



## Mayor's message



Welcome to 2020! I hope it is a happy and healthy year for you and your family.

I wasn't sure what I was going to write about in this newsletter. But then I got to thinking about a conversation I had at one of our local watering holes recently with some people who are a lot smarter and wiser than me.

The discussion's central theme was about how crazy the world has become and how hard people are trying to get everyone else to agree to their ways of thinking and believing. If you just believe everything they do, they reason, we will all become one big, happy family. Unfortunately, that way of thinking is driving us in the opposite direction. We have become divided, tightly wedded to our own convictions and unwilling to consider other points of view.

CONTINUED PAGE 2



Dan and Aleisha Miller are joined by daughters Samantha and Niki to help "flip the switch" during River Dazzle to celebrate City of River Falls buildings going 100% renewable on Jan. 1, 2020. Known in River Falls schools as the "Energy Lady," Aleisha Miller received the 2019 Educator Award from the Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP).

## Renewable River Falls

On Oct. 22, 2019, the River Falls City Council voted unanimously to power the City's public buildings with 100% renewable energy by Jan. 1, 2020.

"Going 100% renewable is a big deal for the community, both locally and globally," said City Administrator Scot Simpson. "As a green energy leader, we have been working our way toward this goal for the past 12 years with significant work completed in community education, conservation, and energy efficiency."

Employee education and engagement, improved building automation, LED light conversion, HVAC upgrades, and more have reduced the electric consumption in city buildings by 11.4%, said Simpson.

"We are now at the point where our electric consumption isn't likely to

appreciably improve through these efforts alone. Renewable energy is the next step, not only for city facilities but for our residences and businesses as well."

The City will purchase additional "green blocks" to reach its 100% renewable energy goal for city buildings. Green blocks are units of 300 kilowatt hours (kWh) of renewable energy – a mix of solar, wind, and biogas – available to River Falls Municipal Utilities customers through WPPI Energy, a regional power company serving 51 locally-owned, not-for-profit electric utilities in Wisconsin, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and Iowa.

Green blocks have been available for purchase by customers since 2004.

CONTINUED PAGE 6

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Founder celebration.....4

Comings and goings.....5

Ty and his trike.....7

All About Town.....8-10

FORWARD for students.....11

UWRF Summit highlights .....12

## Election update

This year will be a busy one for elections. In 2020, there will be five! They include:

**Feb. 18:** Spring Primary and Special Primary for St. Croix County residents\*

**April 7:** Spring Election and Presidential Preference Primary

**May 12:** Special Election for St. Croix County residents\*

**Aug. 11:** Partisan Primary

**Nov. 3:** General and Presidential Election

\*Congressional District 7

## Vote early; avoid lines

Follow these steps to make early voting at City Hall quick and stress-free:

- Make sure you're registered to vote or pre-register to vote online at [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov)
- Review a sample ballot to prepare for voting at [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov)
- Bring photo identification. Acceptable forms of ID can be found here: [www.rfcity.org/elections](http://www.rfcity.org/elections).

Early voting occurs two weeks prior to each election at City Hall, 222 Lewis Street. Check for voting updates on the City's Facebook page or website.

Looking for a way to get involved with the election process? Be a poll worker! Find an application at [www.rfcity.org/elections](http://www.rfcity.org/elections) or contact the City Clerk's office at 715-425-1693.

## Council meetings

River Falls City Council meetings are held the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall (Council Chambers, lower level), 222 Lewis Street, River Falls. The public is invited to attend. Time is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for residents to address the Council.

Past and current Council agendas and minutes can be found at [rfcity.org](http://rfcity.org).



River Falls City Council (l-r): Sean Downing, Chris Gagne, Scott Morrissette, Mayor Dan Toland, Diane Odeen, Todd Bjerstedt, Michael Page, and Hal Watson.

## City of River Falls Mayor and Council

Mayor: Dan Toland  
[dtoland@rfcity.org](mailto:dtoland@rfcity.org), 715-426-3404

At-Large: Scott Morrissette  
[smorrissette@rfcity.org](mailto:smorrissette@rfcity.org), 715-425-8993

At-Large: Diane Odeen  
[dodeen@rfcity.org](mailto:dodeen@rfcity.org), 715-426-5325

At-Large: Michael Page  
[mpage@rfcity.org](mailto:mpage@rfcity.org), 612-810-3949

District 1: Sean Downing  
[sdowning@rfcity.org](mailto:sdowning@rfcity.org), 715-307-2057

District 2: Christopher Gagne  
[cgagne@rfcity.org](mailto:cgagne@rfcity.org), 715-222-3220

District 3: Hal Watson  
[hwatson@rfcity.org](mailto:hwatson@rfcity.org), 715-781-5814

District 4: Todd Bjerstedt  
[tbjerstedt@rfcity.org](mailto:tbjerstedt@rfcity.org), 651-248-1099

## Mayor's message...from page 1

And, we are proclaiming those convictions loudly (and not always nicely). We might say, "my politics, my religious beliefs, my childrearing – even my choice of sports teams – are the right way. If you don't agree, take the highway!"

I know that the idea of a united society working toward solutions together and trying to help each other is a little naïve on my part. But then I think about what we learned in kindergarten, and it all boils down to this: Treat people the way you want to be treated.

We will never all think the same way, or all have the same beliefs – which is a good thing! We need all of us to make the world go 'round. So, let's treat each other with respect, love, and honesty, and try and get along. Actually, we must if there is any hope of surviving as a democratic society. I hope some of this makes sense; I will climb down off my soapbox now!

