- SYSTEM
- CONDENSATE
- FAN
- TEMPERATURE
- CONDENSER
- FILTER
- THERMOSTAT
- COOL
- HANDLER
- VAPOR
- DAMPER
- HEAT PUMP
- VENTS
- DIFFUSER
- HUMIDITY
- ZONES

PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

**GUESS WHO?** I am a singer and actress born in Florida on June 26, 1993. I began my career as a soloist with various symphonies. I made my Broadway debut at the age of 13. After doing some Nickelodeon shows, I released my debut album in 2013. Recently, I appeared as a “good” witch on the big screen.

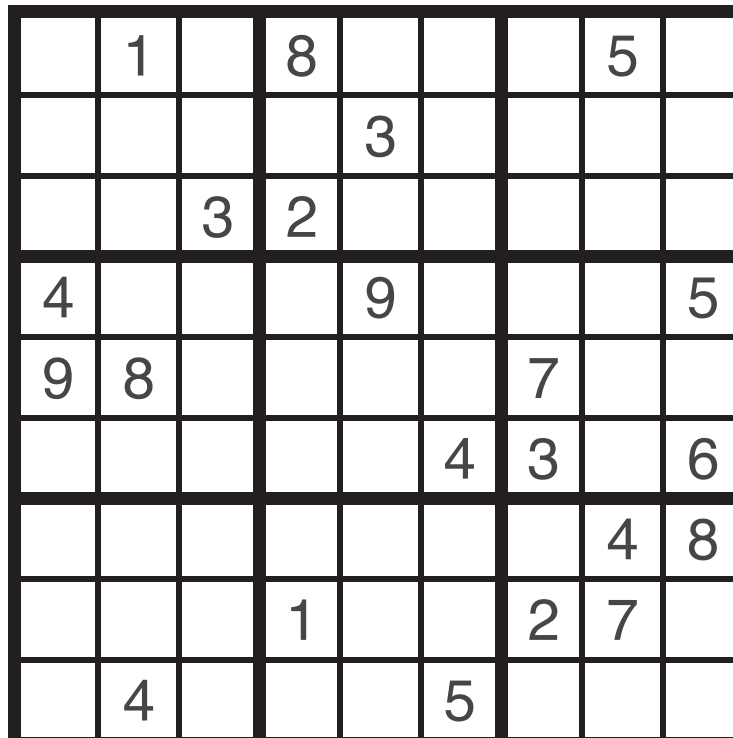


Solve the code to discover words related to the beach. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 10 = S)

- A. 10 9 7 23**  
Clue: Granular material
- B. 10 8 4 16 15 25 20 7 15**  
Clue: Where ocean meets sand
- C. 5 9 2 15 10**  
Clue: Swells of water
- D. 10 8 15 25 25 10**  
Clue: Protective coatings of sea creatures

Answers: A. sand B. shoreline C. waves D. shells

## SUDOKU



LEVEL: ADVANCED • PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

## •Healing (Continued from page 5)

“A lot of that’s gone,” Jeffrey said of the stress. “Taking a big, deep sigh of relief.”

Jeffrey Weingart was one of two family members to take the stand, as both he and Gina’s mother, Eva Gennara, testified the morning of June 24 in Routt’s five-day jury trial.

Jeffrey’s testimony included him receiving a phone call the night of the shooting – from his son Emerson. There was only silence on the other end, as Emerson had already been shot four times by Routt and could no longer speak as he lay dying.

“You don’t know what you don’t know at the time,” Jeffrey said. “I looked and saw it was Emerson. I used my best ‘you didn’t wake me up voice.’ I said, ‘Em, you there?’ “There was just nothing there,” Jeffrey said. “No music, no nothing.”

After querying his son a few different times, Jeffrey assumed it was an accidental dial, and hung up the phone. The next morning that he said to his wife, Christi, “Oh, I think Em butt dialed me.”

He found out later Emerson had tried calling another family member first – that person hadn’t answered, before trying his father.

Jeffrey said the silence on that phone call “haunts” him, especially knowing that Emerson was shot in the jaw and likely couldn’t speak.

“What would he have said? I couldn’t help him and he was dying,” Jeffrey said. “There was nothing I could’ve done.”

That fact, along with the March 24 death of Gina’s father, Tim, of cancer, has left both families with open wounds.

The delay of the trial from December of last year to June of this year due to the state crime lab not being done processing evidence meant that Tim Gennara was not able to see his daughter’s killer brought to justice.

