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Mason and Aaliyah top baby names at ARMC

By Tom Stangl
Publisher

Each year, the Social Security Administration publishes a list of the top ten male and female names in the nation. Topping the national list were Jacob as the top male name and Sophia as the top female name. Locally, at Amery Regional Medical Center (ARMC), the top male name was Mason, top female name was Aaliyah.

Here are the top ten male and female names from births at the Amery Hospital. Males: Mason, Brayden, Landyn, Michael, Bentley, Parker, Wyatt, Easton, Gavin and Nolan. Females: Aaliyah, Callie, Kiley, Lily, Emma, Genevieve, Greta, Hailey, Kathryn and Madelynn.

Nationally, here are the top male and female names selected by parents. Males: Jacob, Mason, William, Jayden, Noah, Michael, Ethan, Alexander, Aiden and Daniel. Females: Sophia, Isabella, Emma, Olivia, Ava, Emily, Abigail, Madison, Mia and Chloe.

The Social Security Administration also tracks names by state and year. In Wisconsin in 2011, the top ten male and female names reflected some of the national trends, but did not mirror them exactly. Top ten males names were: Mason, Liam, William, Logan, Owned, Noah, Jacob, Jackson, Alexander and Benjamin. Top ten female names were: Sophia, Emma, Ava, Olivia, Isabella, Addison, Ella, Abigail, Evelyn and Grace.

As a comparison, 50 years ago, in 1961, the top ten males names in Wisconsin were: David, Michael, John, Mark, James, Robert, Thomas, Jeffrey, Steven and Daniel. The top ten female names were: Mary, Susan, Lori, Lisa, Julie, Linda, Karen, Debra, Barbara and Sandra.

Nationally, the Social Security Administration's database goes back to 1879. A hundred years ago, in 1911, the top ten male names were: John, William, James, George, Robert, Joseph, Charles, Frank, Edward and Thomas. The top ten female names of 1911 were: Mary, Helen, Margaret, Dorothy, Ruth, Anna, Elizabeth, Mildred, Marie and Frances.



Ruth Mugerauer (back row, far left) and Marlene Gustafson (Back row, far right) pose for a class photo with their final Pioneer School class. The two founding teachers retired after 23 years teaching the one-room school. (Photo contributed)

Founding Amery teaching duo retire from Pioneer School

By Breanna Draxler
Contributing writer

I could hardly contain my adolescent excitement as Mom braided my hair, tied on a makeshift headscarf, and helped me turn a white dish-towel into an apron. These preparations were part of my normal morning routine during the summers I spent at Pioneer School. But after 23 years in the Polk County Historical Society's one-room schoolhouse in Balsam Lake, 2012 marked the program's last.

Pioneer School's founders and teachers, Ruth Mugerauer and Marlene Gustafson, are passing the torch in the throes of an eventful year, which includes a reconstructive surgery for each, the loss of both their mothers, and retirement after 38 and 39 years of teaching, respectively. Still, the two maintain a sense of humor about stepping down.

"We couldn't find anyone that we could beat in 'drop the hanky' anymore," Mugerauer said with a smile.

Mugerauer and Gustafson started the Pioneer School summer program in 1989,

almost three decades since the Lanesdale schoolhouse had seen any use, and more than a century since it had been built. They strove to make it a living museum so students could learn about history through direct experience.

"This is a museum but it's also a school," Mugerauer said.

The 20 students who attended each weeklong session ranged from first to eighth grade. All were required, and eager, to fit the part. Boys sported dress pants and suspenders. Girls wore long skirts and blouses. Students brought their lunches in pails or baskets, and were encouraged to avoid packing modern foods like Doritos or chocolate chip cookies.

"Pioneer school was before chocolate chips," Gustafson pointed out.

School didn't start until nine o'clock, even though most students no longer needed to complete farm chores and commute by foot before the bell. The morning ritual kicked off with the pledge of allegiance, followed by a bible reading and a vocal rendition

of the song "America" with piano accompaniment.

"Marlene was doing some real fancy work with the piano. One [key] would stick and one wouldn't work. That was authentic, too," Mugerauer said.

