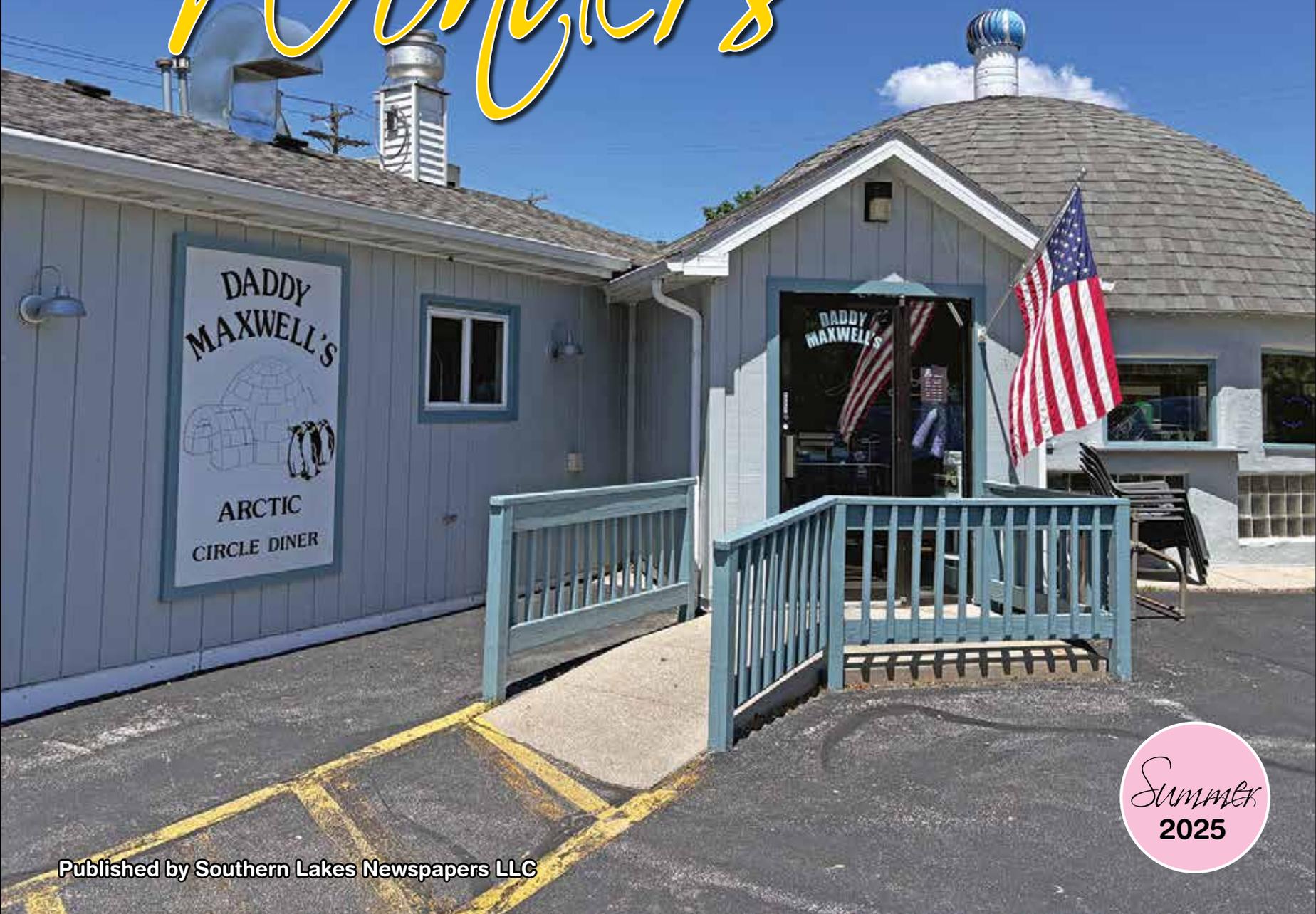




# Wonders

of WALWORTH  
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# Daddy Maxwell's retains loyal customers

## 'Igloo' restaurant now owned and run by two former employees

By Jennifer Eisenbart  
STAFF WRITER

For long-time Williams Bay resident Christine Cilio, there's one place and one place only for her food.

"I love this place, the community loves this place," Cilio said of Daddy Maxwell's, 150 Elkhorn Rd., Williams Bay.

Known as the "igloo" place along Highway 67 in the Bay, the restaurant has had a loyal following for a long time – and with customers like Cilio, it's no wonder why.

"The food is homemade," she added. "They'll make you anything you want. Everyone (knows) everybody."

Daddy Maxwell's, originally owned by Janette and Marshall Maxwell, has been a local diner staple for as long as current owner Dan Smith can remember.

He actually worked for the Maxwells starting in the early 2000s and stayed on and helped out until Jeanette unfortunately died from cancer.

"Another cook who used to work here and I, had kind of toyed with the idea of owning a restaurant," Smith explained, adding that he and Miguel Linares joked that if Daddy Maxwell's ever became available, they should work together.

Following Janette Maxwell's death, the two took over the building in October of last year, renovated it and reopened in late December 2024.

"It was huge," Smith said of the reaction from the community. "Which was nice, because you never know how they're going to take it."

"Everybody knew Janette," he added. "Everybody's been really supportive."

He said they have pretty much "kept everything the same" as it was when Janette was running it.



from left: The igloo section of Daddy Maxwell's offers an interesting round dining room area, in addition to more traditional seating; Daddy Maxwell's waitress Mila Mielke shows off the fruit cups available on the restaurant's menu.



JENNIFER EISENBART Wonders of Walworth County

"We only eliminated a couple of things," Smith said. "We kept all the recipes the same. We tried to keep as close to the original as possible, but with our own style."

Smith said the breakfast menu seems to draw the most customers, though they don't normally get busy until late morning, whether people stop by a late breakfast or early lunch.

"Breakfast is what kind of draws people in," Smith said. "Big servings, plentiful food."

Omelets, Swedish pancakes (think

crepes) and French batter pancakes are among the most popular items on the breakfast.