But on Sunday, Jeffrey Weingart said the trial showed the depth of evidence the state had against Routt, as well as the thoroughness of the state in its preparation to convict Routt.

“I can’t say enough about the respect that we have for the people of Elkhorn, the police department and the Walworth County Sheriff,” he said.

Having spent most of his life in southeast Wisconsin

– including raising Emerson in Burlington for some years – Jeffrey also praised the support he and his family received from the Elkhorn community.

“When you get cards from people you’ve never heard of before, when you have neighbors dropping off food,” he said. “Saying ‘thank you’ just doesn’t feel like it’s enough.”

Both the Weingarts and the Gennara families have significant ties to the area. Gina Weingart (Gennara was her maiden name) was a Waterford Union High School graduate, who worked for Wisconsin Vision Associates and bartended at the Sports Page Barr.

Emerson was the meat department manager of Metro Market in Mukwonago.

Both had passions – Gina danced while growing up, while Emerson was an avid outdoorsman. Gina was a social person who would make friends with everyone in the room, while Emerson was something of an introvert, his father said.

What Jeffrey wanted people to know was that the two were not just homicide victims – and that family members are more than just faces on the news.

“They’re real people with real emotions and real lives,” he explained.

Jeffrey said he will be speaking at Routt’s sentencing hearing because he wants people to understand what was lost on a chilly winter night.

Justice, he added, had come with the trial, but also in other ways.

“In my view, there are two ultimate forms of justice – one that was dispensed on Friday but the ultimate one is going to come when he has to meet his maker,” Jeffrey said. “Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord.”

The hard part, he said, is coming to terms with the idea of forgiveness. Following the homicides, Jeffrey said he spoke with a former pastor.

“I said to the pastor, ‘I know and I’ve been trained that we’re supposed to forgive,’ he said. ‘I’m having such a hard time.’”

The pastor had to explain that forgiveness is, simply, giving up your right to vengeance.

“It just means that you understand that there’s a higher power,” Jeffrey explained. “And I have struggled with that still for a year and a half ... but I understand that.”

## •Routt (Continued from page 5)

911 call by the witness at the bar during the shooting and camera video from the first sheriff’s deputies on scene Feb. 1 were played.

Walworth County Medical Examiner Dr. Brian Peterson, also testified, explaining the four gunshot wounds Emerson Weingart received – including one that shattered his jaw – and the one bullet wound of Gina’s, which entered at roughly the point of the chin and exited the back of her neck.

Neither wound would have caused instant death, Peterson said.

### The defense

Routt’s Attorney, Russell Jones, took to cross examination several times during the state’s presentation to question whether police had followed proper procedure in interviewing Routt.

The purpose was to then call an expert witness June 27, Dr. Brian Cutler, who talked about the frequency of false confessions and how some police tactics can result in a false confession due to coercion.

Cutler spoke for roughly two hours on how some police tactics in interviews can lead a suspect to confessing to a crime they did not commit. Cutler was asked to review only Routt’s second interview with police – he later testified that he did not interview Routt and did not have the psychological background to detail his state of mind.

However, Cutler did point to a handful of techniques that investigators used in their interview with Routt, including minimization (minimizing Routt’s intents or actions, showing sympathy) and maximization (insisting on Routt’s guilt and implying they had evidence).

“False evidence has been specifically studied,” Cutler said. “You can falter people’s memories.”

On the cross examination by Wiedenfeld, Cutler admitted that the data base of false confessions sits at roughly 3,900 confessions – going as far back at 1989 – with likely hundreds of thousands of convictions during that time.

In that database, Cutler admitted there were only 453 false confessions that led to convictions. He also admitted to Wiedenfeld that he had not reviewed all of the testimony, all of the police reports or the first interview by police. He was asked only to analyze the

second interview by law enforcement, as well as part of one phone call Routt made to his mother.

Cutler also admitted, when pressed, even new interrogations that focus strictly on information gathering and do not use the tactics he described (which he admitted are legal) could still be viewed as coercive.

While the defense rested after Cutler’s testimony, Routt did not formally state he would not take the stand until that point. His interviews with law enforcement had stated several accusations, including being used or set up by some sort of cartel, that he’d been gambling the week of the homicides and had been winning, and that the people in what he said was a cartel had taken his winnings while he was at Potawatomi Casino.

Routt also said repeatedly during both interviews that a man in a black hoodie had been playing the gaming machines at Sports Page Barr, and losing, and attempted to make the argument that man was responsible.