In the school's wooden desks, students read from the McGuffey reader, memorized poetry, and practice their ciphering (arithmetic) on slate boards, which Gustafson emphasized were not to be confused with chalkboards. The teachers collected these period items over the years from auctions, antique stores and generous friends.

"We encouraged authenticity," Mugerauer said.

When it came to the dunce cap and stool, though, the teachers were intentionally unauthentic. This former punishment was reserved for only the most well-behaved of children.

"Everybody wanted to sit on the dunce stool," Mugerauer said, explaining that their revised version of the disciplinary practice succeeded by means of reversed psychology.

For lunch, the students lined

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Habitat for Humanity tells county board of reinvestment

by Jason DeMoe
Contributing Writer

Habitat for Humanity is an organization that works with low income families to make home ownership a reality in situations where it otherwise would never be. The eligible families are required to assist in the building of their new homes and pay back the cost through a no-interest mortgage. Habitat takes pride in giving families a hand up as opposed to a hand out. Executive Director Eric Kube presented to the Polk County Board on Sept. 18.

"We are a non-profit, Christian based housing program," Kube said. "We build new homes, do rehabs, and also do repairs. Our main goal is to better the communities we are in. We try to serve as a long term solution to homelessness and housing solutions

for low income families."

In order to qualify for a Habitat home, families must make less than \$40,000 a year, currently live in substandard housing, and also be willing to put 300-500 hours of their own time into building their new home.

"We take donations and combine that with volunteers and the family putting in their time to build simple, affordable homes," Kube said. "We then have a no interest mortgage and the families pay that back to Habitat and the money goes back in to help other families over and over and over. Essentially we just keep recycling these funds to help poor families."

Kube said that the financial feasibility of Habitat homes reaches well beyond the mort

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Medallion found at last



It took longer than it has in years, but the 2012 Fall Festival Medallion has been found. Mitchell Lee found the wafer thin medallion lodged between the curb and the sidewalk south of the clock on Keller. Lee and his wife, along with two-day-old daughter, Rylan found the medallion, which is worth \$25 in Amery Scrip money. Congratulations, Mitchell, and thanks to all who played!

Apple River 'harvest' removes over 250 tons of weeds

By Tom Stangl
Publisher

It only operated for 22 days, but the new aquatic harvester purchased by the Apple River Protection & Rehabilitation District (ARPRD), kept busy, removing 112 loads of aquatic vegetation from the Apple River, a whopping 251 tons of weeds, according to a report by Dale Richardson, operations manager for ARPRD.

The harvester was delivered on Aug. 9, and harvesting began at North Park Bay on Aug. 10. Richardson reports that the first days were spent training the operators. Primary operators are David Schleusner and Wayne Jones. Backup operators when the primary guys aren't available are Gale Tappe and Dale Richardson.

Richardson reports that they already have volunteers lined up for next year.

The cleanup of North Park Bay, according to what Richardson heard from residents, was a "resounding success."

"A couple of people told us that it had been so bad the past few years that they hadn't even attempted to get their boats and pontoons in the water," Richardson said. "After the second day of cutting, fishermen were in the bay catching fish and we noticed several recreational boaters coming into the park. We continued to harvest weeds in the general area near Amery for about a week total," he said.

The weeds removed were initially dumped at the old City dump east of town and then were taken to the Dragonfly nursery where they will be turned into compost.

Richardson explains that each harvester load is approximately 275 cubic feet and weighs approximately 4,480 pounds.

Total volume was approximately 30,800 cubic feet, weighing approximately 501,760 pounds (251 tons).

After the North Park Bay cleanup, operations switched to the Cameron Bridge area. "Mike Coury graciously let us set the shore conveyor up on his property," Richardson said. Operations continued there for several days, cleaning up the channel through that area and providing access for people north and south of the bridge.

The next stop for the harvester was the Larson RV Campground, just south of the Highway 46 Bridge. Two days were spent clearing weeds from the main channel in that area, opening up access for a number of residents to the south.