"It's pancakes mixed with whole eggs kind of whipped into it," Smith said of the French batter pancakes.

The restaurant is also known for its homemade cake donuts, made fresh every day. Flavors include plain, chocolate, coconut, vanilla and cinnamon sugar.

It's not just breakfast, though. Like most Wisconsin restaurants, Daddy Maxwell's offers a Friday fish fry –

available for both lunch and dinner.

In addition to the expected fried fish (beer-battered Haddock), Daddy Maxwell's offers a lemon pepper grilled Haddock.

"I've never had it anywhere else," Smith explained. "It's kind of a thing we do here. It adds a great flavor to it."

And then there is a wide variety of sandwiches – both burgers and other choices – plus burritos, nacho platters, salads and a section of the menu devoted to chicken.

In short, it's the same small community diner – shaped like an igloo – that everyone seems very happy to have back.

"Everyone's excited," Smith said, relating that he had to keep the lights off while renovating to prevent people from coming in.

"It was nice people had so much interest," he said, adding that he didn't mind the visitors but had been anxious to get the restaurant back on its feet.

"When we opened, we didn't tell anyone we were opening. We didn't want to get overwhelmed. We maybe told a couple of people," Smith said. "We flipped on the sign ... and we had a line of people waiting outside."

"Word got out very, very quickly," he added. "That weekend, we were incredibly busy."

The crowds have remained steady – and now the area is heading into the tourist season.

"Now we're getting swamped again," Smith said. "It's nice."

Daddy Maxwell's is open from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Mondays, and from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday.

Hours are 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sunday, and it's closed on Tuesday.

Finding Daddy Maxwell's on Facebook might be a bit more complicated. With the old Facebook page locked out after Janette Maxwell's death, the new page is the one with the igloo on a dark background with penguins.

## Eyes for design

Fourth grade students at Prairie View Elementary participate in a bookmark design competition sponsored by the East Troy Lions Public Library every spring. Students are given that year's Summer Reading Program theme and instruction from their art teacher Stephanie Doroba. This year's winners are Kennedy Sikraji, Waverly Campbell, and Logan Tess. Copies of their bookmarks are available at the library this summer.

SUBMITTED PHOTO  
Wonders of Walworth County



# Professor a finalist in business plan contest

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**  
STAFF WRITER

It's been a busy stretch for University of Wisconsin-Whitewater associate professor Steven Girard. In February, Girard was announced as one of three recipients of the 2024 Universities of Wisconsin Innovation Grant – a total of \$175,000 over two years with the possibility of up to \$400,000 more. In early April, though, Girard one-

pped himself, with his business plan being named one of 25 finalists for the 2025 Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest.

Both the grant money and the finalist nomination come for Girard's proposal of "Sea Change Silicides – Superalloy and Biomedical Coatings from Sustainable and Recycled Feedstocks."

Girard's business plan started by being inspired by osseointegrated implants –

basically, a double amputee who had titanium rods put into his legs so that his prosthetics could be directly attached.

"I previously had some undergraduate research projects involving bioactive glasses in my lab at UW-Whitewater, which could serve as the gold standard for implant bone growth and regeneration, while also limiting infections due to their inherent antibacterial properties," Girard explained. "But I quickly realized there aren't any commercialized coating technologies using bioactive glass – which is a major problem."

Bioactive glasses are a group of surface reactive, glass-ceramic biomaterials – used as implant devices in the human body to repair and replace diseased or damaged bones.

Among the uses are for fillings (replacing metallic or plastic materials in teeth) and can also bind to bone and other tissues.

Girard began working with WiSys, an organization of business professionals that help with academic technology transfer, intellectual property protection, contract management and technology commercialization.

He originally received funding in 2021-22 to start studying the issue and said that they discovered "we could chemically bond bioactive glass into titanium for the first time using a novel silicide interface."

Since then, Girard has filed a patent on the invention for its use on implants. The coating are bioactive, meaning they regenerative and grow bone.

"Osseointegrated implants are a game changer in prosthetic technology," Girard said in a UW-Whitewater release last December. "Rather than a socket prosthesis, which is essentially strapped onto a patient's site of amputation, osseointegrated components are implanted into the patient's skeleton and extend through their skin. The implant becomes a part of the patient's skeleton. These components more naturally distribute weight and have improved function. Patients even report they have improved senses of force and vibration since the implant essentially becomes an extension of their body."

"Bioactive glasses are extremely effective at regenerating bone in the human body and would be ideal to permanently anchor the implant to bone tissue. But they haven't been successfully demonstrated as coatings for osseointegrated implants – until now."

Now Girard waits to see the outcome of further funding, as well as the governor's



Steven Girard has been knee-deep in his silicides research since 2021. He is now a finalist in a business plan contest in the state.

CRAIG SCHREINER PHOTO/UW-WHITEWATER  
Wonders of Walworth County



UW-Whitewater associate professor Steven Girard (left) is shown working with a student on a project at the university. Girard is one of 25 finalists for this year's Governor's Business Plan Contest for a material that could help revolutionize prosthetic implants.

CRAIG SCHREINER PHOTO/UW-WHITEWATER Wonders of Walworth County

contest. The business plan contest's next round will narrow the field from 25 finalists to the "Diligent Dozen" – 12 business plans. Finalists need to submit a 15-minute pitch deck for review by a panel of about 70 judges. The plans describe the core product or service, define the customer base, estimate the size of the market, identify competition, list members of the management team and provide financial data.

The "Diligent Dozen" was announced in late May – which Girard was included in. The winners were announced at a conference in June however, that list had not been made public as of press time.

Girard said prior he was hopeful for a "sea change" provided by his product – hence the name of the business.

"I am extremely proud that all of the research to get to this point was accomplished by incredible undergraduate researchers at UW-Whitewater," Girard said. "The outcomes of this research could be a sea change for biomedical implants – our coatings should reduce implant failures from loosening or infection and improve outcomes for patients throughout the U.S. and the entire world."

Chris Lindeke, UW-Whitewater's Marketing and Communications Manager, contributed to this article.