Remember to get out and enjoy your city – and, please, treat each other kindly.

Go Pack Go,

Dan Toland, Mayor

## Evaluating EMS alternatives

by Jason E. Stroud, assistant city administrator

The City of River Falls has proudly sustained an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department since 1975, which provides advanced life support prehospital care and ambulance transportation for residents in River Falls, Prescott, and surrounding communities. The revenue generated through the EMS fee-for-service program, along with inter-governmental service fees, have fully funded department operations.

Over the past few years, however, a decrease in overall call volume and stagnated reimbursements from insurance and governmental payers, combined with increased equipment and personnel expenses, have led to significant operational deficits. The department was able to cover these deficits with its reserve fund balance since 2017. However, the fund is depleted and cannot cover service costs beyond 2020.

As a result, staff undertook a comprehensive feasibility study to determine future options. The study included researching EMS services in other municipalities and found that, in Wisconsin, only 5% of the municipalities with populations between 10,000-50,000 sustain their own municipal EMS department.

Many of these communities contract their ambulance services through a non-governmental organization, such as a commercial EMS agency, or an EMS agency directly affiliated with a healthcare system.

The final feasibility report includes staff recommendations that such a non-governmental EMS agency may be a viable option for the City in order to avoid potentially significant service fee increases or subsidies that would be needed to sustain current services.

In October, the City's EMS Advisory Board and the City Council received staff presentations regarding options for EMS service delivery. Both groups remain committed to ensuring that quality ambulance services remain available within the community. In addition, they indicated support for City staff to issue a request for proposals (RFP) to non-governmental EMS providers in order to fully evaluate the cost-effectiveness and service implications of such a consideration. In addition to EMS service delivery requirements, the RFP included employment provisions for current City EMS staff as well as options to include all municipalities currently served by River Falls EMS.

Staff is currently evaluating proposals received in response to this RFP and plans to brief both the EMS Advisory Board and City Council at meetings in January.

Questions about EMS or current considerations can be directed to Assistant City Administrator Jason E. Stroud at [jstroud@rfcity.org](mailto:jstroud@rfcity.org) or 715-426-3416. EMS Advisory Board agendas and minutes can be viewed at [www.rfcity.org](http://www.rfcity.org).



## Biennial budget: Year 2 report

At its Nov. 26 meeting, the City Council approved an ordinance for the second year of the City's 2019/2020 biennial budget. The 2020 budget totals \$45.7 million and represents all the revenues and expenses that allow staff to fulfill the policies and direction determined by the Mayor and City Council.

The approved budget includes a property tax levy of \$6,860,235 to support City operations, though the City of River Falls is only one of the taxing jurisdictions included on a resident's property tax bill.

### Where do your taxes go?



\*Based on an average between Pierce County and St. Croix County.

The complete approved budget can be found at [rfcity.org](http://rfcity.org), at City Hall, and at the Library. Contact Sarah Karlsson, finance director, at [skarlsson@rfcity.org](mailto:skarlsson@rfcity.org) with questions.

## Census questionnaires arrive in March

In March 2020, every address in the country will receive an invitation to complete a simple questionnaire that will help determine funding levels and government representation for the next 10 years. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

**What is the census?** Every ten years, the census records every person living in the United States. The data is used to inform funding for services like fire stations, schools, clinics, as well as government representation that affects local communities.

### How does it affect representation?

There are 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, distributed among states by population. An accurate census response helps states get the right number of seats.



**How do you take the 2020 Census?** When the questionnaire is received in March, there

are three ways to respond: online, by telephone, and by mail. For those who don't respond, a census taker will travel to neighborhoods to assist residents in completing the questionnaire.

**Is my data safe?** By law, your information can not be shared with any other government agency, law enforcement, or landlord.

For more information, visit [census.gov](https://www.census.gov).

## RFEDC founders recognized

by Dale Jorgenson, former president, RFEDC

In 2018, the City celebrated the 30th anniversary of the formation of the River Falls Economic Development Corporation (RFEDC).

This past October, founding members were honored during a reception at the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center (SCVBIC).

From the beginning, RFEDC members worked hard to get stuff done, adhering to advice from Peter Dahm, then the City's community development director who was serving on the committee. He said: "Well-managed development is the foundation to positive growth for the City."

River Falls' industrial community today is a living embodiment of that statement made long ago.

RFEDC members worked with the City to establish the Whitetail Ridge Corporate

Park, and, beginning in 1990, they started what was to become a successful program constructing industrial buildings for businesses on a rent-to-own basis. Four buildings were completed over the course of the next 20 years followed by the construction of the SCVBIC in 2018.

RFEDC continues to work hard for the industrial community in River Falls. In 2018, a group of stakeholders, including RFEDC board members, updated the corporation's strategic plan, which included these goals: 1) to assist and support the SCVBIC; 2) support the River Falls industrial community; and 3) hold regular economic development meetings with regional stakeholders.

The RFEDC board meets at noon on the second Monday of each month at City Hall. To get involved, contact President Max Neuhaus at [max@riverfallslaw.com](mailto:max@riverfallslaw.com).



RFEDC founding members were honored with a plaque this fall at the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center. Members included (l-r): Dennis Carstens, Paul Schwebach, Dan Ross, Jerry Wilkens, Jay Griggs, and Pete Herpst. Front row: Mary (Schmitt) Waters

Not pictured: Peter Dahm, Ken Devillers, and Liz Oostendorp (deceased)

## Changing leadership



Thirty years ago, **Julie Bergstrom** arrived from Florida to interview for the City of River Falls' finance director position. She remembered it was a chilly day in March and she was sneezing and coughing with a cold.

