



Elm Grove NEWS-

INDEPENDENT



Vol. 16 No. 6

Serving Elm Grove, Wisconsin & Neighboring Communities

February 2026

Freedom of the Press is Essential. Community News Matters.

Public Tours of Elmbrook Schools Announced

The School District of Elmbrook is actively seeking input regarding the development of a **20-year Facilities Plan** and has scheduled a series of open-to-the-public tours during the month of February for the purpose of gathering opinions, listening to concerns and answering questions.

The tours include:

- Monday, February 9, 6:00 p.m.
Pilgrim Park Middle School
1500 Pilgrim Parkway
Elm Grove
- Wednesday, February 11, 6:00 p.m.
Swanson Elementary
305 N. Calhoun Road
Brookfield
- Monday, February 16, 6:00 p.m.
Tonawanda Elementary
13605 Underwood River Parkway.
Elm Grove
- Tuesday, February 17, 6:00 p.m.
Wisconsin Hills Middle School
18700 Wisconsin Avenue
Brookfield

Visit: www.elmbrookschoools.org for more information.

**Announcing a new
monthly column...**

***“Our Village”*
in recognition of
volunteers’ service
to this community.**

See Page 4.



Photo courtesy: Elm Grove Beautification Committee

SOWING SEEDS FOR FUTURE GROWTH. Community residents Pat Westen, James Lange, Ren Lange, Julia Lange, Jennifer Studebaker, Steve Steen, Karen Mead Steen, Drew Sternitzky, Nicci Sternitzky, Debrah VanderHeiden, Heidi Kaun, and Amy Forecki with help from Native Roots LLC, gathered in early January to spread buckets of native-to-Wisconsin plant seeds throughout Elm Grove’s Veterans Park on the corner of Legion Drive and Juneau Blvd.

Elm Grove Park Invasive Species Survey Support a Brookfield East AP Research Student

By Jane Bagby

Hello! My name is Jane, and I am an AP Research student at Brookfield East High School. My project aims to understand the level of civic awareness regarding invasive plant species in Elm Grove Park and how this awareness relates to interest and participation in management and educational efforts.

Elm Grove Park visitors aged 18 or older are invited to participate. The survey is anonymous and takes around 5 minutes to complete.

Please consider scanning the QR code to fill out the survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will help inform local invasive species education and conservation efforts in the community!



On the Ballot

A 2026 Elections Preview

By Lisabeth Passalis-Bain

elmgrovenews@yahoo.com

Among the names on the April 7, 2026 Spring Election ballot for the Village of Elm Grove will be candidates for the **Board of Trustees** (3 seats) and the **Elmbrook School Board** (At-Large, Area I, and Area III seats).

**Candidates’
Question & Answer sections will
appear in the MARCH 2026
edition, distributed by March 1.**

In the meantime, if you are not already registered to vote, you can sign up now at

MYVOTEWI.GOV

At that website, you can also **UPDATE YOUR REGISTRATION STATUS and REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT** for just the next election OR for all 2026 elections, if interested. Information about what will be on your ballot can also be viewed.



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What a Wonderful Grove!
A Community Celebration of Kindness

Random Acts of Kindness Week: February 15 – 20, 2026
Brunch at Elm Grove Woman’s Club: Saturday, February 21, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Random Acts of Kindness Day (February 17th) celebrates the power of simple, unprompted good deeds to create a ripple effect of kindness. Just witnessing a kind act can improve a person’s mood and make them more likely to help others, resulting in a cascade of positive impacts that can grow exponentially in a community.

To help spread kindness in our community, the **Elm Grove Woman’s Club (EGWC)** is kicking off “What a Wonderful Grove” and calling on individuals, schools and organizations in the Elm Grove community to perform random acts of kindness during the week of February 15th – February 20th. A simple act can range from paying someone a compliment, to doing something kind for the planet, to donating to a favorite charity.

For each act of kindness that is shared via egwc.org, text, email or social media, a commemorative heart inscribed with details of the act of kindness will be planted on the grounds of the EGWC, 13885 Watertown Plank Road, during that week. Those wishing to share can also fill out a heart in person at the drop box on the porch of the Club. The goal is to see an entire “grove” of hearts take root on the property by week’s end. On Friday, February 20th, DonutNV will be giving out free donuts from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. in the Woman’s Club parking lot to anyone who engaged in acts of kindness during the week.

The week will culminate with a very special event at the Club on Saturday, February 21st. “What a Wonderful Grove” Brunch, will feature heart-warming music, delicious bites catered by Cuppa Tosa Kitchen & Cafe, a mimosa & bloody Mary bar, and a video send-up to a week of kindness. For tickets, visit www.egwc.org.

(See AD – Page 5)



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Kindness Bingo

give someone a compliment	bake treats for a neighbor	smile at a passerby	donate a gently used book to the library	pick up litter
write a kind note to a friend	hug a member of your family	clean up a mess that you didn't make	say hi to someone new	put stray grocery carts where they belong
use reuseable water bottles	help someone before they ask		shop locally	leave a thank you note for your sanitation worker
let someone go ahead of you in line	make a handmade gift for someone		hold the door for someone	give flowers to someone you appreciate
say something nice to a worker at a store	make a thank you card for your mail carrier	donate to a charity	make a music playlist for a friend	help a teacher



Village Update

By Jim Koleski, Village President / jikoleski@elmgrovewi.org

As I write this letter on January 22nd, the weather is pretty darn cold. The good news is that the days are getting longer and hopefully the temperatures will improve as we enter February.



In the meantime, please use extra care when exposed to the bone chilling temperatures and pack an extra layer in your car in case of emergency.

I would like to highlight a new addition to *The News-Independent* – a monthly recognition of the volunteers serving on the Village’s many standing committees. These committees and boards do a lot of heavy lifting working with staff and Trustees guiding the future of the Village. In February, we are highlighting the Building Board. Join me in thanking the members for their significant contributions to this Board and the community in achieving their mission to preserve the character, charm and quality of life within the Village.

(See OUR VILLAGE – Page 4)

***Underwood Creek Daylighting Update**
The Public Works and Utility Committee invested a significant amount of energy making cost effective improvements to the overall scope and design of the Project throughout 2025, without impacting the quality of the end product. This led to a request for re-bids being published on January 6th. Meetings with potential bidders were held in January and final bids will be submitted by January 27th. The updated bids will provide clarity on next steps for the Village Board to move this project forward. It is expected that a contract will be awarded before April 27, 2026. Acquisition of the Railroad parcel continues to be a focus as the condemnation legal proceedings progress.

***Public Works Committee.** The Highland Drive pathway engineering and design work continues on the extension from Gebhardt Road to Watertown Plank Road. It is expected that 60% complete plans will be reviewed at the February 9th Public Works committee meeting. Ongoing meetings with residents have occurred throughout January to understand any specific homeowner input or concerns. The Committee will review how input from the December open meeting, which shared the 30% complete plans with the community, have been considered in the updated design as well review remaining concerns. Feedback to the Engineering firm will be provided following the February 9th meeting.

In January, the Committee reviewed the closeout of various projects from 2025. Overall, the projects were completed within expected cost ranges, after addressing soft soil and other issues identified during construction. Many thanks to the entire Public Works team!

The Committee would like to remind residents and businesses (including their snow removal contractors) to apply ice melting salt (rock salt) judiciously to driveways, walkways and crosswalks. A 12-ounce mug can cover 10 sidewalk squares. Let’s all do our part to provide safe walkways for our residents while limiting the impact on the environment.

***Plan Commission Activity.** In January, the Plan Commission interviewed three planning and consulting firms bidding to provide the Village’s updates to the Comprehensive Plan and a new Downtown Master Plan. All three firms did an excellent job sharing their credentials and the value which would be provided to the Village. After extensive discussions, the Plan Commission recommended Vandewalle and Associates be selected to perform this scope of work. The Board of Trustees will take up this recommendation at its regular meeting on January 27th. The time and talent invested by the Plan Commissioners was extensive throughout this selection effort and my thanks go out to all Commissioners!