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**On the cover:** Daddy Maxwell's, a popular restaurant in Williams Bay, has been a destination story for many over the years, in part because it's shaped like an igloo.  
JENNIFER EISENBART Wonders of Walworth County

# Students honored by arts foundation



Walworth County high school students were honored for their outstanding works of art during an awards program in April as part of the annual Student Art Show presented by the Geneva Lake Arts Foundation at Gallery 223 in downtown Lake Geneva.

The \$750 Neal and Dotsy Heffernan Memorial Award for the best of show was presented to Conner Reed of Elkhorn Area High School for his drawing titled "My Groove." The award was presented by Jane Ipsen of the Lake Geneva Rotary Club.

The \$500 Louis Mergener Memorial Award for outstanding work was presented to Elliot Vail of Big Foot High School in Walworth for his ceramic tea set. The award was given by Tracy Mergener in honor of her father Louis.

Alexia Anaya of Badger High School in Lake Geneva received the \$500 Martin Smith Memorial Award for the most creative work for her oil painting titled "Deception Then Deterioration."

The \$500 John Larson Memorial Award for the most innovative work was presented to Jaelyn Logterman of Delavan-Darien High School for her "Connection of Music" painting done with oil and gouache.

The foundation presented the \$500 Young Emerging Artist Award to Yaris Aranda of Elkhorn Area High School for her digital artwork titled "Portrait of God."

The foundation also honored five students with Awards of Recognition of \$100 each. They were presented to Isabel Halbesma, East Troy High School, for her oil painting "A Diabetic Reality" and Hazel Bartlett of Whitewater High School for her pen stipple work titled "My Dear Livvie."

The other three recognition awards were presented to Layla Vos, Badger High School, for her "Under the Sea" ceramic mugs; Rubi Soto, Catholic Central High School in Burlington, for her "All Nations Come Together" painting; and Kylee Amstute, Williams Bay High School, for her ceramic work titled "The House of Harmony."

The judges were Lisa Dukowitz of Burlington and Carol Pearson of Lake Geneva. Both are former high school art teachers and award-winning artists who are members of the foundation.

**from above:** Elliot Vail of Big Foot High School in Walworth received the \$500 Louis Mergener Memorial Award for outstanding work for his ceramic tea set.; Jaelyn Logterman of Delavan-Darien High School received the \$500 John Larson Memorial Award for the most innovative work for her "Connection of Music" painting done with oil and gouache; Isabel Halbesma of East Troy High School received a \$100 Geneva Lake Arts Foundation Award of Recognition for her oil painting "A Diabetic Reality."

SUBMITTED PHOTOS Wonders of Walworth County

# Making the most of the moment

## Jared Romano competes on Augusta National's grounds for youth contest

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**  
STAFF WRITER

If there is a tradition with the annual Masters tournament, it's the walk to the 18th green on Sunday afternoon.

Jared Romano, who lives in Darien, may not be a PGA professional, but he got to experience that in April as part of the National Drive, Chip and Putt finals.

After qualifying through regionals last fall, Romano was one of 10 finalists competing on Augusta National's practice spaces and the 18th green as part of the 14-15-year-old age group at the DCP finals.

While Romano finished seventh of 10 competitors, the memory of walking up to the 18th green will likely last forever.

"Walking up to putt on the 18th hole was just crazy," Jared said.

The home-schooled high school freshman made the trip to Georgia with 16 other members of his family, creating memories that few people ever get the chance to because of the costs involved.

The National Drive, Chip and Putt Contest enabled the Romano family to travel to Augusta, gave them access to the grounds and practice rounds tickets – as well as covering travel expenses.

It was an experience the family would not have been able to do on their own.

"It's not something we ever would have come up with the cash for," Jamie Romano,

Jared's father, said.

Seeing Augusta National in person is something Jamie said he thought he'd never get to do – and it was a dream come true for him as well as Jared.

Jamie has watched The Masters for 40 years.

"The memories are unbelievable," Jamie said, adding that most of the family walked the 18 holes of the golf course over the last few days of the tournament. "The experience is unbelievable."

Jared said television doesn't give the true experience of seeing what Augusta National offers as a golf course.

"It's way more," said Jared, about the course. "It looks way better in person."

The competition wasn't everything Jared had hoped for – his competition drives were problematic on the Augusta National driving range and he left a chip short in spite of going as hard as he thought he needed to.

But the National DCP finals gives young golfers a chance to access areas that not even members of Augusta National get to go, including the driving range, which is reserved for pro golfers and the DCP finals.

Getting to finish on the 18th green of a renowned course was the icing on the cake.

"It was such a good experience," Jared said. "Now I get to come back home and say I putt on the 18th green of Augusta National."

"You just never think it'll happen," he added.



Darien's Jared Romano (center) is congratulated by tournament officials after finishing competition at the National Drive, Chip and Putt competition in April at Augusta National in Georgia – the home of The Masters.

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**above:** Area high school students sign letters of intent to attend Gateway Technical College as part the annual NC3 National Career and Technical Education Letter of Intent Signing Day at GTC's Kenosha campus. **left:** Jake DeMarco, of Big Foot High School, signs a letter of intent to attend Gateway Technical College during a ceremony on April 10.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County

# Students commit to attending Gateway Tech

Jake DeMarco, a senior at Big Foot High School in Walworth, said he's always wanted to be a pilot.

"Ever since I could talk, I wanted to be a pilot," DeMarco said. "Being a pilot has just always been the career I wanted to get into."

He was on hand at Gateway Technical College in Kenosha on April 10 to find out more about the college's Aeronautics program and to celebrate his intention of enrolling in the program this fall.

DeMarco joined 160 other high school students as they signed their letters of intent to also attend Gateway in Fall 2025 as part of the annual NC3 National Career and Technical Education Letter of Intent Signing Day.

Students from 34 area high schools – including Walworth, Racine and Kenosha counties as well as other area of Wisconsin and Illinois – were at Gateway's signing ceremony held in HARIBO Hall of the Madrigrano Conference Center on

Gateway's Kenosha Campus.