"I was miserable," she said.

The good news is she got the job and has never looked back. She said she likes the variety of work and the fact that "you can really get something done in local government. You can see the results."

But, she said, it's working with people – her coworkers, City Council, and community – that makes the difference.

"I have enjoyed getting to know all kinds of people who are so different and have led such interesting lives. The best thing is they are all working together to make our City a better place."

Bergstrom has had six job titles in 30 years, the last three years as assistant city administrator serving alongside City Administrator Scot Simpson.

"Julie has been a changemaker in our organization," said Simpson. "While keeping expectations high and reinforcing high ethical standards, she has reminded us that we don't have to fit any pre-determined mold of a city government. There are many ways to get things done – she has proven this time and again."

Bergstrom grew up in Alexandria, MN, with her brother and three sisters. She earned her bachelor's degree from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, double majoring in business administration and art.

One of her first jobs was as assistant to the vice president for business affairs at the Minneapolis Society for Fine Arts, which, at the time, included MCAD, Children's Theatre, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. From there, she took her first local government job in the City of Milaca, MN.

Then, sunnier weather beckoned and she packed her bags for Florida where she served the cities of Melbourne as internal auditor, and Lynn Haven as the administrative services director.

She came back to the Midwest in 1989, settling in New Richmond where she and her husband, Tim, raised son Adrian and daughter Anna while she continued to make significant contributions to the City.

"Julie was absolutely critical in facilitating the fundamental fiscal strength of this organization," said Simpson.

"Not in a conservative, hide-and-ration-the-resources fashion, but one that allows the organization to take risks, enjoy the rewards, and build on our success by investing in the future."

Specifically, said Simpson, "she enabled the community to invest in our successful corporate parks, downtown projects, fantastic workforce, and equipment. She has had so many ideas over her career (that she has given the credit to others for) that have become fundamental to our culture."

In retirement, Bergstrom plans to travel and spend time with her family, sail on Lake Superior, read, take classes at UW-River Falls, and focus on her first love: art.

Bergstrom said 30 years have gone by fast.

"When you like what you do," she said, "that's what happens!"



City EMS Director **Jason Stroud**, was selected to replace Julie Bergstrom as assistant city administrator.

In his new role, he will assist City Administrator Scot Simpson with strategic planning, Council relations, organizational oversight, and day-to-day decision making. He will also provide direct support to public services-focused departments including Operations, EMS, Fire, Library, and Parks and Recreation.

"Jason was selected from a group of 100 candidates for this position," said City Administrator Scot Simpson. "We are confident in his abilities to provide leadership to the departments he supports as well as to the broader organization."

Stroud has worked in local government for 20 years and has significant experience leading multi-departmental projects. Prior to coming to River Falls, he served as deputy chief of operations for the City of Virginia Beach (VA) Department of Emergency Medical Services. He has a master's degree in public policy and a graduate certificate in public administration.

"Throughout the years," Stroud reflected, "I have always seized opportunities to work on projects across departmental lines in support of the greater good; this has instilled in me an appreciation for the different challenges and needs of the entire organization."

Stroud says he is most looking forward to "interacting and collaborating with our Mayor, City Council members, various stakeholders, and community members on broad issues impacting our City."

EMS Department Critical Care Paramedic **Katy Frey** will serve as interim EMS coordinator until a long-term plan is created for the department (see page 3).

## Advocating for parks

*There are plenty of ways to become involved within the City and community. One is to participate in our collective future by joining one of 12 City committees, commissions, or boards. What follows is the second in a series of profiles of current volunteer leaders.*

Melissa Pedrini, who has served on the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board since January 2019, says she believes she can bring a unique perspective to the board because of her daily interactions with residents at her local business, Well Living Massage.

"My conversations with community members give me an opportunity to voice

their praises and concerns with parks and recreation activities that I would otherwise not be able to do," says Pedrini.

She says her undergraduate studies in geography and environmental studies at UW-Parkside sparked her interest in serving on the Park Board. Living in River Falls since 2016 with her husband and three sons, she says that the availability and number of green spaces and parks are essential to the community.

"Parks are vital for the health of our citizens by offering them opportunities for exercise and play, places to socialize and make personal connections, and a way to connect with nature and relieve stress."

Pedrini believes that those who are interested in volunteering for a board must have a true appreciation for the community.

"You should have a genuine love for the community and board on which you're serving," Pedrini explained. "You can't think just about how things affect you and your family but the young, old, and in between."

Going forward, Pedrini said she plans to be an advocate for community members and "help create safe, clean, accessible parks and green spaces for both residents and visitors."



Melissa Pedrini

## About the Board

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board acts in an advisory capacity to the City Council on use of park facilities, future parks, construction of parks, and recreation programs.

Residents interested in serving on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, or any other board, committee, or commission, are invited to visit [www.rfcity.org/RFserves](http://www.rfcity.org/RFserves) and complete an application. Prospective volunteers are also invited to attend monthly meetings and peruse agendas and minutes available on the City's website.

## Renewable...from page 1

Today, over 12% of River Falls residents voluntarily purchase green blocks, making the City first in the state and third in the nation for green energy participation.

City buildings going "green" in January include: City Hall; Public Library; Public Works Facility; Wastewater Treatment Plant; Public Safety Building; Emergency Management; and Glen Park Pool.