Other Community News
Congratulations to Elm Grove’s new Police Detective. **Hannah Martin** was recently unanimously appointed by the Police and Fire Commission to the position of Detective, following the retirement of Detective **Craig Meyer**. This promotion follows Hannah’s 10 years of service to the Village as a patrol officer. Congratulations Hannah!
(See PUBLIC SAFETY – Page 6)

The Elm Grove Police Department is again partnering with St. Mary’s School to provide the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program to students this year. The Dare Program will be led by our new instructor, **Alexa Billstrom**, who will be working with students to build skills in decision-making, personal responsibility and resisting negative influences. Through interactive lessons and open discussions, Officer Billstrom will help students gain confidence, strengthen character, and make safe, healthy choices. Officer Billstrom recently completed specialized training for this new opportunity. Many Thanks Alexa!

As we enter February, let’s take care to bundle up and take extra care to avoid the impact of very cold temperatures. Rest assured, warmer and longer days of sunlight lie ahead.

Business Directory

* Insurance

Woller-Anger, a Relation Company
930 Elm Grove Road, Elm Grove, WI 53122
(262) 789-2500
“Relationships Matter”

* Community Theatre

Sunset Playhouse, Inc.
700 Wall St., Elm Grove
(262) 782-4430
SunsetPlayhouse.com
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Clubs & Organizations Directory



Elm Grove Golden K Kiwanis Club

Come Join with Us, Men & Women, to serve the children of our community. We meet each Friday at 9:30 a.m. in the St. Mary’s Senior Center in Elm Grove. We have stimulating speakers each week and offer socializing among all present.

See us on Facebook
kiwaniselmgrove@gmail.com
www.kiwaniselmgrove.org

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Our Good Neighbors

Do you know a community resident who should be recognized in print for their extraordinary kindness, generosity, or service to others?

***Stories & photos for this section (300 words maximum) may be submitted to:**
elmgrovenews@yahoo.com
(Subject line: Good Neighbors) or mailed to: EGNi, 14420 Watertown Plank Rd. Elm Grove, WI 53122-2423.



News Briefs

Elmbrook Education Foundation to Host Annual Explore STEAM Event

(BROOKFIELD) - The Elmbrook Education Foundation (EEF) invites families to explore the exciting world of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math at its 4th Annual Explore STEAM event on Wednesday, February 18, from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the Brookfield Central High School Main Gym.

Designed for families with students in grades K4–8, Explore STEAM is an engaging, hands-on event that encourages creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving through interactive learning experiences.

“Explore STEAM offers students the opportunity to discover science, technology, engineering, arts, and math in a fun and meaningful way while learning alongside their families,” said **Elizabeth Simpson**, Explore STEAM Chair. “It’s an evening that inspires curiosity and creativity for learners of all ages.”

Attendees can expect:
* Hands-on experiments that spark curiosity
* Engineering challenges that test problem-solving skills
* Interactive technology demonstrations
* A fun, community-wide atmosphere encouraging collaboration and exploration

The event is open to elementary and middle school students and their families. Community members are encouraged to attend, bring friends, and connect with others while discovering the wonders of STEAM. Tickets are available at: <https://ExploreSteam26.givesmart.com> Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

For more information, contact **Beth Dobrzynski**: elmbrookeducationfoundation@gmail.com.

PPMS Student Receives Scholastic Art Award

(ELM GROVE) The School District of Elmbrook congratulates Pilgrim Park Middle School student **Swarpreet Singh**, for winning a Gold Key in the Scholastic Art Competition. This is the highest award that a student in grades 7 – 12 can win statewide.

His piece (shown at right) will be displayed at the Milwaukee Art Museum, and will now go on to be judged at the national level. This is an elite award that is highly regarded by colleges and in the art community.



Our History: *Remembrances of Things Past*



Photo courtesy: Stephen K. Hauser

WATERTOWN PLANK ROAD in 1946, looking east toward the north side of the street. The building at the center of the photo (at 13320 Watertown Plank Road) housed **Elm Grove’s Rexall Pharmacy** at the time. Later, it would be home to **Niemann’s Candy Store** in the late 1950s / early 1960s. Another tenant would be “**Pop’s**”, a tiny shop that sold chewing gum, baseball cards, novelties and Coca-Cola to village youngsters. The small real estate building, farther to the east, was originally **Crother’s Wadhams gas station**, and later home to a barber shop. It was torn down in around 1958. Even farther east stood the late **Ray Reusch’s Mobil** service station. In the foreground of the photo is the **Elm Grove Garage**, which doubled as a Chevrolet dealership.

“OUR HISTORY” STORIES & PHOTOS WANTED!

Share **your memories** of
Elm Grove / Brookfield
Waukesha County in years past.

E-mail stories (250 words maximum)
+ photos to:
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(Subject line: Our History)

OR, Mail to: **EGNI “Our History”**
14420 Watertown Plank Rd.,
Elm Grove, WI 53122

Our Village

Volunteer Recognition – Building Board

By **Jim Koleski**, Village President, jkoleski@elmgrovewi.org

The Village of Elm Grove extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the members of the Elm Grove Building Board for their dedication, professionalism, and volunteer service to the community. The Building Board plays a critical role in preserving the character and quality of life that make Elm Grove such a desirable place to live.

The Building Board members include:
***Jim Olson**, Village Trustee and Chairman
***Tim Flanner**
***Michele Jackson**
***Tim Janusz**
***Andrew Matola**
***Jennifer Stuckert**, Village Trustee
***Kiel Thedford**
***Jim Koleski**, Village President (alternate)

Serving on the Building Board requires a significant commitment of time, energy, and expertise. Unlike most of the Village’s volunteer advisory boards and committees, the Building Board meets twice per month year-round, with longer meetings during building season (spring, summer, fall). Board members are tasked with carefully reviewing simple and complex building plans in advance of meetings. During meetings, they are often balancing subjective design judgment with the objective standards set forth in Village ordinance. This work is rarely simple. It requires a deep understanding of building codes and zoning regulations, attention to detail, and the ability to apply standards fairly and consistently while remaining mindful of the unique circumstances of each project.

Some of the distinct challenges that the Building Board faces on a regular basis include:

***Managing applicant expectations and preferences.** Property owners often invest a significant amount of time, money, and emotions in their projects in Elm Grove, which is encouraged and appreciated. The Board must balance property owner investment and review for possible revisions to improve the project while also respecting the proposed timeline for the project.

***Time constraints and workload.** Building Board members are volunteers who typically have many commitments (jobs, other volunteer responsibilities, family commitments, etc.). Reviewing lengthy plan sets, elevations, and materials outside regular meetings takes many hours each month.

***Public scrutiny and pressure.** Elm Grove residents are passionate and highly engaged, which is what makes this community so great. Board members may face pressure from neighbors, friends, and others to reach certain outcomes. Maintaining independence and impartiality in this environment can be challenging, but our Board does a wonderful job.

***Ensuring consistency.** The Building Board must strive to apply standards uniformly, even as architectural styles and development conditions change, to maintain fairness.

The contributions of the Building Board often go unnoticed by the broader public, yet they are fundamental to the day-to-day functioning of the Village. Beautiful homes and well-designed additions and other projects do not happen by chance; they are the result of careful review and thoughtful oversight. The Board’s work supports not only individual projects but also the collective interests of the community as a whole. Beyond the technical aspects of their role, the Building Board also serves as an important forum for public engagement. Board members listen to applicants and neighbors alike, fostering a transparent, fair, and respectful process. This approach helps build trust in local decision-making and reinforces the Village’s commitment to openness and accountability. Even when decisions are difficult or outcomes are not what an applicant hoped for, the Board’s professionalism and clear communication help ensure that the process is understood and respected.

Thank You & Call for Volunteers

On behalf of the Village Board, staff, and residents of Elm Grove, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the members of the Building Board for their service. Your willingness to volunteer your time and expertise makes a meaningful difference in our community. Elm Grove is stronger, safer, and better because of your commitment, and we are deeply grateful for the role you play in shaping and protecting our Village.

If you have a background in architecture or able to read and understand construction plans, I encourage you to reach out to Chairman **Jim Olson** at jolson@elmgrovewi.org to discuss becoming a member. The Board currently has a vacancy and would greatly appreciate additional perspective.

Thank you Building Board members and **Ethan Sowl**, Village Staff representative!



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53 one 22

Elm Grove Community Foundation

www.elmgrovethefoundation.org

NEW at the Community Foundation

Support the Community Foundation with Planned Gifts

The mission of the Community Foundation is to provide quality of life enhancements to the Village of Elm Grove with projects for which tax dollars are unavailable.