On Aug. 22, the operation moved north of the Highway 46 bridge. Due to the low clearance

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The aquatic harvester purchased by the Apple River Protection & Rehabilitation District (ARPRD) has completed its first season removing weeds from the river. Over 250 tons of weeds were removed in 22 days of operation. (Free Press file photo)

Harvest: Response has been positive

Continued from page one height, the harvester can't make it under the bridge, so it is pulled out of the water and made the trip over the back roads.

"We've been given permission to use the old gravel access located on the Stanley Bowles property, about a mile north and west of the bridge on the west side of the river," Richardson explained.

"That portion of the river has been absolutely terrible for the past few years and was so weed-choked that it was nearly impossible to get a boat through the mess. Almost all the weeds from this area was dumped at the Brad Fougner farm where they will use it for fertilizer on their fields next year," Richardson said.

Leaving this area proved to be interesting for the harvesting crew. They discovered that their

dump truck was unable to get enough traction on the dirt/gravel to pull the 16,000 pound machine and trailer out of the water. "Fortunately, Brad was standing by with his tractor and yanked us out without a problem," Richardson said.

The season was finished out by moving back to the Amery area. The harvester operated out of the Stan Proden place just across the river from North Park. While there, they mainly harvested in the Beaver Brook area plus working to the north opening up access for residents along that stretch of the river.

Richardson commented that overall, the feedback from the community and people living along the river has been extremely positive.

"We've had quite a few people comment that they've not seen

the river is this good of shape in many years and several have told us that they plan on getting their docks fixed back up and have their pontoons back in the water next season," he said.

Almost without exception, Richardson added that operators "get lots of friendly waves, thumbs-ups, and a more than a few encouraging "directions" to harvest a little closer to their docks as we pass by."

By the time mid-September rolled around, the cooling water temps started to "drop" the weeds, making it less productive to try to harvest them. The last day of operation was September 13th and the equipment was put into winter storage on the 26th.

For now, the plan is to commence harvesting again next spring around the middle of May.



Among the field trips taken by the students was a visit to the Gibbs Home Farm in St. Paul, Minn., which has a Sod roof cabin. (Photo contributed)

Habitat: Electronic recycling is boon to program

Continued from page one gage payment and used a recent rehabilitated home in Milltown as an example.

"Not only does this home look nice, it is actually very well insulated as well," Kube said. "We also redid all the mechanical systems. The home went from about a \$500 a month heating bill at 50 degrees, to about a \$50 a month bill. We work with EnergyStar and Focus on Energy to make sure all of our homes are very efficient."

Kube also mentioned how the ReStore in St. Croix Falls, where Habitat sells donated building supplies and items for the home, assists in the continuation of the home building process.

"In March of last year we opened the store and so far we have recycled about one and a half million pounds of stuff," Kube said. "Of that, we have recycled over 350,000 pounds of electronics and we have had \$500,000 in sales. From those sales \$120,000 has been reinvested back into the mission of what we are doing."

Habitat has also recently implemented their "Brush with Kindness" campaign that has provided some much needed assistance to current homeowners in the area.

"With this program, we help people stay in their houses," Kube said. "We help low income families do the things that can-

not afford to do such as painting, wheelchair ramps, and small repairs. We have thus far done between 50-60 projects and put around \$350,000 worth of improvement into area homes. The cool thing about this is that these are improvements that would not have otherwise been done."

Habitat for Humanity is always in need of volunteers. Interested parties can help in the building and repairing of homes, volunteer for shifts at the ReStore, make a meal for groups working on a home, help in the Habitat office, or even simply spread the word about the program.

Teachers: Pair will miss their students

Continued from page one up and paraded down the street to Balsam Lake Park. Here students had access to running water and restrooms, neither of which was available at the school. I would perch atop the biggest rock in the park with my metal lunch bucket and contentedly drink my milk from a glass, flip-top Mason jar.

Students burned off their excess, post-lunch energy via group games. Mugerauer preferred "drop the hanky" and Gustafson tended toward "last couple out." No matter the game, though, the teachers loved watching how play brought the various ages and genders together.