The City's sustainability efforts are managed through its POWERful! Choices program, a division of River Falls Municipal Utilities, which provides electric, water, and wastewater services for the City.

For frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the program or information about how to participate, visit [www.rfcity.org/RenewableRF](http://www.rfcity.org/RenewableRF).



Tri-Angels Playground, Hoffman Park

## New officers now on duty

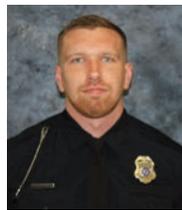
Four new patrol officers have joined the Police Department since spring 2019.

**Jordan Hemker** has been working in law enforcement for the last four years, most recently as deputy sheriff for the Vernon County Sheriff's Office. He earned a degree in criminal justice at Western Technical College, and is a 2015 graduate of the Law Enforcement Academy at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC).

In his spare time, Hemker enjoys playing soccer, hunting, fishing, and relaxing with his chocolate lab.

**Patrick McGinty** graduated from the University of North Dakota with a degree in aeronautical science and air traffic control and served in the Air National Guard working with security forces. He was a special education instructor at Friendly Hills Middle School in West St. Paul for the past four years. He graduated in October from CVTC's Law Enforcement Academy.

**Derek Hokkanen** joined the force after working as an automotive technician and owner of a small repair shop for the past 20 years. He went back to school to fulfill his dream of becoming a police officer, graduating in 2019 from the Law Enforcement Academy at CVTC. Married with two children, Hokkanen enjoys hunting, fishing, and cheering on the Minnesota Wild.



**Cody Tomlinson** grew up in Durand, WI, leaving to attend UW-River Falls where he graduated with a degree in criminology.

Tomlinson joined the River Falls Police Department as a reserve office in March 2019. He graduated from the Law Enforcement Academy at CVTC on Dec. 18. Besides being a fan of Wisconsin sports, Cody enjoys staying active, spending time with his dog, and trying his best at cooking.



*Erica Hokkanen pins husband Derek Hokkanen at a Police Department swearing in ceremony on April 8, 2019. Pictured (l-r) are Chief Gordon Young and fellow new officers Jordan Hemker and Patrick McGinty. Cody Tomlinson (far left) was sworn in on Dec. 19.*

## A new trike for Ty



Something magical happened Friday, Oct. 25, when Tyon "Ty" Burch showed up at the River Falls Police Department under the guise of retrieving his lost ID. Officers, Ty's parents, and others, were waiting with a new adult-sized tricycle. Ty's surprised look, followed by a big smile, tells it all.

The story began when retired Bloomer Police Chief Richard Carr saw Ty riding in River Falls with a bent frame on his tricycle. He mentioned it to RFPD Chief Gordon Young who was able to track down Ty's mom. No, she said, the bike was beyond repair due to the damaged frame.

Chief Young looked for a way to help and was eventually connected with University of Wisconsin-River Falls employee Elise Koop and the Francis Johnson Memorial Fund. A replacement trike was ordered, and a

plan devised for the surprise. Police Officer Logan Dohmeier assembled the trike, which arrived at the station in two big boxes. This true community effort helped Ty remain independent and mobile. And, there's that big smile that made it all worth it.

Postscript: Ty was featured on "Land of 10,000 Stories," a KARE 11 series reported and produced by Boyd Huppert, award-winning journalist, former River Falls resident, and UW-River Falls graduate. The program aired on Dec. 4; see [KARE11.com](http://KARE11.com).

Donations to the bike fund can be made via check to First National Bank of River Falls, 104 East Locust St., River Falls, WI 54022, made out to the "Francis Johnson Memorial Fund," or by contributing online at [gofundme.com/ff/francis-johnson-memorial-fund](http://gofundme.com/ff/francis-johnson-memorial-fund).

## Just for teens

### Teens in Power (TIP)

Teen advisory board for grades 6-12 meets to discuss and plan library events for teens.

Feb. 12, March 11, April 8, May 13  
4-5 p.m.

RFPL, Library Board Room

### Teen events

For students in grades 6-12.

Every fourth Wednesday, 4-5 p.m.

RFPL, Library Board Room (unless otherwise specified)

Jan. 22: Create your own bullet journal

Feb. 26: Anti-Valentine's Day Party

March 25: Game Day

April 22: Button making

May 20: Ice cream social

Also check out book clubs for middle- and high-school students at [riverfallspubliclibrary.org](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org).

## The Big Read 2020

### "Lab Girl" by Hope Jahren

Experience theater, music, visual arts, and other cross-cultural activities related to the book throughout the St. Croix River Valley.

*In collaboration with ArtReach St. Croix and a host of community partners.*

Visit [artreachstcroix.org](http://artreachstcroix.org).

### Book worm? Us too!

Check out book discussion groups or Winter Storytime for all ages at [riverfallspubliclibrary.org](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org).

(RFPL=River Falls Public Library)



## Big Fun Lab opens Jan. 13

### Jan. 13-April 1

RFPL Gallery

River Falls Public Library is honored to have been awarded the 2019 Big Idea Grant for \$10,000 from the River Falls Community Foundation. The grant money funds the Library's Big Fun Lab, a pop-up indoor play and exploration space for children and families in the Library Gallery.

The Big Fun Lab is free and open during the winter months for babies through tweens and their families. Contact Cole Zrostlik at [czrostlik@riverfallslibrary.org](mailto:czrostlik@riverfallslibrary.org) to learn about volunteer opportunities.