Your current gift, or your planned future gift through your will or trust, can assist the community and provide a lasting legacy for you or a loved one and provide enjoyment for all present and future Village residents. You might also consider designating the Community Foundation a beneficiary of your retirement plan, life insurance policy, or a portion of appreciated stock.

In as little as one sentence, and with the assistance of your legal or financial advisor, you can complete a planned gift to the Foundation so that we can continue our mission for years to come.



BOOK IT! Oktoberfest - September 17, 18, & 19, 2026

Calendar of Events – February 2026

Sunday – FEBRUARY 1

- Elm Grove Beautification Committee Invasive Species Task Force meets: 11 a.m. at Elm Grove Village Park. Volunteers needed. Contact: beautification@elmgrovewi.org

Monday – FEBRUARY 2 GROUNDHOG DAY

Tuesday – FEBRUARY 3

- Elm Grove Building Board meeting– 5:30 p.m. at Village Hall.

Thursday – FEBRUARY 5

- Elmbrook Garden Club – 6:00 p.m. at the Brookfield Public Library, 1900 N. Calhoun Road. presentation by **Lisa Gelhaar**, “Floral Arranging”. Monthly meeting to follow. Details: Shelley at (262) 271-8060.

Friday – FEBRUARY 6

- Elm Grove Kiwanis Club – Golden K Board meeting at St. Mary’s Senior Center. kiwaniselmgrove@gmail.com

Sunday – FEBRUARY 8

- Elm Grove Beautification Committee Invasive Species Task Force meets: 11 a.m. at Elm Grove Village Park. Volunteers needed. Contact: beautification@elmgrovewi.org

Monday – FEBRUARY 9

- Wine Down hosts a “Chocolate & Wine Pairing” event. (See AD, this page.)
- Sunset Playhouse Auditions for musical “All Shook Up”, featuring the songs of Elvis Presley (performances April 23 – May 10). www.SunsetPlayhouse.com (262) 782-4430.

Tuesday – FEBRUARY 10

- ***Elmbrook School Board**
Public meeting: 6 p.m. at the District Office, 3555 North Calhoun Road, Brookfield. www.elmbrookschoools.org

Friday – FEBRUARY 13

- Elm Grove Kiwanis Club – Golden K Meeting: 9:30 a.m. at St. Mary’s Senior Center; Speaker: **Nathan Plennes**, Waukesha County Sheriff Department Detective; “Protecting Yourself” kiwaniselmgrove@gmail.com

Saturday – FEBRUARY 14 VALENTINE’S DAY



- Wine Down hosts “Champagne Flights” event. (See AD, this page.)

Sunday – FEBRUARY 15

- Elm Grove Beautification Committee Invasive Species Task Force meets: 11 a.m. at Elm Grove Village Park. Volunteers needed. Contact: beautification@elmgrovewi.org
- “What a Wonderful Grove” – a Community Celebration of Kindness” – today through February 21. (See AD, this page and story - Page 2)

Monday – FEBRUARY 16 PRESIDENTS’ DAY

Friday – FEBRUARY 20

- Elm Grove Kiwanis Club – Golden K Meeting: 9:30 a.m. at St. Mary’s Senior Center; Speaker: **Steve Lied**, Community Warehouse representative; Topic: “Partners in Hope”. kiwaniselmgrove@gmail.com

Sunday – FEBRUARY 22

- Elm Grove Beautification Committee Invasive Species Task Force meets: 11 a.m. at Elm Grove Village Park. Volunteers needed. Contact: beautification@elmgrovewi.org

Tuesday – FEBRUARY 24

- Elm Grove Board of Trustees meeting: 7 p.m. at Village Hall Courtroom. Open to the Public. (262) 782-6700 Agenda & Live Stream at www.elmgrovewi.org

Friday – FEBRUARY 27

- Elm Grove Kiwanis Club – Golden K Meeting: 9:30 a.m. at St. Mary’s Senior Center; Speaker: **Mary Spicuzza**, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reporter; Topic: My Cousin Augie” kiwaniselmgrove@gmail.com

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Thursday, February 19, 2026
Our Speaker will be
Robert Block, Historian.
Program: **Wisconsin POW Camps**

Thursday, March 19, 2026
Program: “Jazz/Pop Classics”
Musicians: **Carmen and Kostia**

Watch the website for details
Or sign up for our newsletter
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14700 Watertown Plank Rd., Elm Grove
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Community United Methodist Church
Elm Grove BLOOD DRIVE

14700 Watertown Plank Road, Elm Grove-Fellowship Hall

*<https://tinyurl.com/CUMCEFeb2026> to make your appointments via this link or QR code.

*Any questions or need help, call 877.232.4376 or visit versiti.org/WI

*Promotion: Give blood, watch hockey. As a thank you, all attempting donors will receive an Admirals code to redeem for one FREE ticket to any home game in February or March.

Helpful tip:
Make sure to eat a healthy meal and drink plenty of water before donating.

What a Wonderful Grove

ELM GROVE WOMAN'S CLUB

A Community Celebration of Kindness

February 15th - February 21st
visit www.egwc.org to learn more

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Public Safety Reports

Report from The Capitol

From the files of the Elm Grove Police, Fire, and Emergency Services Depts.

IN AN EMERGENCY... CALL 9-1-1

from your landline or cell phone.

***EGPD Detective Craig Mayer’s Retirement Announced**

After more than 32 years of dedicated service, we congratulated **Detective Craig Mayer on his retirement from the Elm Grove Police Department**. Craig began his law enforcement career with 3½ years of part-time service at the Town of Williamsburg, Iowa Police Department, before joining Elm Grove on November 8, 1993, where he has proudly served our community ever since.

During his tenure with Elm Grove, Craig spent 13 years as a patrol officer before being promoted to Detective on May 22, 2006, a role he has held for nearly the past two decades.

Throughout his career, Detective Mayer has been known for his steady professionalism, strong work ethic, and positive influence within the Department.

His contributions have made a lasting impact on both his colleagues and the community we serve. While we are excited for Craig as he begins the next chapter of his life, he will certainly be missed by all who had the privilege of working alongside him.

As if celebrating 32 years of dedicated service wasn’t enough, Detective Mayer’s final 10-42 (end of tour) call was answered by his daughter **Carlee**, who has proudly served our community as a dispatcher for the past 2½ years. It was a truly special moment, and one we are honored to have shared with their family.

Congratulations on a well-earned retirement, and thank you, Detective Mayer, for your many years of faithful service to our community!



Hannah Martin is shown at her swearing-in ceremony at Village Hall on January 15, 2026.

New EGPD Detective Named

Please join us in congratulating **Hannah Martin** on her promotion to Detective. Hannah has proudly served our department for nearly 10 years and brings a strong background in investigative work to this new role.

She is an experienced Evidence Technician, Arson Investigator, and a valued member of Waukesha County’s Major Investigative Unit. Hannah’s dedication, skill set, and passion for investigations make her an excellent fit for this position. We look forward to the great work she will continue to do for our community.



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By Robyn Vining, State Representative – Assembly District 13
*Serving Elm Grove & sections of Brookfield & Wauwatosa

Youth Mental Health & The Role of Belonging

Have you ever been in a room or a situation where you felt like you didn’t belong? Do you remember how that felt? Increasing numbers of Wisconsin students feel this same sense—that they do not “belong”—in their classrooms, so let’s talk about it.

I love visiting with students, and was honored to spend an hour with Elmbrook high school students recently. We had a wide variety of discussion topics to choose from, and they chose mental health. Not only were they enthusiastic to discuss mental health, but when I showed up they had already researched many of the bills in my Mental Healthcare Is Healthcare package of legislation, and I appreciated hearing their feedback, and their deeply felt concern that we need to better address mental health.

Students continue to impress me. For years we have seen the broader trends of declining youth mental health, including increased rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders, and we are trying to figure out how to adequately respond. Our brilliant young people are now stepping up and speaking out as advocates for themselves and their peers, and I appreciate their helpful feedback. I’ve seen Wisconsin youth work to destigmatize conversations on mental health, and they often express to me they wish older generations were more comfortable talking about it. When they say this to me, I wonder how I can play a helpful role in that shift. (I am all ears.)

The Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health (OCMH) released its annual report and held a briefing at the Capitol focused on how a sense of belonging contributes to youth mental health, and I want to use my column this month to both dig into their report, and by doing so, work to destigmatize conversations around mental health, and hopefully start more multigenerational conversations around the dinner table. The panel included youth advocates whose voices help us better understand the moment we are in.