"National Signing Day is an exciting and symbolic moment for high school students as they formally commit to continuing their education at Gateway Technical College," said Tammi Summers, Gateway Technical College vice president of student affairs.

"This day marks the beginning of a new academic journey – one filled with opportunity, growth and the promise of a bright future. For students, Signing Day provides a sense of pride, excitement and belonging," she added. "It allows them to publicly celebrate a major life decision with their peers, families and communities, showing that college and career success are not only possible but within reach."

Darian Davis, of Racine Case High School, plans to enroll in the college's Criminal Justice program and then intends to go on to the college's Law Enforcement Academy.

Davis said he also knew what he wanted

to do from an early age.

"I want to be a police officer," Davis said. "Being a black male, I want to have an effect on my community, to help affect change, and I feel the best way to do that is to be a police officer."

River Kerpec, from Kenosha Indian Trail High School, plans to enroll in Gateway's Liberal Arts program, intending to then transfer on to a four-year college where he will seek an environmental science degree.

Gateway holds agreements with many four-year colleges which allow students to earn their associate degree at Gateway and then transfer to a four-year college, saving them time and money.

"My dad is an environmental scientist, and I wanted to follow in his footsteps," Kerpec said.

The Liberal Arts program was designed for students interested in earning a bachelor's degree, and completion guarantees them admission to area four-year colleges, which

they enter with junior status.

"National Signing Day reinforces our dedication to student success ... it also strengthens our partnerships with area high schools," Summers said.

"By celebrating students' next steps in such an intentional and affirming way, Signing Day becomes more than just a moment – it becomes a milestone that inspires confidence, community, and connection between all new students who are becoming Gateway Red Hawks," she added.

For Yareni Cruz, a student at Racine St. Catherine's High School, that's already happened – she is also a Gateway Red Hawk.

Cruz, who intends to become a nurse, has earned 21 Gateway credits toward her degree and she will earn three more before summer.

She came to the event to show that she's fully dedicated to attending Gateway.

"I've liked all the instructors I've had, all the classes," Cruz said. "I want to be more involved at Gateway, that's why I'm here."

# Fostering a culture of empathy, engagement

## Make a Difference Day about community service and unity

Make a Difference Day is an event at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, held annually to inspire and mobilize the campus community to engage in meaningful service activities. This day is dedicated to fostering a spirit of volunteerism and collective action, aiming to create a lasting impact on the local community and beyond.

The Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs was fortunate to have a group of young ladies who volunteered to assist club members with the annual spring landscape cleanup at the historic Bassett House on Friday, April 25th. With their assistance, leaves were raked, weeds were pulled and bushes were trimmed.

"This is always a wonderful event and we are most thankful that we can participate with UW-Whitewater," Pat Blackmer, president of the Whitewater Federation of Women's Clubs said.



During UW-Whitewater's Make a Difference Day April 25, a variety of cleanup projects took place throughout the Whitewater area. A crew of volunteers, including those shown, worked to protect and preserve Whitewater Creek where they collected a large amount of trash, recyclables, tires and more.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County

such as littering and lack of Native habitat.

Volunteers from the Whitewater Creek Coalition led students from UW-Whitewater on their aptly named "Make a Difference Day," as they sought to tackle those issues.

At Whitewater Creek Nature Area, they

were able to collect a half-dozen bags of trash, and two bags of metal recycling, along with tires and construction materials.

Whitewater Creek Coalition treasurer Aubrey Thompson noted that "volunteers left with giant smiles" from such a successful cleanup.

Meanwhile, volunteers at Brewery Hill Park in downtown Whitewater planted dozens of Native species along the creek, building on the invasive species removal work of prior volunteers. Plants included Wild Bergamot, Goldenrod, Brown Eyed Susan, and many other bird, pollinator, and wildlife friendly flowers and shrubs.

The Whitewater Creek Coalition organizes regular cleanups, invasive species removal events, and supports education and awareness to ensure a healthy and resilient Whitewater Creek ecosystem. Those interested in learning more or getting involved can contact them via Facebook or Instagram.

UW-Whitewater's Make a Difference Day exemplifies the power of collective action and the positive influence of community service, Blackmer said.

"By uniting students and local residents in purposeful activities, this event not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters a culture of empathy and proactive engagement," she said.

"As it continues to grow and evolve, Make a Difference Day will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of UW-Whitewater's commitment to making a meaningful difference in the world."

# Take in some history at Black Point Estate

Black Point Estate and Gardens, a Wisconsin Historical Society site, offers a variety of events each year.

The special events include a new “Nooks and Crannies Tour” and an intriguing “Institute for Victorian Living” series that invites guests to step into the Gilded Age to master the hallmarks and social traditions of a lost era.

Perched along the shore of historic Geneva Lake, the Queen Anne style retreat and surrounding gardens offer visitors a glimpse back in time to a period when beer barons reigned, and life moved at a slower pace, according to the Wisconsin Historical Society.

“Whether you are a first-time visitor or a returning guest, every visit to the site is an opportunity to learn something new and enjoy the little details that set the property apart from modern life,” said Dave Desimone, director of Black Point Estate and Gardens.

We’re excited to bring back annual favorite events along with new experiences to connect our guests with our gilded-age roots,” he added.

Black Point Estate and Gardens’ summer season kicked off in late May and runs through Aug. 31 with a morning tour offered Monday through Thursday and both a morning and afternoon tour Friday

through Sunday.

The cost for the boat tour with Black Point Estate and Gardens experience is \$53 for adults, \$37 for teens (13 to 17), \$51 for seniors (65+), \$33 for children (four to 12) and \$2 for children younger than 4.

Tickets for the general admission experience are available through Lake Geneva Cruise Line found at [cruiselakegeneva.com/public-tours/black-point-estate/](http://cruiselakegeneva.com/public-tours/black-point-estate/)

Wisconsin Historical Society members receive a \$17 discount and 10% off select special experiences. Members are encouraged to pick up a Pastport for the 2025 season to start earning stamps towards special prizes for every Wisconsin Historical Society site visited.