### Jan. 13-17

#### Library Mini Golf

RFPL, Lower Level

### Jan. 14-March 31

#### Tuesday playgroups

Storytime, 6-6:30 p.m.

Big Fun Lab, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

*Registration required at [rflerns.org](http://rflerns.org)*

*No class Feb. 18.*

### Jan. 25, 10 a.m.-noon

#### Moms & Muffins

A breakfast playdate in the Big Fun Lab for children and their moms and grandmas.

RFPL, Lower Level

### Feb. 1, 10 a.m.-noon

#### Dads & Donuts

A breakfast playdate in the Big Fun Lab for children and their dads and grandpas.

RFPL, Lower Level

## Where to look for what to do...

**City of River Falls:** [rfcity.org](http://rfcity.org)

**City Parks and Recreation:**

[www.rfcity.org/recreation](http://www.rfcity.org/recreation)

**Chamber/community events:** [tourism.rfchamber.com/events](http://tourism.rfchamber.com/events)

**Community Arts Base:** [riverfallscab.org](http://riverfallscab.org)

**Library:** [riverfallspubliclibrary.org](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org)

**School District Continuing Education:** [rflerns.org](http://rflerns.org)

**University of Wisconsin-River Falls:** [go.uwrf.edu/cal](http://go.uwrf.edu/cal)



Jan. 20, Feb. 17, April 3, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

## Out-of-School-Day Events

RFPL, Lower Level

For pre-K through grade 5

Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, 9:30 a.m.

## Fit Fridays Yoga

RFPL, Lower Level

Registration required at [riverfallspubliclibrary.org](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org).



Feb. 13, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 14 and 15, 6:30 and 8:30 p.m.

## "Amor and More: A Valentine Cabaret"

Directed by Joy Amel

Syse Black Box Theatre, Kleinpell Fine Arts

UW-River Falls



March 1-31

## World War 1: Lessons and Legacies

RFPL, Main Level

This special exhibition explores how the lessons and legacies of World War I continue to affect the United States.

*Poster exhibition courtesy of the Smithsonian and United States World War I Centennial Commission.*

March 4-7, 7:30 p.m.

## Dance Theatre Spring Concert

Davis Theatre, Kleinpell Fine Arts

UW-River Falls

March 21-27

## UW-River Falls Spring Break



## Community Arts Base Barn Dances

Family dance: 7-8 p.m.

Grown-up dance: 8-9:30 p.m.

\$5 adults/\$2.50 for 12 and under

Meyer Middle School

230 North 9th St., park in south lot;

entrance at door #305.

### Featuring:

Jan. 18: Rush River Ramblers

Feb. 15: Barn Cats

March 21: Woolly Buggers

*Sponsored by Community Arts Base.*

Find more info at [riverfallscab.org](http://riverfallscab.org).

## April is Poetry Month



April 16, 6-7 p.m.

### Poet Daniel Ruefman

Reading from "Sleep Bringer"

RFPL, Lower Level

April 25, 1 p.m.

### Poets Annette Gagliardi

### and Laura Kozy Lanik

RFPL, Lower Level

"Upon Waking: 58 Voices Speaking Out from the Shadow of Abuse" is the culmination of the Let's Talk About It! Poetry Project created by Gagliardi and Kozy Lanik and representing the work of 58 poets from Minnesota, the U.S., and Canada.

*This event is co-presented by the Library and River Falls Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Books will be available for purchase at the event.*

April 29, 6 p.m.

### Open Mic Poetry Night

RFPL, Lower Level

Sign up the night of the event to read a personal poem or short story.

## Tax Day is April 15!

For lots of information about federal and state taxes, as well as free tax assistance options, visit [riverfallspubliclibrary.org/tax-forms.html](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org/tax-forms.html)

## Winter library sampler

Visit [riverfallspubliclibrary.org](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org) for even more winter fun!

### Maker Mondays

Join fellow "makers" on the second Monday of the month for an afternoon of family-friendly, hands-on activities in a pop-up makerspace. Families, kids 10+ w/out an adult, and adults without kids are all welcome.

Second Mondays, 3:30-6 p.m. (drop in)  
RFPL, Lower Level

- Feb. 10** Perler beads and zip lines
- March 9** Going green
- April 13** Robotics

### Climate science series

The River Falls Public Library, along with River Falls Community Education, is excited to present this Thursday evening public lecture and Q & A series.

Second Thursdays, 6 p.m.  
RFPL, Lower Level  
*Registration required at RFLearns.org.*

- Feb. 13** "Cycles of the Earth in Space," Eileen Korenic, physics professor, UW-River Falls
- March 12** "Human Activity and Climate Change," Jill Coleman Wasik, associate professor of plant and earth sciences, UWRF
- April 9** "Local Sustainability Initiatives and How You Can Help," Mike Noreen, conservation and efficiency coordinator, City of River Falls

March 26, 6 p.m.

**Wisconsin Advanced Directive Seminar**  
Presented by Attorney John Del Vecchio  
RFPL, Lower Level



April 2, 6:30-8 p.m.

**International Bazaar**  
Riverview Ballroom and Falcon's Nest,  
University Center, UW-River Falls

April 3, 6 p.m.

**American Cancer Society Relay for Life**  
River Falls High School  
[relayforlife.org/riverfallswi](http://relayforlife.org/riverfallswi)

April 4, 7:30 p.m.

**Commissioned Composer Concert with Alan Ferber**  
Abbott Concert Hall, UW-River Falls

April 13-May 20

**All-School Art Show**  
Opening reception April 20, 5-7 p.m.  
RFPL Gallery

April 17-18 and April 23-25, 7:30 p.m.