Belonging: What it is and Recent Trends

Belonging (as defined by the Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health) is the feeling of being welcomed, accepted, respected, and valued within one’s social environment, including family, friends, school, and community. Wisconsin youth have reported a 37% drop in feeling like they belong at their school in the past 10 years, according to the Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health (OCMH) data from 2013 to 2023. Many of us may be familiar with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and social isolation, but it’s clear that this decline in “youth sense of belonging” started well before the pandemic. Only about half (53.6%) of Wisconsin youth reported feeling like they belong at school, and the numbers are even worse for underrepresented groups, including girls, Hispanic students, Black students, multiracial students, and LGBTQIA+ students.

I’m concerned about these trends because belonging is so important to mental and



physical health. When youth feel they belong in their school, they are less likely to report emotional distress or suicidality and they are less likely to engage in substance misuse. They are also more likely to experience better academic outcomes that they carry throughout their lives with higher graduation rates, greater enrollment in higher education, and higher salaries.

All of this is why the programs that help students feel included matter. It is our job as legislators—the elected adults—to support and protect our state’s youth so they can thrive throughout their lives.

So, what can we do?

OCMH reports that a youth’s sense of belonging increases when they are actively engaged in positive relationships; feel welcome, safe, cared for, and supported; and feel that they matter and their voice is heard. Extra-curricular activities create spaces for students to connect with each other, and peer-to-peer support groups help students feel supported. The high school students on the OCMH briefing panel also talked about the importance of supportive adults in their lives, and the value of connecting in-person over online.

I wonder what else is affecting youth’s sense of belonging—does digital technology in classrooms affect social connection? Or not? Are there lingering effects from the pandemic playing a role? What comes to mind when you think about this? I welcome your feedback at the link below.

One student on the panel, Gavin, asked for adults to listen more, to judge less, and to love unconditionally. There are policies and programs that we as legislators can support to improve student belonging. Is there more that we can do to support Wisconsin youth, and a growing sense of belonging? I’d love to hear your thoughts.

Forward together,

Robyn Vining
State Representative
13th Assembly District
Wauwatosa-Brookfield-Elm Grove

Rep. Vining’s Website:

Mental Healthcare is Healthcare Bill Package:

OCMH Annual Report:

Youth Mental Health Feedback:

PHONE (608) 237 9113 / (888) 534-0013

EMAIL REP.VINING@LEGIS.WISCONSIN.GOV

f@REPROBYNVINING @@REP.ROBYN

https://legis.wisconsin.gov/assembly/13/vining

News Briefs

BATTLE OF BROOKFIELD

7AM-5PM AT BCHS GYM

FTC QUALIFIER

FEB
7TH



- Experience **FIRST Robotics** with **25 FIRST Tech Challenge** teams featuring robots built by kids ages **12-18!**
- **Learn about FIRST** and engage in researching **STEM**. Explore **careers** in technology, science, art, business, and more!
- Visit **FIRST Lego League Explore Festival** featuring **8 teams** with kids in **grades 1-4!**
- Join the annual **community art creation** and participate in **fun events** for prizes!
- Celebrate International Day of Women in Science. Learn from experts at a **Women in Technology and Science Career Fair!**





PRESENTED BY
TEAM HAZMAT 13201



Green is Good!

A Little Less Salt, a Lot More Care for Our Local Waters

By The Elm Grove Green Team

De-icing salt is important for winter safety, but when the snow melts, that salt washes into local waterways and eventually, Lake Michigan. Chloride doesn't break down naturally—it keeps building up. Rising chloride levels harm fish and aquatic insects, disrupt plant life, and threaten groundwater that supplies our drinking water. In southeast Wisconsin, salt pollution has become one of the fastest-growing water quality concerns.

This year, the Village of Elm Grove Board officially recognized Winter Salt Week, held annually the last week of January, to urge residents and businesses to join Village departments in using de-icing salt responsibly. We can all reduce salt pollution by:

- Going easy on the salt. The Wisconsin DNR's rule of thumb: A 12-ounce mug of salt is enough to treat 20 feet of driveway.
- Shoveling early and often. Removing snow promptly reduces ice buildup and salt needs.
- Sweeping up extra salt. If salt remains after ice melts, sweep it up and reuse it.
- Salting only where needed. Focus on slippery, high-traffic areas.
- Picking smart help. If you hire a service, choose a Salt Wise—Certified contractor trained to use salt efficiently.

With some care this winter, we can keep our walkways and our local waters safe. Visit <https://www.wisaltwise.com/> for more information!

Save April 25th for Drive-Through Recycling

Take care of your spring cleanout in one stop at the Green Team's Drive-Through Recycling Event Saturday April 25th, 9 a.m. to noon in the Pilgrim Park Middle School parking lot. More details to come!

NANA'S NAUGHTY KNICKERS

March 5 - 22, 2026

**SUNSET
PLAYHOUSE**

SunsetPlayhouse.com
262-782-4430

**MARVELOUS
MOTOWN**

March 9 - 10, 2026

**DIVA
DYNASTY:**
*A Tribute to
Judy & Liza*

March 26 - 29, 2026



Pictured (left to right): **Tom Kozlowski**, ENBST Driver; **Marj Kozlowski**, ENBST Board President; **Sandra Small**, ENBST Rider; **Melissa Baxter**, WCCF President/CEO; **Ben Dobner**, WCCF Grants & Stewardship Director; and **Francis X. Vogel**, ENBST Executive Director.

Elmbrook New Berlin Senior Taxi Awarded Grant

(BROOKFIELD) The Waukesha County Community Foundation recently awarded Elmbrook New Berlin Senior Taxi (ENBST) a \$10,000 Community Grant to continue its work making a difference in the lives of Waukesha County seniors and disabled adults of all ages.

“Many thanks to the Waukesha County Community Foundation for its Community Grant award,” said **Francis X. Vogel**, ENBST’s Executive Director. “The grant better allows us to serve elderly and disabled folks who live in Brookfield, Elm Grove, Butler or New Berlin.”

Founded in 1993, Elmbrook Senior Taxi merged last April with neighboring New Berlin Senior Taxi. The newly-formed entity, ENBST, reinforces its combined mission of

fostering independence and mobility for two vulnerable groups by providing safe, reliable, affordable transportation.

“Area seniors can’t always rely on family or neighbors to get them, for example, to needed medical appointments. Our taxi is also essential in conveying disabled adults to their workplace or job training sites,” Vogel added. “Since many of our riders simply can’t afford to pay the significantly-higher fares that for-profit taxis and ride-sharing services charge, a service like ours broadens the horizons of valued community members.”

To learn more about ENBST, please call its Elmbrook office at 262-785-1200 or its New Berlin location at 262-814-1611.

The logo for Wahlen Advisory Group of Raymond James is centered at the top. It features a stylized 'W' above the word 'WAHLEN' in a serif font, followed by 'ADVISORY GROUP' in a smaller sans-serif font, and 'OF RAYMOND JAMES' in a larger serif font. Below the logo, the text 'Wahlen Advisory Group of Raymond James & Associates, Inc.' is displayed in a serif font, followed by the address '20800 Swenson Drive, Suite 325 • Waukesha, WI 53186'. The website 'wahlenadvisorygroup.com' and the phone number '(262) 207-3815' are listed at the bottom of the logo section.

Missy Wahlen

Dana

Chris Knight

Raymond James & Associates, Inc. member NYSE/SIPC.

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News Briefs



Photo courtesy: Kayte Parkin

The wide-variety of toys collected by local scout troops.

(NOTE: This is a follow up to the community toy collection hosted by **Girl Scout Troop 1171** and **BSA Troop 156**. (DECEMBER 2025 edition – “Ways to Help” Page 2)

Toy Drive Thank You! By Jane Parkin, age 10

Thank you so much to everyone in the community who donated to the Elm Grove Toy Drive at Tonawanda and Village Hall. We highly appreciate it when you support our scout projects and the people in need. With all of your help we received over 200 toys to donate to Robyn’s Nest, a resource center for foster families. Thank you again for helping us make a difference!

Discovering My Best Self through Distinguished Young Women

By Janavi Wagle, Brookfield East High School, Class of 2027

When I joined the Distinguished Young Women (DYW) of Brookfield program, I thought it would be about competition and titles. Instead, it became a moment of reflection.