However, during the second interview, when confronted with evidence from law enforcement that Routt was in the bar the whole evening and the other man was not, Routt broke down and gave police the confession – which is what Jones argued was coerced.

### Closing arguments

After Routt declined to testify and the jury was dismissed, Jones did make a motion for dismissal and for a “directive verdict” – which would have taken the decision out of the jury’s hands and asked Drettwan to declare Routt not guilty.

She declined on both motions, making a point to say that the evidence was sufficient and credible, and leaving the decision to the jury.

The court took a lunch break and came back for closing arguments at 1 p.m. June 27.

Drettwan clearly defined the charges being brought against Routt before those closing arguments were made. Drettwan made the point that first-degree intentional homicide must prove two elements – one, that the defendant caused the death, and two, that he acted with the intent to kill, had the mental purpose to take a life or that his actions were practically certain to lead to death.

The specific point Drettwan made was that “no appreciative

time” needed to happen between the thought and the act of killing. She added that the state was not under the burden to prove motive.

Wiedenfeld spoke first during closing arguments, setting the stage of Feb. 1, when Gina Weingart was bartending and her husband was there keeping her company until the bar closed.

“No one was expecting a homicide. No one was expecting a shooting, or a death,” Wiedenfeld said. “Except the defendant.”

He then reviewed the evidence, which showed not only Routt’s DNA on the weapons and cash drawer at the bar, but video of Routt dumping the gun and testimony from the medical examiner that Gina Weingart had likely made no move to swat at the gun, as Routt has insisted.

“He had the gun pointed at the face of the victim, his finger on the trigger,” Wiedenfeld said. “He wanted everyone to be dead so he could take that money and get away.”

Wiedenfeld also said that the witness who fled the bar was alive because her “instincts kicked in.” Routt, he added, then confessed to police and confessed to his mother, using the exact same details.

“Gina and Emerson did nothing to bring this onto themselves, and neither did (the witness),” Wiedenfeld said.

When Jones made his closing statement on Routt’s behalf, he conceded that the deaths of Gina and Emerson were a “horrific tragedy,” but said Routt had been maneuvered into a confession by law enforcement.

“They lied to him,” Jones explained, pointing to the techniques law enforcement used to imply they had more evidence than they did, and that those techniques convinced Routt

into a false confession.

“They kept it going until they got somewhat what they wanted,” Jones said. “Because it fits their narrative.”

He added that reasonable doubt played into the jury’s decision, because the jury could decide whether it was reasonable that someone else could have committed the crime, and that it was reasonable Routt’s confession had been coerced.

Wiedenfeld got a chance to rebut the comments, and reminded the jury about the tremendous amount of evidence that had been presented that linked Routt to the crime. He added that “lots of little details” all added up, and while law enforcement was gathering information from Routt, the defendant did the same, until Routt reached the point he was “cornered.”

Wiedenfeld then finished with one other detail – a key fob that was found on Routt when he was taken into custody could also be seen when Routt purchased the jacket he was wearing when he committed the crime, and at another scene.

Wiedenfeld concluded by saying that it wasn’t the jury’s job to search for doubt, nor was it reasonable to search for it.

“The truth is, the defendant did this,” he said.

### What happens next

Wiedenfeld confirmed the state wanted a pre-sentencing investigation done before the sentence was determined.

Drettwan said that process would take a minimum of 60 days, and the two sides worked to iron out a date that also worked for the court.

The pre-sentencing investigation will look into Routt’s background, history and circumstances, including his criminal history, which will all factor into the sentence given by Drettwan.

## •Hearing (Continued from page 3)

the child, who was squirming away.

Merkel said he then took out a 9 mm handgun and removed the magazine from it. He said he did not believe the gun would fire without one.

He said he walked out of the bedroom, pointed the gun at the child and pulled the trigger expected it to click but instead it “went boom.”

He said that after the shooting, he took the child into the bathroom and called the

child’s grandmother who told him to call 911. He also stated he drank “two little drinks of rum and RC” that evening.

During his status conference on June 17, defense attorney Joshua Ryan-Polczynski raised competency issues and Judge Kristine Drettwan ordered Merkel’s examination.

Results are expected to be heard during the July 8 hearing.

If convicted of the Class B felony, he faces up to 60 years in prison.



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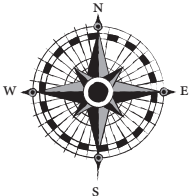
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