**"Eurydice" by Sarah Ruhl**  
Directed by Kathy Welch  
Syse Theatre, Kleinpell Fine Arts, UWRF



April 17-19

**10th Annual River Falls Roots and Bluegrass Music Festival**  
Various locations; [riverfallsbluegrass.com](http://riverfallsbluegrass.com)

## Summer fun!

It's not too early to start planning summer activities. Be on the lookout for catalogs and info. this spring.

**City of River Falls**  
Parks and Recreation  
[www.rfcity.org/recreation](http://www.rfcity.org/recreation)  
715-425-0924

**Summer Library Programs**  
[riverfallspubliclibrary.org](http://riverfallspubliclibrary.org)  
715-425-0905

**School District of River Falls**  
Community Education  
[rflearns.org](http://rflearns.org)  
715-425-1830, ext. 3801

April 23, 6:30 p.m.

**Parallels to Pokémon**  
RFPL, Lower Level

Botanist Nate Dahlberg will show amateur scientists of all ages how to use the tools of science when they hunt, find, and collect Charizard, Bulbasaur, Ivysaur, Pikachu, and other Pokémon. He will draw parallels between the characteristics, environments, and evolutions of Pokémon and the biological surveys that catalog the 2,100+ native plants in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

May 2, 8 a.m.-noon

**10th Annual "Wings of Spring" Bird Festival**  
City Hall, 222 Lewis Street  
*Sponsored by St. Croix Valley Bird Club*  
[scvbirdclub.com](http://scvbirdclub.com)

May 9

**UW-River Falls Spring Commencement**  
Falcon Center, UWRF

## Moving River Falls students FORWARD

by Samantha Rose, president, FORWARD Foundation

In 2009, the River Falls community wrote an ambitious strategic plan for the School District of River Falls that included the creation of a private foundation to support public education in our city. As a result, in 2012, FORWARD: The River Falls Public Schools Education Foundation was created.

The founding board members included retired school district teachers and staff, as well as community leaders from the River Falls area. Today, FORWARD is still a private, all-volunteer non-profit organization that raises funds from alumni, parents, and the community; 100% of every contribution to FORWARD stays in River Falls.

Each year, FORWARD awards grants that engage, challenge, and inspire students at all grade levels. District teachers, support staff, and administrators apply for project grants that they feel will enhance the educational experience in River Falls' public schools. These grant projects can be

described as demonstration or pilot projects to prove out new ideas, or they can be curriculum and technologies to test prior to broader implementation. Grants provide an opportunity for staff to identify, implement, and show measurable results on creative teaching techniques.

Early grants helped to fund robotics team projects, iPads for classroom use, character education, equipment for environmental education projects, 3D printers, and digital microscopes.

More recent grant projects include support toward a district-wide mental health initiative, advanced STEM tools and resources, an aquaculture system for the high school, and initial funding for Leadership River Falls Youth and Project SEARCH.

Since its inception, FORWARD has awarded over \$145,000 in grants to the district. Many projects and practices in River

Falls schools began with and/or were substantially enhanced because of funds from the Foundation.

In addition to the annual grant giving of \$20,000 to the staff in the district, FORWARD is building an endowment fund with a goal of \$300,000 that will continue to sustain grant funding for many years to come.

### FORWARD Fundraisers

March 14, 5:30 p.m.

#### Dueling Pianos

Kilkarney Hills Golf Course

July 27, 11 a.m.

#### Luther Automotive Golf Tournament

Kilkarney Hills Golf Course

*Also benefits the River Falls Sunshine Fund.*

For ticket information or more about the Foundation, visit [Forwardrf.org](http://Forwardrf.org).



### Podcast for good

Students at Greenwood Elementary launched a podcast with a FORWARD Foundation grant to purchase recording equipment and a laptop. Four podcasts have since aired: nine are planned for 2020. The podcasts focus on the nine characteristics from the River Falls School District's Character Education program.

"Our students are leaders and have powerful viewpoints on our world. By giving them a platform to speak to a bigger audience, we empower them to be change agents and leaders of character," said Emily Rose, Greenwood Elementary's school counselor.

To listen to the podcasts, visit [greenwoodcharacter.podbean.com](http://greenwoodcharacter.podbean.com).



*Osman Mohamed Ali, founder and executive director of the Somali Museum of Minnesota, participated in the summit at UW-River Falls in November.*

## Did you know?

- On average, 350 UWRF students go abroad each year.
- UWRF currently enrolls 129 international students from 24 different countries.
- UWRF Falcons have been studying abroad since 1963. Students today learn on every continent in settings ranging from 318-year-old Scottish palaces to mangrove trees on Andros Island.
- Nearly 60 individuals and families in the local community participate in the International Friendship Program where they are paired with a UWRF international student in a non-residential "host family" capacity.
- Since 2013, UWRF has celebrated a "Year of," highlighting one nation a year for community and campus events, workshops, and seminars. Academic year 2019/2020 is the Year of Somalia.

## Summit highlights global perspectives

UW-River Falls rolled out the red carpet for local and global audiences during its International Summit on Education and Engagement in November. The week-long summit showcased events that engaged ideas, people, cultures, and places beyond the UWRF campus to enrich learning and understanding.

An estimated 1,500 participants, including community members, students, faculty, and staff, chose from a wide selection of events and activities during the event.