DYW’s *Be Your Best Self* platform is built around five values: **Be Healthy, Be Ambitious, Be Involved, Be Responsible, and Be Studios.** Preparing for the program pushed me to look closely at how I live these values every day. What surprised me most was realizing that I was not trying to *become* my best self as I was already growing into her.

Being healthy means caring for both my body and mind. Through nine years of Taekwondo, earning my second-degree black belt, and leading mental health awareness initiatives as the founding president of Raise Your Voice (NAMI affiliate), I have learned confidence, balance, and resilience. Ambition shows up through my leadership roles in my community, where I work with others to create meaningful change.

Being studios means staying curious and challenging myself. Along with rigorous coursework, I take college-level classes to push my learning further.

As a Medical College of Wisconsin student researcher, I explore health sciences beyond the classroom and continue growing through research and global learning opportunities. Writing for local and school newspapers give me a creative platform to share my voice on important issues.

I stay involved and through community service, helping my family and working at Kumon Center. My community service includes volunteering working with Autism United due to a personal connection, National Honors Society tutoring, working with younger students in Tae Kwon Do, helping at memory-care units and Veterans at the hospital, and supporting families at the Ronald McDonald House. These experiences have taught me empathy, patience, and the importance of showing up. The Presidential Volunteer Service Award and the Barbara James Service Award stand as testaments to my dedication and passion for service.

I am grateful I joined this program because it gave me a platform to showcase my values: consistency in effort, curiosity in learning, creativity through writing, collaboration with purpose, and compassion in action. In my self-expression answer, I shared my faith by talking about the *Bhagavad Gita* about focusing on duty without worrying about the outcome, and how I strive to lead with purpose and becoming the best version of myself.

I did not leave the program with a title, but I left with something more important—the confidence that leadership is about values and intention to make a positive impact, not awards. I would not have discovered this side of myself without participating.

I encourage other students in Brookfield and Elm Grove to step outside their comfort zone, get involved, and discover what they are capable of.



COMMUNITY NEWS ITEMS

(attached as Word documents)
&
PHOTOS
(attached as jpgs)

may be submitted for consideration to: elmgrovenews@yahoo.com



Library News and Programs
February 2026
13600 Juneau Blvd., Elm Grove, WI 53122
262-782-6717 | elmgrovelibrary.org

First Friday Films: *Soul on Fire* / Friday, February 6, 1:00 p.m.



A matinee film series for adults. On the first Friday of every month, a new release movie is screened in the O'Neill Room at 1:00 p.m. Popcorn and water provided. Movie ratings and contents vary. Not all movies will be suitable for all audiences. Free admission, no RSVP needed. February's movie is *Soul on Fire*. *Film description:* In 1987, nine-year-old John O'Leary survives a terrible accident and grows into a man who show us what it means to truly live. Starring Joel Courtney and William H. Macy. PG. 112m.

Rodin’s Unshackling of Thought in Angst and Passion: A Thinker in Stone / Tuesday, February 10, 6:30 p.m.

Presented by Karri Fritz-Klaus of Cornerstone Symposium, this engaging art history program explores the dramatic vision of Auguste Rodin, one of the most influential and revolutionary sculptors of the modern era. The program examines his broader body of work, revealing how Rodin broke from classical traditions to embrace raw emotion, movement, and psychological depth in stone and bronze. More than a century later, Rodin’s passionate and expressive style continues to shape modern sculpture and captivate audiences around the world. This is the second lecture in a five-part series, “The Push and Pull of the Soul.” Mark your calendar for the next presentation (3/10: Chagall). Free to attend. No registration required.



Putting Scammers Out of Business One Educated Consumer at a Time / Wednesday, February 18, 1:00 p.m.



Consumers lose more than \$12 billion a year to fraud. One key defense to stopping scammers is simple consumer education. Using a mixture of stories and protection techniques Ben Merens from the Wisconsin Bureau of Consumer Protection will discuss the details of common scams, the warning signs of a scam, and what to do if you or someone you know falls victim to a scam or fraud. Helpful factsheets from The Bureau of Consumer Protection will be available. As Wisconsin’s lead agency for consumer protection, the Bureau of Consumer Protection at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection, provides information and education, mediates complaints, investigates cases, and takes enforcement actions to fight fraudulent and deceptive practices that harm consumers and honest businesses. Free to attend. No registration required.

Scholarship Essay Contest 2026

The Elm Grove Junior Guild is a local, non-profit organization committed to the education, wellness and protection of women and children, within and beyond our community.

Eligibility

All high school seniors who meet the following criteria are eligible to apply:

1. Graduate high school in June 2026
2. Reside in the Elmbrook School District OR attend Brookfield Central or Brookfield East High School

(Students related to members of the Elm Grove Junior Guild scholarship committee are not eligible.)

Award

One student will be awarded at least \$2,000

Application

Applications will be accepted from February 1, 2026 - March 31, 2026.

Visit elmgrovejunorguild.org/scholarship for application instructions

Contact scholarship@elmgrovejunorguild.org with any questions.

Essay Prompt

Share a time when you took initiative to make a positive impact on someone or your community. How did stepping into a leadership or mentorship role shape your understanding of responsibility and empathy?

Young Writers & Reporters

Valentines
By Rosie Trandem, 3rd Grade – Tonawanda

Valentines cards handed out
A nice gift to give
Love is in the air
Everyone loves
Nice to all
Taffy and chocolate
In a fancy restaurant
Never too much love
Everywhere is pink and red
Somewhere romantic



Valentine’s Day
By Odette Walker, 3rd Grade - Tonawanda

Valentine’s day is fun and gay!
Children eating goodies galore,
always saying they have room for more!
Busy making Valentine sweets,
how many have you made this week?
A special chocolate box
appears at your door!
Who is your secret admirer?

Waves
By Aanya Chandel
Level 7 - Brookfield Academy

At the end of long days
I sit by the beach
And watch the waves roll by
I close my eyes and breathe in the soft air
A few moments pass
Then a seagull piercing call
breaks the stillness
And I wake up
To the world around me

How to be a Kind Friend
By Odette Walker
3rd Grade – Tonawanda

Would you like to learn how to be a kind friend? Now’s your chance! You will have lots of friends if you follow these steps! You will need: a kind heart, people that you want to be friends with, and something that you like.

First, walk up to the people that you want to be friends with. Start asking them questions. For example, what is your favorite color? Or can I play with you? If you ask if you can play with them, they will probably say yes. Even if they do, they might not actually want to be friends with you. So that is why you need a kind heart! PRO TIP: All you have to do is be yourself!

Next, start doing whatever they are doing, but remember to still act like yourself. Make sure that they don’t think that you are boring, otherwise they won’t want to be friends with you.

After that, try to share what you’re interested in. Chances are someone else might like the same things that you like! If they don’t like any of the same things that you like, ask them what they like.

Last, make sure that you smile a lot! People like people who smile! Congratulations! Now you know how to be a kind friend. You can follow similar steps to be kind to other people.

Third Graders at St. Mary’s Visitation wrote about what it would be like to get snowed in and stuck AT SCHOOL overnight:

If I were snowed in at school overnight, I would go to the gym and ask for some mats. When I got the mats, then I would find a spot in the gym. For dinner, I would eat whatever I had left in my lunchbox. Then, I would read for 20 minutes for my homework that I was supposed to do at home. Then, I would turn on the heat in the gym so it would feel like a blanket. I think it would be fun to sleep at school.
– Lucy

If I got snowed in at school for a night, I would gather up all of the chairs and coats and make a fort. I would also get a Chromebook and download some games. I would use the Clevertouch to watch some movies and I would be pretty much set up for the night.
- Sam

If I was stuck at school overnight, I would do math and more math. I would play games. I would also play games on my Chromebook. And when it was time to go to sleep, I would go sleep in the teacher’s lounge. - Connor

If I was stuck at school overnight, I would play games with my friends. Then we would all sleep on the floor. When my classmates were asleep, I would sneak out and go to the teacher’s lounge with two of my friends. We would eat everything in the fridge. Then, we explore the entire school. In the morning, I would go to the music room and get an instrument to play and wake everyone up.
- Amelia

If I got stuck at school overnight, I would play hide and seek in the gym with my friends until 7:00pm. Then, we’d go in the hallways and bang the lockers. There would be a crying area for kids that are scared. We’d go to bed at 10:00pm. Then, I would wake up at midnight and explore the teacher’s lounge while the teachers were sleeping. It would be the best night ever!
- Iggy



Someone Else
By Sophia File
Level 7 - Brookfield Academy

Don’t try to be someone else
They’re already taken.
Be yourself.
Be unique, be special, be different.
Those that follow the crowd
learn only to follow
Those who lead learn to listen,
find the best idea, and apply it.
Why not be that person?
Only you know how to best describe you.
At this moment, at this stage of your life.
No one else knows exactly how you feel,
or exactly why.
All the little insignificant things
make up one very significant person.
You get one life, make the most of it.
Do you want to spend that life
being someone’s puppet?
Someone’s shadow?
Someone’s copy?