## Upcoming events

**Nooks and Crannies Tour – Thursdays, through Aug. 28, 12:30 to 4 p.m.**

Guests will go behind the scenes and uncover the mysterious secrets of this 1800s summer manor during a rare all-access tour.

“Explore all three sprawling floors of the historic mansion Chicago beer baron Conrad Seipp once called home, traversing seldom seen rooms, forgotten nooks



**from above:** The 2025 season is underway for Black Point Estate and Gardens, which is perched along the shore of Geneva Lake; Guests head to the entrance of Black Point during a visit. In addition to regular tours, the Wisconsin Historical Society site offers several special events.

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County

and quiet crannies full of long-forgotten history,” officials wrote.

The cost is \$58 for adults, \$42 for teens (13-17), \$56 for seniors (65 and older), \$38 for children (4-12) and \$2 for children under four.

**Beer Barons of Lake Geneva – July 19 and Aug. 16, 12:30 to 4 p.m.**

Guests will embark on a narrated cruise that dives into the stories and secrets of legendary beer barons who once called the shores of Geneva Lake home, the Historical Society states.

Additional features include sampling regional brews as guests tour the 1888 Queen Anne-style mansion and learn about beer barons who created getaways on the shores of Geneva Lake.

The cost is \$70 for adults and seniors.

**An Evening with Agatha Christie – June 21, 6 to 7:30 p.m.**

People will experience an intimate tour of the first floor of Black Point Estate as well as a twilight conversation on the veranda with the most successful mystery writer of the 20th century, brought to life by local historian and actress Chris Brookes.

Brookes will discuss Christie’s literary career, including her most famous novel, “Murder on the Orient Express,” and her wildly successful play, “Mousetrap.”

Enjoy talks over a complimentary glass of wine as you immerse yourself in the allure of a timeless author in a timeless location. The cost is \$35 for adults, seniors and teens (13-17).

**The Institute for Victorian Living Series – July 12, Aug. 9 and Sept. 13, from 5 to 7 p.m.**

Black Point Estate is unveiling a new series of events inviting guests to step into the Gilded Age as they learn to master the Victorians’ most formidable social code.

Victorian society placed great importance on maintaining a high standard of personal conduct throughout social classes.

People can immerse themselves in the customs of the age at this special series exploring three intriguing topics – the Language of Flowers on July 12, the Art of Politeness and Grace on Aug. 9, and Weddings of Geneva Lake in the Gilded Age on Sept. 13.

The cost of each session is \$75 per person.

**She Sips and Sails: A Ladies’ Brew Adventure – Aug. 2, 12:30 to 4 p.m.**

People can step aboard and embark upon an exclusive cruise where they’ll sip regional craft beverages as they uncover the history of the beer barons who helped shape the scenic Geneva Lake area.

“As you glide across the sparkling waters, our expert guide will share the captivating stories of these influential figures whose legacies still echo throughout the Greater Milwaukee and Chicago areas.

Upon docking at Black Point Estate, the summer home of noted Chicago beer baron Conrad Seipp, you’ll be treated to a curated tasting experience perfectly paired with delicious snacks,” the Historical Society wrote in a news release.

The cost is \$70 per person.

## About Black Point Estate and Gardens

Black Point Estate and Gardens is one of the Wisconsin Historical Society’s 12 historic sites and museums. The Geneva Lake estate is a 20 room Queen-Anne style mansion built by Chicago beer baron Conrad Seipp with construction completed in 1888.

The lakeside summer home is surrounded by seven acres of gardens and natural areas. Visitors reach the site by boat just as family and friends did in a bygone era, and tickets can be booked through the Lake Geneva Cruise Line.

For more information and a list of upcoming events visit [blackpointestate.org](http://blackpointestate.org) or call 262-248-1888. Wisconsin Historical Society members receive discounted admission to this site.





## Savory Sounds

The Whitewater Arts Alliance hosts a Savory Sounds concert series in the summer, featuring a musical group and a lunch vendor outside the Cultural Arts Center at Flat Iron Park, 402 W. Main St., Whitewater. Shown performing last year is the Currach Irish Trio to those that gathered to listen. This year's concerts will be on June 19 and 26, and July 10, 17 and 24, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. For details on performers and lunch vendors, visit whitewaterarts.org.

TOM GANSER *Wonders of Walworth County*

# Rolfs puts another fiction mark in her column

By **Susan Steele**  
CORRESPONDENT

Judith Rolfs stands as a testament that many stories emerge from a single life.

Now in her 80s, Rolfs draws upon her extensive background as a marriage and family counselor, spanning three decades, to forge deeply relatable relationships in her diverse body of work, which includes both non-fiction and fiction.



**Judith Rolfs**

"We all care most about that (relationships)," said Rolfs. "I aim to provide valuable insights that can assist readers in confronting their personal challenges, particularly when they encounter them reflected in the clear language of my counseling solutions."

Rolfs sees her role as more than just an author.

"I'm not merely in the business of writing books," she explained. "My true intention is to help people. There's so much we can gain from shared knowledge."

And indeed, she writes prolifically, boasting an impressive catalog of over 26 non-fiction titles. Her works include informative guidebooks like "How to Be a Great Husband and Dad\*" and "52 Ways to Live, Love and Laugh as a Woman" as well as practical resources for grandparents with her two super-grandparent books. She has also crafted soulful devotionals such as "God's Near" and "Jesus Time\*".

In an exciting evolution of her writing journey, Rolfs ventures into the realm of suspense and mystery. Her latest novel, "The Windemere Affair," launched recently at Angelus Gift and Home in Walworth.

Once a vibrant resident of Delavan, Rolfs now calls Fontana home, where she shares her space with her beloved writing companion, Miles – a 10-pound Maltese who dutifully nestles at her feet in his cozy dog bed while she immerses herself in her stories.

Despite her fulfilling life, Rolfs carries a bittersweet nostalgia for her late husband, a fellow writer who transitioned into the literary world after a successful career as a PGA Golf Pro.

"We thrived on exchanging ideas," she remembered fondly. "I never put pen to paper without him being the first to read what I had written."