Nationally-acclaimed polar explorer Ann Bancroft served as the summit's keynote speaker. During her presentation, Bancroft shared photography from her historic journeys as well as stories and personal experiences while she advocated for the protection of polar environments.

The summit was an opportunity to celebrate the university's global profile, which includes 129 international students from 24 countries and international faculty, as well as an active student body participating in education abroad opportunities.

"We are grateful to all who share our commitment to international education and our mission to help prepare students to be engaged citizens and leaders with a global perspective," said UWRF Chancellor Dean Van Galen. "The summit was a unique opportunity for global and intercultural learning."

UWRF faculty and staff bring a wide range of global perspectives to campus through their own international backgrounds, degree attainment abroad, internationally-focused research, global cooperative research endeavors, and varied experiences teaching abroad.

"The event highlighted the importance of international engagement for the university and its faculty, staff, and students," said Heidi Soneson, assistant vice chancellor of international education and director of the UWRF Office of International Education.

"The summit was also a celebration of our commitment to community engagement."



*Four international guests participated in the November summit. Pictured here (l-r): Judith Hayer, director, International Office, RheinMain University of Applied Sciences, Wiesbaden, Germany; Dr. Wil Bekkering, vice chancellor, Aeres University, Almere, The Netherlands; UW-River Falls Chancellor Dean Van Galen; Dr. Joe Wu, president, and Dr. David Wu, dean of International Affairs, Shih Hsin University, Taipei, Taiwan.*

## Fitness on the trail



In October, the Leadership River Falls Class of 2018/2019 cut the ribbon on a new fitness trail in DeSanctis Park. The trail was organized, funded, and installed by the group. Leadership River Falls is a program of the River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. (l-r): Cindy Campbell, City of River Falls; Alan Symicek, UW-River Falls; Krista Paulus, Security Financial Bank; Lisa Jahns, First National Bank of River Falls; Amy Peterson, City of River Falls; Mary Qualls, WESTconsin Credit Union; Laura Bower, River Falls State Bank; Kristy Treichel, Ayres Associates; and Maren Valentine, Oso Clean.

Not pictured: Samantha Hamann, UW-River Falls, and Carrie Snyder, Royal Credit Union

## 2020 Recreation Plan

River Falls is known for its extensive parks and green space that contain a variety of recreation options and unique natural features that set it apart from other communities. To ensure that the park system will continue to serve its residents for future generations, the City will update its current Outdoor Recreation Plan in 2020.

The Plan will prioritize citywide park improvements for the next five years and provide a long-range vision for the park system's future. As part of the planning process, the City will be asking for public input and participation.

Once the plan is completed and certified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the City will be eligible for various grants and funding opportunities for park system improvements.



For questions about the upcoming project, please contact Sam Wessel at 715-426-3424 or [swessel@rfcity.org](mailto:swessel@rfcity.org).



## Reserve event space!

Rental reservations are now being accepted for enclosed and open shelters in Hoffman and Glen Parks.

### Rental dates and rates

#### Glen Park Pavilion

Open now for year-round use  
 Resident: \$125 half-day  
 \$250 full-day

Non-resident: \$140 half-day  
 \$280 full-day

#### Hoffman Park octagon shelter

Available year-round  
 Resident: \$50 half-day  
 \$100 full-day

Non-resident: \$65 half-day  
 \$130 full-day

#### Hoffman Park storm shelter

Available year-round  
 Resident: \$75 half-day  
 \$150 full-day

Non-resident: \$90 half-day  
 \$180 full-day

#### Hoffman and Glen Park open shelters

Available beginning spring 2020  
 Resident: \$30 half-day  
 \$60 full-day

Non-resident: \$45 half-day  
 \$90 full-day

Check availability or make a reservation at [riverfalls.activityreg.com](http://riverfalls.activityreg.com) or call 715-425-0924.

## Embrace winter

There are many winter outdoor activities available in and around the River Falls area. Make the new year a time to revisit a favorite activity from years past or try something new.

### Ice skating and hockey

Falcon Center, UW-River Falls  
1110 South Main St., River Falls

Open hockey and skating, plus figure skating

[uwrf.edu/CampusRec](http://uwrf.edu/CampusRec)

### Snowshoeing

Whitetail Ridge  
701 Whitetail Blvd., River Falls

Kinnickinnic State Park\*  
W11983 820th Ave., River Falls

Willow River State Park\*  
1034 County Hwy A, Hudson

Snowshoeing is also permitted in ungroomed areas of all City parks. Popular spots include DeSanctis Park (1543 Roosevelt St.) and the trails behind Hoffman Park (547 Hanson Drive).

### Sledding

Hoffman Park, 547 Hanson Drive

Larson Park, 1800 Sorenson St.

Kinnickinnic State Park\*

### Cross-country skiing

Kinnickinnic State Park\*

Willow River State Park\*

### Mountain biking

Whitetail Ridge, 701 Whitetail Blvd.

\*State park entrance fees apply at both Kinnickinnic State Park and Willow River State Park.

## Free education services for adults

In addition to its highly-regarded degree programs, including nursing, business management, criminal justice, and residential construction, Chippewa Valley Technical College's River Falls campus also provides adult education services, which are free and open to the public.

Services include helping students develop or refresh classroom learning skills prior to enrollment, learn or update basic computer skills, or improve their English language skills. The help is free, and participants can set their own schedules and start and finish at their own pace.