Going to the Great Wolf Lodge
By Scarlett Wozny, 3rd Grade - Tonawanda

After school when I got off the bus I went inside my home. After I got inside, we finished packing. It took us about 2 minutes. I was so happy. Now I am in the car waiting for the rest of my family. The rest of the family finally got in the car and we left. It took us 2 hours to get there. It looked nice from the outside but it was nicer inside than outside. We checked in and we got our room. I opened the stuff they gave us. They gave us a coloring book, crayons and a slingshot.

If I was stuck at school, I think it would be fun because I could have cafeteria food for dinner. Also, I wouldn’t have to follow the school rules. The teachers would be sleeping on the ground. I could play games on my Chromebook, color and play with my friends. Next, I would play some board games and go to the gym. I would play hide and seek all over the whole school. I would sleep in the teacher’s lounge and stay up late. I would watch a movie on my Chromebook. Last, I would turn off all of the teacher’s alarm clocks so school would start late the next day. That’s what I would do if I was trapped at school!
- Claire M.

If I spent the night at school, I would get a midnight snack from the cafeteria. I would do my homework at school. We would have a midnight movie and play games. We could even play hide and seek around the school!
- Jacob

If I was stuck at school overnight, I would sleep in the K-4 classroom. I would also play games. I would play basketball in the gym, boys vs. girls. I would try to make food for dinner in the cafeteria. I would use the Clevertouch in my classroom to watch a few movies. Last, I would stay up until midnight reading books. It would be fun!
- Matthew L.

If I got snowed in at school, I would not spend the night in my classroom because that wouldn’t be as fun. What you could do is go down to the gym and sleep on the mats and use your jackets as a blanket. We would eat our leftover lunch for dinner and goof off on our Chromebooks for a while. After a little bit, we would turn off the gym lights and go to sleep. That is all I would do if I was stuck at school overnight.
- Avery

If we got snowed in at school, we could make hot cocoa. We would also play a game in the gym and use the gym mats to sleep. If we could, I would order Taco Bell for dinner. Next, I would ask if we can play ghosts in the graveyard inside the school with the lights off. The next morning, I would ask if we could have some coffee. If I got snowed in at school, it would be fun!
- Claire C.

New School
By Christina Ghimire
3rd Grade – Tonawanda

I first moved to this place called Brookfield. I needed to move far away from my old house and my school and all my friends. Next, my parents enrolled me in a school called Tonawanda. Then, my mom took me to Tonawanda. Then, when we arrived. A nice person helped me to get to my new classroom and my teacher’s name was Mrs Dukatz. Then, I made lots and lots of friends. And now I love my new school.

How to Ice Skate
By Sydney Sosalla, 3rd Grade - Tonawanda

Have you ever wanted to ice skate? You will need: ice skates, guards for your skaters, a jacket, a hat, gloves and ice arena.

First, get your ice skates. Ice skates can be found at ice skating stores. Make sure you get one size above your normal shoe size because ice skates run small! Next, put your guards on your skates. Guards can also be found at ice skating stores. Carefully put them on the blade of your skate so they don’t hurt when you carry them. Then, get your jacket, hat and gloves on. You can pick any jacket just make sure you will be warm! You can also wear earmuffs instead of a hat. Wear gloves so when you fall down your hands won’t hurt. After that drive to an ice rink or arena.

Now go ice skate! Push one foot to the left and one to the right. Make sure you don’t push with your toe pick. Instead, push to the side and just have fun! Congrats! Now you know how to ice skate! Just be careful not to fall! You got this!

A Falling Sky
By Sanvitha Madireddi
Level 7 - Brookfield Academy

It’s night.
The sky starts falling.
Stars that were once in place
flew across the sky;
With tails beaming so bright
that it hurt your eyes.
The chaos of streaking lights
flying through the sky had its own beauty.
I guess that’s true for everything.
The darkness of light balances
with the light that the stars bring.
The stars produce warmth
even if there is an icy cold around them.
And now this chaos has its beauty.
Maybe the stars are tired of being in
place for so long that they wanted to fly
somewhere else.
Maybe nature has its way
of balancing things.
Darkness and light
Warmth and cold
Chaos and beauty
Maybe the things I see aren’t stars.



Music that Heals
By Sanvitha Madireddi
Level 7 - Brookfield Academy

This reflection is based on a concert at my school with the *Violins of Hope*, a collection of violins once owned and played by Jewish musicians during the Holocaust. These instruments preserve the stories and strength of those who suffered.

Music helped Holocaust victims find moments of comfort and hope in a dark world, both physically and spiritually. Physically, music reduced stress and fear caused by forced labor and constant danger. Many survivors remember that listening to music helped them forget their pain for a short time. Music also comforted sick or crying children. In some camps, musicians played soft melodies that acted like lullabies, helping children relax and fall asleep. During performances, prisoners focused on the sound of instruments instead of shouting guards and violence, giving their minds a brief escape.

Music also healed prisoners spiritually. It reminded them of happier times and helped them remember who they were before the camps. Traditional Jewish songs brought back memories of family, celebrations, and faith. Children clapped, sang, and moved to the music, briefly regaining their innocence. Even though it was dangerous, musicians continued to play, bringing unity and peace. Overall, music became a powerful symbol of hope that helped prisoners endure their suffering.

WANTED:
Young Writers & Reporters!

Students in Grades K-12 are invited to submit for consideration:

- NEWS ITEMS
- INTERVIEWS
- SHORT STORIES
- POETRY

(about 200 words maximum)

***Send items (within an email or as a Word document) to:**
elmgrovenews@yahoo.com

Subject line: Young Writers

Include the writer’s name, grade level & school / homeschool

Young Writers & Reporters

Elm Grove Kiwanis Club Volunteers at Waukesha Head Start

By Hailey Dooyema, Brookfield East High School

The Head Start program is a national program for preschool education that gives kids a head start to their education enabling them to be successful in school. The Waukesha Head Start program has infant, preschool, 4k, special education, and an after-school care programming that help kids and their families that need it most. Elm Grove Kiwanis Club members have supported this program for over a year. Kiwanis members have volunteered at Family Event Nights and Literacy Nights where families come to the center and read books, then go home with books to keep, and have also assisted at the Art Stroll, where children’s art work is on display in hallways and classrooms, and the STEAM Night where members help kids of all ages build wooden boats. Members have gone to classrooms to read about Summer Safety with a kit of books Kiwanis donated to them. The next event is in February when Head Start is hosting a “Drive-In Movie” night for students who sit in cars they made out of boxes and recycled materials and watch the movies.



Photo courtesy: Elm Grove Kiwanis Club

The Kiwanis Club donated a variety of English and Spanish language children's books to Waukesha Head Start.

The Waukesha Head Start program creates so much more than fun activities. They create a place for students to learn and grow in their education. The Kiwanis motto of “Doing it for Kids” fits so well with this program, as Kiwanis members are able to help kids and remain present in all sorts of learning activities. One Kiwanis member said that she loves to volunteer and feel the importance of kids getting an early start.

Together Kiwanis and the Waukesha Head Start program continue to help kids grow in their education and learn the key information that they will need in the future. Kiwanis is a service club, and it is with Head Start and many other programs that they fulfil their mission of helping kids.

PERSONAL FINANCE: Investing - The Basics

By Future Wealth Foundation*

*A registered non-profit that advocates for personal finance awareness, started by a Brookfield East High School student and his friends. **DISCLAIMER:** This is not financial advice. It is meant for educational purposes only.