"You came as a 1st grader, a 2nd grader, a 3rd grader. By noon you were a school, the big kids helping the little kids and the little kids looking up to the big kids," Gustafson said.

Students rounded out the day by sharing something old they had brought from home. Some brought family relics in the form of antique coffee grinders

or rusty cowbells. Others had a slightly skewed definition of old, bringing kitchen items their grandmothers had used in the 1970s.

Mugerauer and Gustafson laughed at the memory of these antics, and other entertaining highlights from their Pioneer School days. Gustafson recounted a particularly memorable field trip to an Amish farm. When the Pioneer School students exited the Amery school bus, one of the farm boys saw their costumes and excitedly asked if they were Amish too.

During the hottest Pioneer School session, Bob Dueholm, an assemblyman at the time, came to visit wearing a wool suit and top hat. Without air conditioning or airflow in the school Mugerauer spent his visit reciting a silent appeal under her breath: "Please don't pass out on us."

The teachers were particularly grateful for their many guests, mentors and aides over the years since the traditional country schoolteacher was necessarily a

jack-of-all-trades. "We were nurse, we were teacher, we were playground supervisor, we were lunchroom monitor, we were janitor," Gustafson said.

The two teachers say they will miss the kids immensely, and are crossing their fingers that someone will take over the Pioneer School in the future. For the time being, they are excited to enjoy some hard-earned down time. They plan to travel together, starting with a trip to Scandinavia or Russia.

"My goal is to hit all the continents," Mugerauer said. "I don't care if they have to take me in a wheelchair, gumming my food. I want to go to Antarctica."

Gustafson considers their next step to be a reflection of the philosophy and legacy they worked to emphasize during their years running the Pioneer School:

"In order to enjoy the present, enjoy the past."

Fire Dept. Open House Monday

In observance of National Fire Prevention Week Oct. 7-13, the Amery Fire Dept. will be hosting several events.

There will be an open house at the Amery Fire Hall on Monday, Oct. 8 from 4-6 p.m.

Those attending will be able

to experience a simulated smoke-house, see a fire sprinkler head demonstration, an extrication demonstration and view the fire equipment.

There will be free gifts and activities for kids and free hot dogs, chips and pop.

In observance of the week, the Amery Fire Dept. and Pizza Man will offer a free pizza or smoke detector sometime during the week of Oct. 7-13.



Some of the 55 walkers who turned out on Saturday for the Arnell Memorial Humane Society's Dog Walk. (Photo contributed)

Dog walk raises over \$2,500

Humans and canines alike enjoyed the beautiful fall weather on Saturday, Sept. 29 as the Arnell Memorial Humane Society held their annual "Walk for the Animals."

A total of 55 walkers arrived for the walk on the Stover Seven Lakes Trail, enjoying the fall colors.

Many brought "alumni" from the shelter, dogs that have been adopted over the years.

The walk, the largest fundraiser for the organization raised \$2,530.

Sue and Haley Olson took top prize for the largest amount of pledges.



Terry Carlson, Osceola, cuts the ribbon to begin the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Amery. Terry is a client at Day Friends in Balsam Lake, and his team, Terry's Trailblazers, were among those who raised over \$8,300 in this year's Polk County Walk. (Photo by Tom Stangl)

Alzheimer's Walk attracts over 50 walkers, raises \$8,377

The Amery Walk to End Alzheimer's Disease attracted over 50 walkers, six teams and raised \$8,377 on Saturday, Sept. 22. The goal for the walk is \$11,500, and contributions will be accepted until Dec. 31.

Amery Regional Medical

Center was recognized as the sponsor of the walk. Amery Mayor Mike Karuschak spoke to the walkers before they began their walk, thanking them for their dedication to the cause.

According to information presented before the walk, Alz-

heimer's Disease is now the fifth leading cause of death in the nation. One in eight Americans will contract the disease, which has no cure, by age 65. By age 85, the number increases to one in two. There are currently five million Americans affected by

the disease. The walk raised over \$8,300 of the \$11,125 goal. Donations may be made by contacting the Alzheimer's Association at 800-221-3900.



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