Her poignant work, "A Widow's Love Story," is a heartfelt tribute to him.

"The wonderful thing about being a writer is that you never have to retire," she reflected.

To discover more about Rolfs and explore her extensive range of books, go to [www.judithrolfs.com](http://www.judithrolfs.com). You can also check out her informative marriage and family videos on her YouTube channel, JudithRolfs.

# Treasure Hut offers flowers, plants and more

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**  
STAFF WRITER

What started as the business of Nieman's Greenhouse, the boasting point of the flower shop once was that they could telephone or telegraph flowers anywhere.

"Times have changed," said Kevin Hermann, son of the couple who purchased the business in 1969 and renamed it Treasure Hut.

Now a staple in the Delavan area and greater Walworth County community, the flower shop and greenhouse boasts a large variety of flowers, plants, gifts and even furniture.

"I was born and raised in Delavan and Walworth County has always been my home," explained Hermann. "I believe if you're part of the community, you need to contribute."

Located on the eastern edge of the City of Delavan at 6551 Hwy. 11, the flower shop offers a large variety of services and has for many decades.

When asked about his involvement in the business, Hermann joked he's been around greenhouses since birth.

"I grew up tugging my dad's pants legs, asking him questions," Hermann explained.

Those questions led Hermann into the business.

In 2000, he and his wife, Stacy, purchased the business from his parents, Richard and Jean Anne. Since then, he has continued the family business' motto of serving the public.

"Our advertising motto is, 'where quality counts,'" Hermann said, who is hopeful the business will pass into a third generation with his son, Logan.

"We've just tried to continue the family business," he added.

Customers can make appointments with staff at the Treasure Hut for weddings. While scheduling in advance is well advised, the shop's website also offers photos from recent weddings it has done – so customers can get ideas and see the quality of the work. Anniversaries can also be set up with staff.

But it's not just weddings and anniversaries. Somber occasions, such as



**left:** Kevin Hermann (right) is shown here with his son, Logan, who Kevin said he hopes will make Treasure Hut a three-generation family affair.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Wonders of Walworth County*



**right:** Among the many displays Treasure Hut puts together each year are hanging flower baskets for places like Lake Lawn Resort.

JENNIFER EISENBART *Wonders of Walworth County*

funerals, can and will be accommodated.

Treasure Hut handles arrangements for corporate events and during the interview for this story, were preparing the hanging baskets that are normally on display at Lake Lawn Resort and in the City of Lake Geneva as they are on display beginning in May.

In addition to the work going out, the greenhouse crew is spending time on similar plants and flowers that they'll sell outright.

Hermann said the shop will do its best to handle all requests but asks customer to remember to book early when possible.

"We try not to say no to anybody, but sometimes we have more than we can handle, especially on weekends," he explained.

While the shop is busy on certain weekends like many others such as Mother's Day, the inventory is there year-round,

focusing not just on plants but also flowers.

The shop also handles holiday displays. "For Christmas, we do Pier 290," Hermann said.

In addition to the fresh flowers and plants, though, Treasure Hut has a variety of gifts available in its shop. Those items range from stuffed animals and candles to antique Victorian glass lamps and even artificial flowers, the latter of which special requests are also placed for.

"We do stuff for houses and resorts," Hermann explained. "They need planter boxes and such."

For more information about Treasure Hut, call 262-728-2020 or visit [treasurehutflorist.com](http://treasurehutflorist.com). Hours are Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Appointments on Sundays, or after hours, can be requested.

# 100 years of acoustic perfection

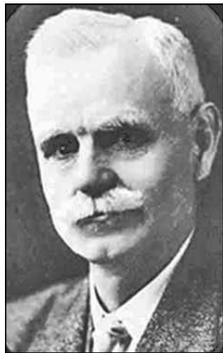
## Elkhorn band shell, the last of its kind, reaches historic milestone

By **Kellen Olshefski**

CORRESPONDENT

A 100th birthday is a monumental milestone, and it's one that Elkhorn's historic and unique band shell in Sunset Park is celebrating this year with hopes of the greater community rallying to ensure many more to come.

Elkhorn Community Grant Writer Katie James said a 2021 survey found that 70% of people not only wanted to see continued use of the band shell but want to see it restored and preserved as a piece of area history. That, she said, set her and



**Frank Holton**

Recreation Director

Karl Sorvick on a path to advocate for city funds for a true historic structure report (HSR) for the band shell to get a better idea on the cost involved.

Last summer, the City of Elkhorn Common Council voted to split the cost of roughly \$45,000 for the HSR by Restoric Enterprises with a grant through the Wisconsin Historical Society, supported by the Henry Fuldner Architectural and Historical Heritage Fund created through a donation by the Jeffris Family Foundation.

"Ultimately, if I want to look for outside funds to make this restoration possible, I needed two things," James said. "One, I needed to know how much it was going to cost, and two, I needed to know its value, and not just an insurance value. I needed to know its rich history and the elements that make it so unique."

What came back from that report was remarkable.

"We actually got very early news from Neal Vogel of Restoric that there was something really special going on with that building that's sitting out in Sunset Park."

### Acoustic perfection

While stories abound about the wood liner backing to the band shell and its brilliant acoustic properties, James said Vogel wanted to know why and hire an acoustics expert to investigate.