Investing is the practice of putting money into assets that will grow in value over time. Rather than letting money sit in a savings account that earns little interest, investing allows individuals to benefit from economic growth, compound returns, and appreciation. Investing can involve some level of risk, but by understanding fundamentals, this uncertainty can be mitigated to improve outcomes and returns.



One of the most important investing principles is the relationship between risk and return. Investments with higher potential returns, such as stocks, carry a greater risk. Lower-risk options like bonds or ETFs offer modest returns. Diversification, which is where money is spread across different types of investments, can help reduce risk by ensuring that poor performance in one area doesn’t have a huge impact on the entire portfolio

Time frame has a critical role in investing. Long-term investors can tolerate short-term market volatility and benefit from compound growth, where returns become larger over time. By starting early, wealth can significantly increase due to the compounding effect over time.

Finally, successful investing requires discipline and consistency. Regular contributions, patience during economic downturns, and rational decision-making are habits that help improve returns. By focusing on long-term goals and maintaining a disciplined approach, investing can be a powerful tool for financial security.



Valentine’s Day

By Rachel Schnake
8th Grade, Homeschool

Chilly air outside,
That tingles my skin.
I can see conversation hearts,
Declaring “xoxo” and “Be Mine”.
A flower bouquet crinkles in my ears,
When it is gifted to me.
Rose scented perfume wafts through the air,
Drifting into my nose.
Bittersweet chocolates melt,
When I put them on my tongue.
And I know,
That it is Valentine’s Day.

Love

By Jonathan Schnake
3rd Grade, Homeschool

I love the Elm Grove community.
I love how everyone is so friendly and nice.
And I also love the important people
in the community,
Like the police, firefighters, garbagemen,
librarians, and the mail workers.
I love my community.

Bleeding Heart Flowers

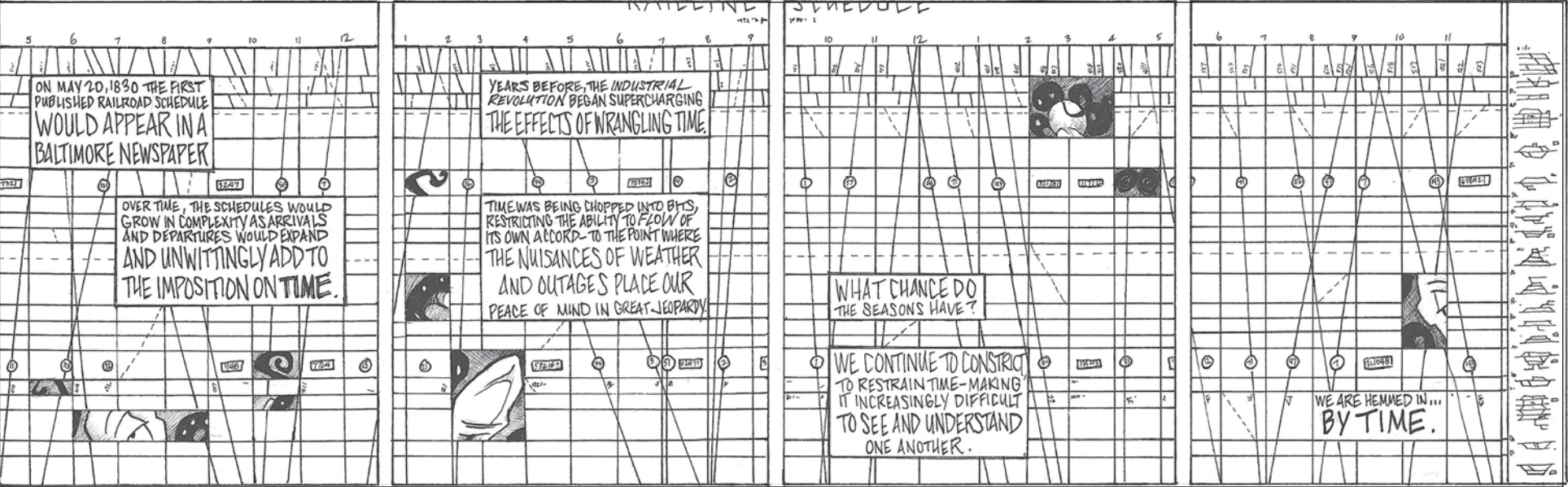
By David Schnake, Homeschool

Growing bleeding hearts in zone 5b (Elm Grove) grows well and is entertaining. To grow them, first select your color of choice; bleeding heart flowers can be white, pink, red, blue, black, and yellow. These perennials need partial shade and will grow 1-3 feet tall. Plant them 1.5 feet apart outside in early spring or fall. Do not touch their flowers, leaves, or stems without rubber gloves because they can cause irritation.

Coloring for Kids (of ALL ages!)



MR. HUGH’S HISTORY by Drew Sternitzky @mrhughshistory on Instagram



News Briefs

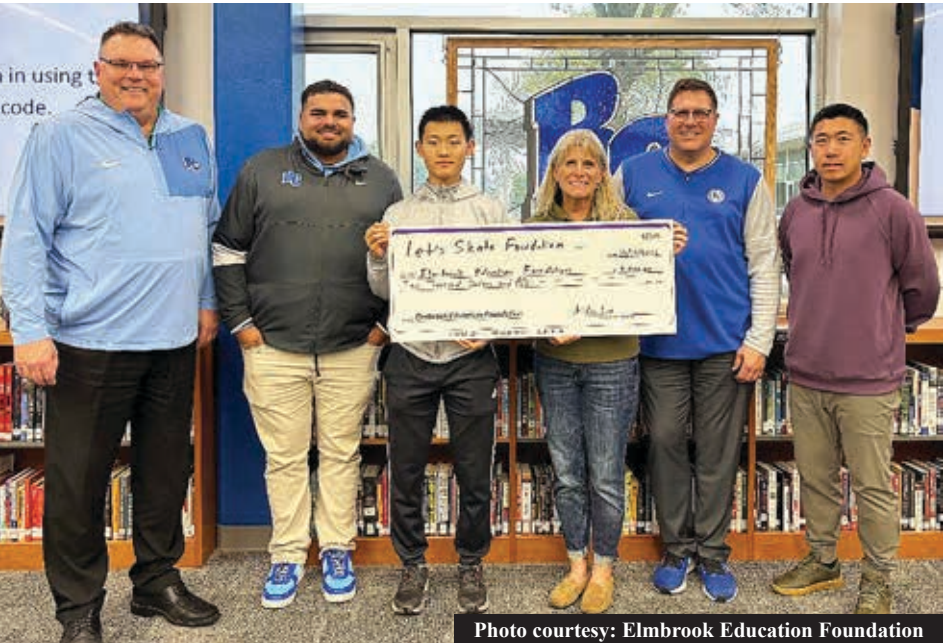


Photo courtesy: Elmbrook Education Foundation

CHECK PRESENTATION: (Shown, Left to Right) **Brett Gruetzmacher**, Principal, Brookfield Central High School; **Andrew Flegel**, Unified Sports Head Coach, Brookfield Central High School; **Aidan Liu**, Founder, Let's Skate Foundation and Brookfield Central High School Student; **Beth Dobrzynski**, Executive Director, Elmbrook Education Foundation; **Don Kurth**, Athletic & Activities Director, Brookfield Central High School; **Hongyang Wang**, Speedskating Coach.

Let's Skate Foundation Donates to Elmbrook's Unified Sports Program

(BROOKFIELD) – The Elmbrook Education Foundation (EEF) is proud to accept a **\$2,000 donation from the Let's Skate Foundation** in support of the **Unified Sports Program** in Elmbrook Schools. This contribution supports EEF's broader commitment to raise **\$75,000** to sustain and expand Unified Sports opportunities for students across the district.

Unified Sports brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same teams, fostering teamwork, leadership, and mutual respect through shared athletic experiences. The program helps build authentic friendships, strengthens school pride, and promotes a culture of inclusion throughout the Elmbrook community.

"Unified Sports isn't just about playing together—it's about belonging together," said **Kayla Lees**, Unified Sports Advisor. The Let's Skate Foundation was founded in 2021 by **Aidan Liu**, who combined his passion for speedskating with a desire to give back to the community. Let's Skate provides free opportunities for children to try speedskating and affordable options for continued

participation, increasing accessibility to the sport for youth.