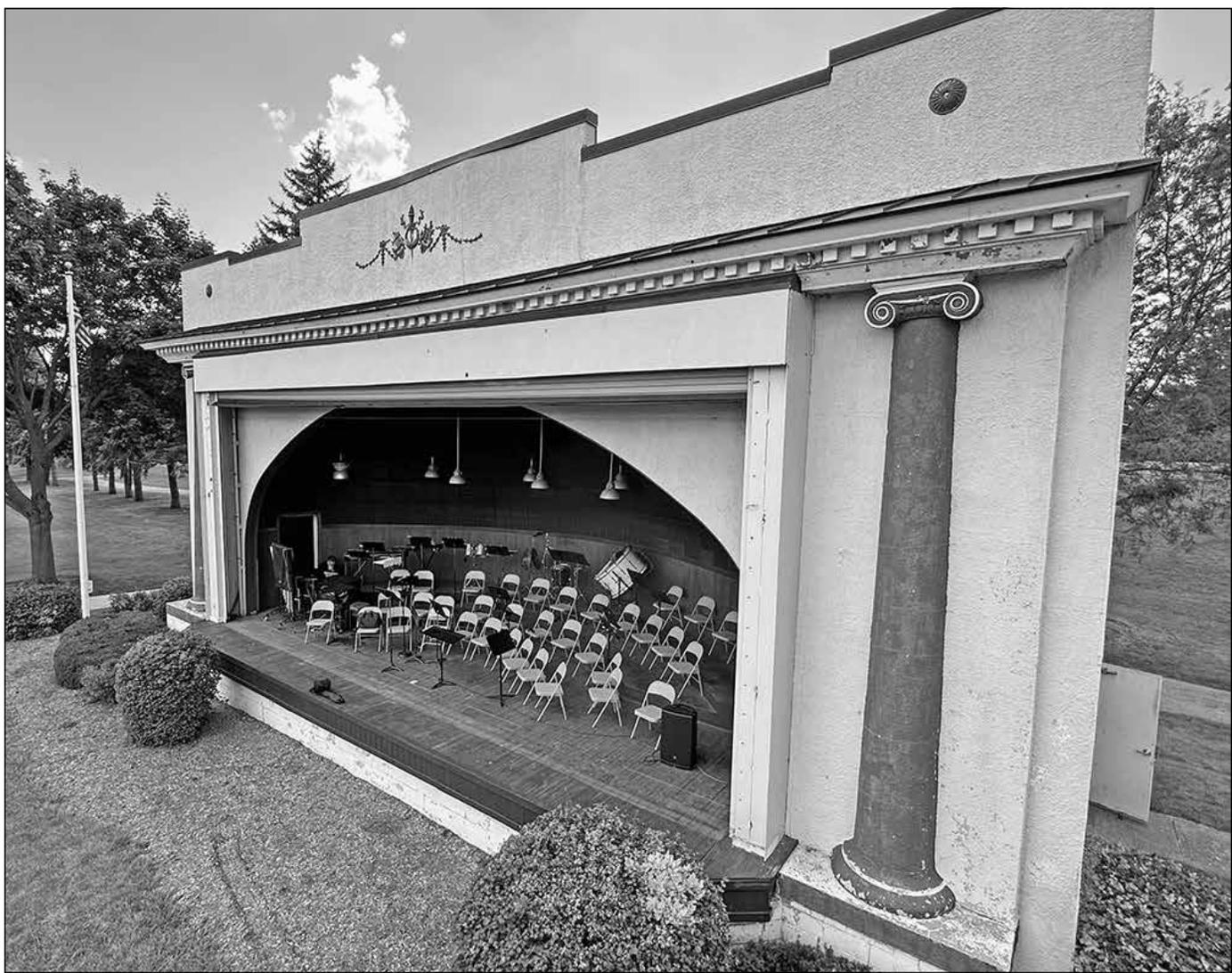
Around Labor Day of 2024, Vogel reported he had accessed the original architect's collection of work and materials through a university in South Dakota. The investigation revealed the 100-year-old band shell's design is acoustically perfect, either intentionally or by accident.

"Even when it was built in 1926, we've all heard the story that someone dropped a hammer on the stage and you could hear it 500 feet away," James said. "You can actually talk, facing backwards in the band shell, and be heard clearly at Sunset Pool and vice versa."

James said those claims are verified by data in the report.

Of course, it's perfect design begs the question of who designed it and why?

James said that would be George Pheby, an Arizona architect who had a friend who was a Native American band director, Peter Venne, though Vogel wasn't able to find other experience Pheby had with building band shells or association with music.



The historic Elkhorn band shell in Sunset Park.

PHOTO COURTESY RESTORIC, LLC *Wonders of Walworth County*

According to James, Pheby was tasked with building a band shell in his home state. The outcome was the Phoenix band shell, which historic photos show looks strikingly similar to Elkhorn's.

"It's very neat to see that we have a big brother," she said.

What makes Pheby's design so interesting and spectacular, according to James, is that he expanded on the idea that wood instruments have incredible acoustic properties, and they're primarily made of spruce wood.

"He thought at the time, which was really innovative, what if we designed the band shell to mimic the materials instruments are composed of," James explained. "It would be like performing inside of a guitar or cello."

In looking at the band shell's wooden construction, different woods were used. The lower ring is expensive redwood, and the upper construction is even more expensive spruce, leading to its costly construction.

That design, James said, is called a "hollow-body resonator," a term heard in reference to guitars and cellos.

"You get to play inside of an instrument, and that is why the Elkhorn band shell is so spectacular," she said.

What's more, James noted, is that while other famous band shells were designed by physics majors and professors with a deep understanding of acoustics, this one was designed on a draft table with a pencil by Pheby.

"It was a bit of an experiment. It really is remarkable, and what's even more

remarkable is that in 2026 the band shell is 100 years old and is still able to maintain that level of accuracy," she said. "It's truly amazing that he created a design that has lasted this long, if properly maintained."

Community campaigns in the past have looked to do just that, maintain it properly, adding the garage door to the front in the 90s and replacing the floors at one point, though the band shell's most significant feature, its redwood and spruce resonator, remains largely intact since being constructed in 1926.

### The band shell's history

James said the band shell brought Pheby some fame, including a feature in *Popular Mechanics* in January 1922 highlighting the design.

Back in Elkhorn, Wisconsin, Frank Holton of Frank Holton & Company just so happened to be a subscriber of that magazine.

In an article, James said Pheby noted he had sold his plans to four communities across the nation – as well as Christchurch, New Zealand – including Norristown, Pennsylvania, Mount Morris, Illinois, Menomonee, Wisconsin, and Emporia, Kansas though New Zealand and Kansas reportedly didn't have them constructed.

With Mount Morris just across the border into Illinois, James said Holton and a couple friends from the factory took a trip to see the band shell, which led to him writing Pheby and requesting a copy of the plans.