"Unified Sports has had a profound impact on the community," said **Aidan Liu**, founder of Let's Skate. "The mission of Let's Skate is to increase accessibility to speedskating for youth. As an Elmbrook community member, we wanted to give back to the school district that nurtured our foundation and help create opportunities for growth, inclusion, and athletic development. By fostering a supportive environment, we aim to empower the next generation and strengthen the community that helped shape us."

For more information, contact **Beth Dobrzynski**, Executive Director, at elmbrookeducationfoundation@gmail.com, or www.elmbrookschoools.org/elmbrook-education-foundation.

Donations to the EEF's Unified Sports Initiative can be made directly at: fundraise.givesmart.com/vf/UNIFIEDSPORTS

Valentine's Day

WordSearch

H	E	A	R	T	T	C	N	T	N	E	Q
U	V	R	O	S	E	H	B	E	H	J	M
C	V	G	Z	B	S	M	L	O	V	E	V
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S		A	A	D	O	R	E	B	R	P	
S	F	O	U	R	T	E	E	N	T	H	Z

CUPID	GIFT	MOVIE	LETTER	PINK
LOVE	SWEET	PARTY	ARROW	VALENTINE
HUGS	KISS	FEBRUARY	DOVES	POEM
HEART	DATE	FOURTEENTH	ROMANCE	BELOVED
CHOCOLATE	ROSE	CARD	ADORE	SECRET



Photo courtesy: Elm Grove Beautification Committee

Community members gather at Elm Grove Village Park for a past Spring Cleanup event.

Beat the Winter Blues

By The Elm Grove Beautification Committee

Are you, along with an estimated 10% of Wisconsinites, suffering from the winter blues? One of the most effective treatments for this is to get active--especially outdoors! And there is no better way than by doing something that benefits not only your mood, but the wellbeing of your entire community! Have you taken a look at this map (<https://www.adoptyourdrain.com>) to see if there is an adoptable drain near your house that you can get outside and keep clear of snow, ice, and road salt?

Yet another action you can take is to help protect our beautiful Underwood Creek by actively learning about smart

wintering salting practices. Two resources are the Wisconsin Salt Wise website and the Milwaukee Riverkeeper® website, where you can also report road salt pollution. A national Winter Salt Week was the last week of January, but you can watch the recorded webinars on topics that included Freshwater Salinization, Salt Wise Stories, Engineering Solutions, Salt Monitoring, Advocating for Change, and Salt Smart Contracts.

Spring is still two months away, but you don't need to wait for warmer weather and more sunshine to feel better. Get the boost of endorphins you need by engaging in your community and creating a sense of belonging.

Old(er) Writers

***Readers (age 18+) may submit poetry, short fiction, life stories / reminiscences (200 words maximum) to: elmgrovenews@yahoo.com or EGNI, 14420 Watertown Plank Rd., Elm Grove, WI 53122**

About Time

By Gary Kerslake

If time is a number, what would it be?
One or ten or infinity.
Could it be one's age or one's birth?
Or, is it about the movement of the earth?

Time is precious and not to be wasted,
It should be cherished and not be hated.



News' Hounds

& other beloved animals

Adopt a Pet at the Elmbrook Humane Society

By Morgan Pelon

Meet **Marshmallow**! Sweet, soft, and impossible not to love, Marshmallow is exactly as delightful as his name suggests. This happy-go-lucky pup is a social butterfly who adores people and is always ready to make a new friend. Marshmallow is also great with other dogs, making him a perfect fit for families with existing pups or anyone who enjoys dog park outings. He's an energetic, playful companion who loves to run, romp, and go for walks, and he'll happily join you on any adventure, big or small. When the fun winds down, Marshmallow is all about cuddles and companionship. If you're looking for a sweet, active, people-loving pup to fill your days with fun and your heart with love, Marshmallow is ready to melt his way into your life.



Photo courtesy: Elmbrook Humane Society

Marshmallow

The EBHS is at 20950 Enterprise Avenue, (off Barker Road) Brookfield. Call (262) 782-9261 for more information.



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- Sendik's
- Elliott's Ace Hardware
- The Chocolate Factory
- Sunset Playhouse
- Table in front of Fazio's
- Imperial Hair Care of Elm Grove

+ at other area businesses, clubs, organizations, schools & churches



The News-Independent is also mailed on or before the first of each month to every residence & business in Elm Grove, Wisconsin 53122.

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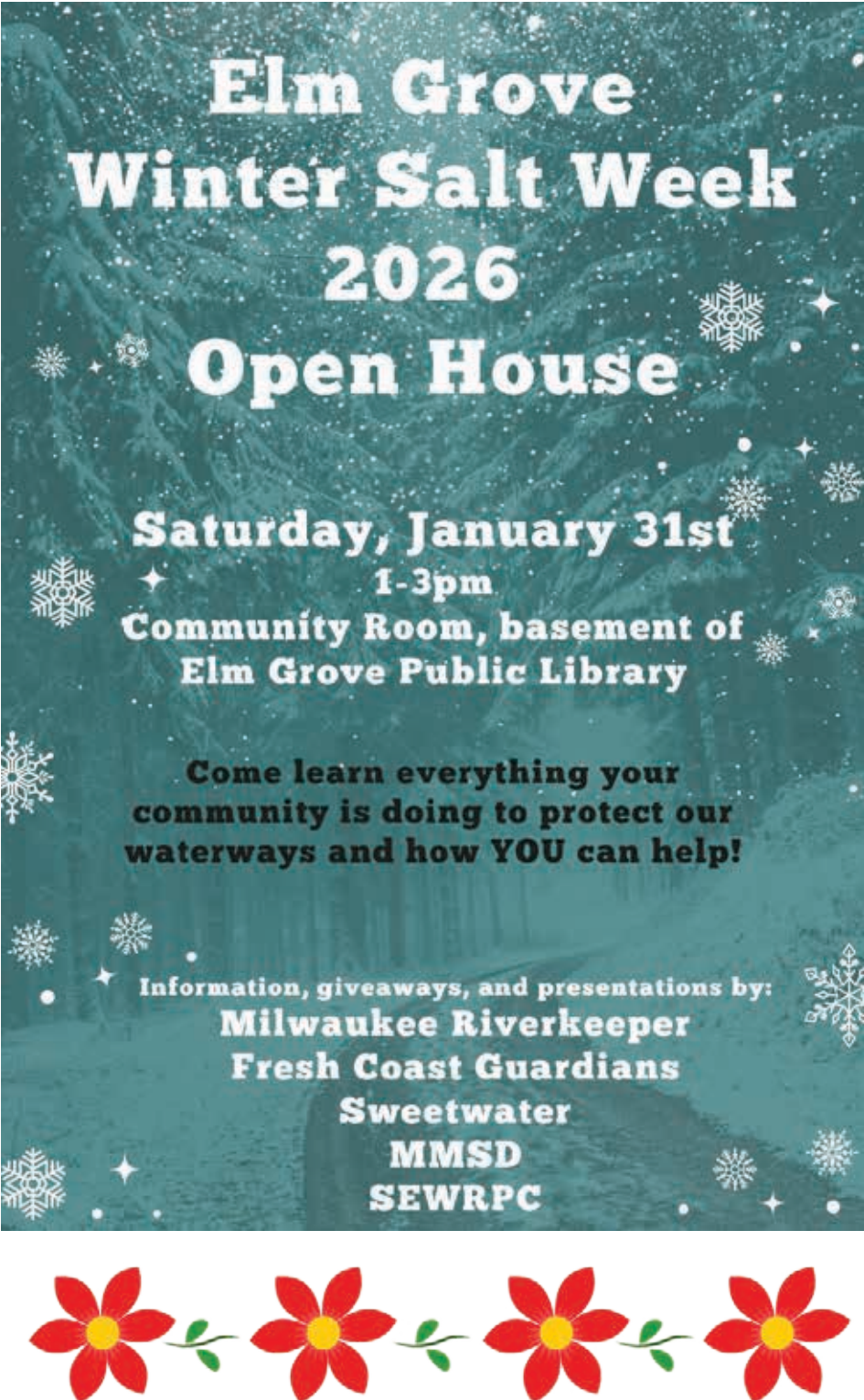
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Elm Grove Winter Salt Week 2026 Open House

Saturday, January 31st
1-3pm
Community Room, basement of Elm Grove Public Library

Come learn everything your community is doing to protect our waterways and how YOU can help!

Information, giveaways, and presentations by:
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Fresh Coast Guardians
Sweetwater
MMSD
SEWRPC