In 1926, Pheby's design was constructed in Elkhorn with funding from Frank Holton,

the Kiwanis Club and the City of Elkhorn.

However, James said Holton strayed slightly from Pheby's original design because of Wisconsin's harsh winters and the effect it would have on the wooden band shell over time.

As such, Holton opted to put a roll-down canvas cover on the front of the band shell, something the other Pheby-designed band shells didn't have, and as result, deteriorated over time.

Ultimately, James said the Phoenix band shell was demolished, Menomonee lasted about 25 years, Norristown stuck around as they added a door and later renovated, and the Mount Morris band shell was eventually replaced with cinder block backing as the wood was rotted and had to be torn out. In August 2024, a fire ravaged the Norristown band shell, and James said it has since been determined it will need to be demolished.

"They can't do another Pheby," she said. "We have the last one."

According to James, Vogel said its mind-blowing that Elkhorn's band shell was not only designed to perfection but also survived a move on the back of two trucks to Sunset Park and its placement onto a new foundation and maintained its amazing acoustics.

### Historical significance

Upon conveying this information to Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer Daina Penkiunas, James said Penkiunas was blown away.

While the band shell was added to the

National Historic Registry of Historic Places in 2012, James said it was classified as local significance, the lowest of the three classifications, which doesn't cut it when looking at funding from state and federal levels.

She was informed by Penkiunas whether it's the first or last or has ties to a significant historical figure like Abraham Lincoln, that has no effect on a building's standing in terms of classification. What does, James explained, are architectural innovations – like Pheby's design – and things important to the historic culture of the country.

"The City of Elkhorn has the last-known hollow-body resonator Pheby band shell in the United States," James said.

She did note that five years after Elkhorn's was constructed, the military band from Marshfield, Wisconsin, constructed a band shell that looks remarkably similar. However, that band shell was designed by a Marshfield architect and there's no mention of Pheby in its design or construction.

Based on the recent findings, James said Penkiunas recommended the City of Elkhorn apply for elevation to state-level significance, and in February, that request was approved unanimously, in part thanks to the support of Carol Cartwright, who wrote the original application to get the band shell added to the registry in 2012, and now volunteers with the state historical society.

"She's still as passionate about our band shell as she was the first time around," James said, noting Cartwright wrote the amendment application and made the argument for its elevation to the review board at no cost to the city.

Of the nine Wisconsin band shells on the historic registry, James said Elkhorn's is the only one elevated to state-level significance.

**Looking forward**

What the HSR also revealed,

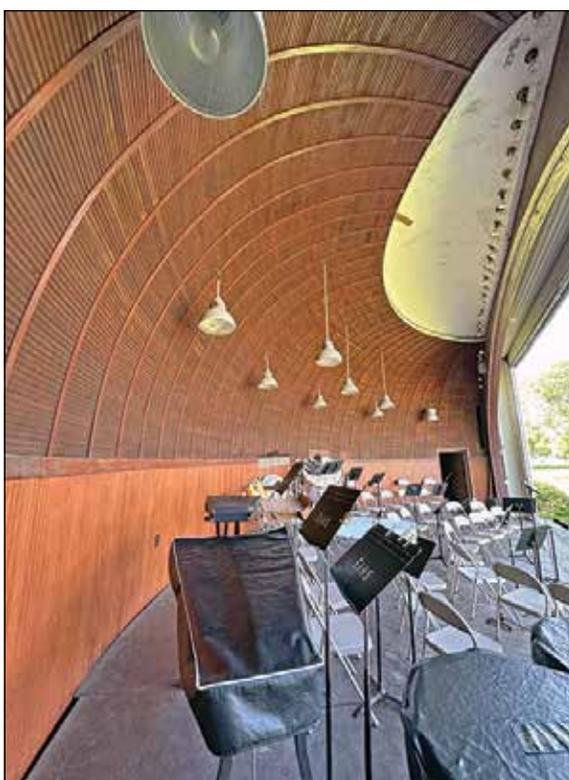
unfortunately, is that the band shell is unstable and not safe for use at this time. Fortunately, the City of Elkhorn Common Council has already taken steps to remedy that, voting in favor of a contract with Beane Engineering for design services for minor repairs to reinforce the structural beams on the front.

James said the total cost for the design and implementation of the work was \$7,300, which would allow the city to continue entertainment at the outdoor venue this summer.

In the meantime, James is looking for funding, grants and community support to help restore the band shell to help ensure it perhaps lasts another 100 years. The HSR goes far beyond minor repairs, with estimates for the restoration reaching more than \$880,000.

"We're looking for a long-term fix, not just a band-aid at this stage," she said.

Interestingly, James said the word has gotten out about Elkhorn's incredible band shell, with bands calling the city because they want to perform on the historic and acoustically perfect stage, making it even more worthy of preserving.



**left:** The band shell's unique hollow-body resonator design featuring redwood and spruce wood. PHOTO COURTESY RESTORIC, LLC Wonders of Walworth County

**above:** Band shell architect George Pheby pictured in Grants Pass, Oregon, in the 1890s. PHOTO ACQUIRED BY KATIE JAMES FROM FIND-A-GRAVE DATABASE Wonders of Walworth County

According to James, it was a grassroots effort to construct Elkhorn's band shell back in 1926, a grassroots campaign to move it and a grassroots movement to make changes to it in the 90s.

"In 2026, we're going to be asking the public for their help again to bring in a new 100 years of the band shell," she said.

The ultimate goal is a strong commitment from the greater community and getting people involved who want to bring great music to Elkhorn and preserve the band shell's important history.

A Band Shell Advisory Committee is

being formed to determine the next steps and a future renovation plan. Anyone interested in helping or learning more is encouraged to contact Elkhorn Recreation Director Karl Sorvick at (262) 741-5114.

"I want to make sure that every dollar we spend goes to long-term restoration and with foresight," James said, noting the HSR included a sustainability plan to ensure the band shell isn't neglected in the years to come.

"I really want to protect folks' investment in the long term," she said. "If we really are going to do this, let's do it right."

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