Most services are available in the newly expanded Adult Education Services lab at 500 South Wasson Lane, part of the college's \$1.5 million building expansion and remodeling project completed in 2018. The lab is open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on

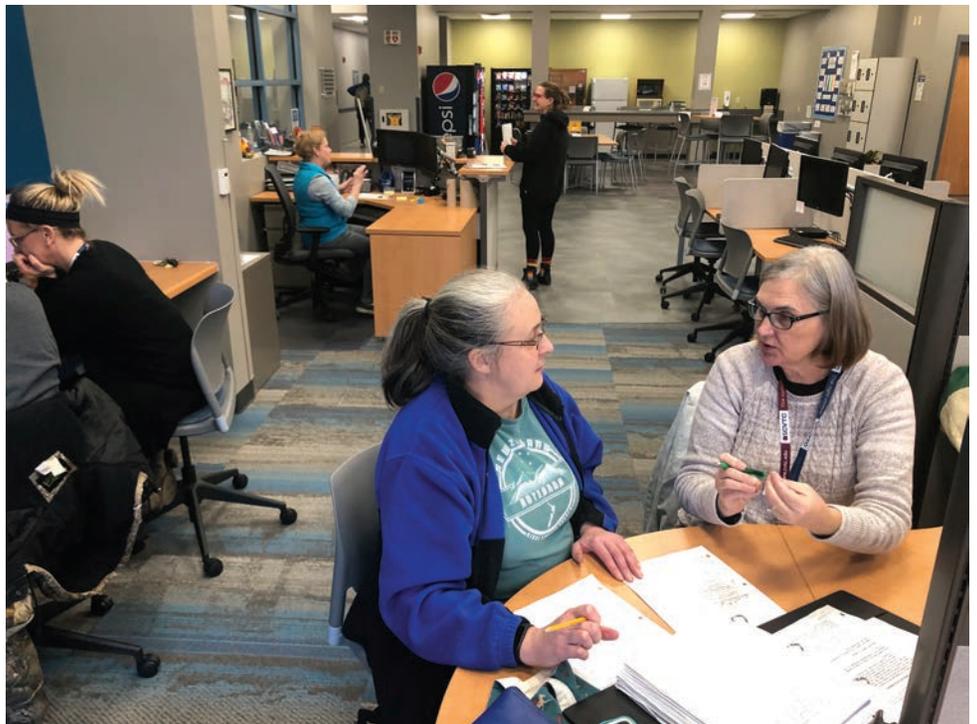
Fridays. People can call for an appointment, or just drop in.

"These services are open to everyone," said Holly Hassemer, dean of academic development and services at CVTC, "but are mostly used by returning learners who may feel some anxiety about going back to school."

Adults can also get help preparing for their General Education Diploma (GED) or High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) tests. Classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on a drop-in basis.

"CVTC's adult programs are ever evolving," said Hassemer, "we continually assess the needs of the River Falls community and the surrounding area and respond to those needs."

To learn more about CVTC-River Falls Adult Education Services, call 715-425-3301.



CVTC adult education instructor Debbie Freitag, right, helps student Michele Delong-Reiter in the Adult Education Services lab at the CVTC River Falls campus.

## Winter tips and reminders

- Odd-even parking is in effect through March 31.
- Test your CO (carbon monoxide) detectors. According to the Centers for Disease Control, carbon monoxide poisoning is responsible for more than 50,000 emergency department visits and more than 400 deaths annually – most of them occurring in the winter months, with January being the deadliest.



- Be a “Hydrant Hero” and shovel around hydrants so Fire Department volunteers have easy access to water in case of a fire emergency.
- When shoveling, please include sidewalks in the right-of-way as well as pedestrian curbs/ramps on corner lots.
- During snowstorms, do not place garbage cans in the street or blacktop area in your alley.
- For winter heating tips, visit [rfmu.org/heatingtips](http://rfmu.org/heatingtips).

- For utility bill help during the winter months, visit [rfmu.org/billhelp](http://rfmu.org/billhelp).

### The skinny on salt

Dense use of salt can harm aquatic ecosystems and groundwater supply. To avoid overuse, follow these tips:

- Shovel early, before snow gets packed down.
- Sometimes salt on the sidewalk is thicker than it needs to be to be effective; a good rule of thumb is to salt so there are 3” between grains. A coffee mug of salt can treat 10 sidewalk squares.
- Wetting the salt when you put it down makes it work faster.
- When it’s below 15 degrees, salt doesn’t work; consider using sand.
- When you see stripes on the roads, it means City trucks are anti-icing and putting material down before a snowfall so the snow doesn’t stick and less salt is required.



## Dog license renewal time

Remember, all dogs five months or older in the City of River Falls must be licensed annually beginning Jan. 1. Renewal notices were mailed for all dogs licensed in 2019; new dog licenses can be purchased at City Hall, 222 Lewis St., River Falls. Note that a current rabies vaccination record is required to issue a license. Find an application and more information at [www.rfcity.org/DogLicense](http://www.rfcity.org/DogLicense).

## Free spring clean ups



### Electronics and Lighting Recycling Event

**April 18, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Public Works Garage  
950 Benson St., River Falls

Open to RFMU residential and business customers.

Please bring ID or utility bill to verify your address.

### Spring Drug Take-Back Day

**April 24, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.**

River Falls Police Department  
125 E. Elm St., River Falls

For what to bring/what not to bring, visit [rfcity.org/police](http://rfcity.org/police).

### Spring Clean Up Event

**May 11-16**

Monday-Friday, 4 p.m.-8 p.m.  
Saturday, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Household items only  
(no hazardous waste)

Public Works Garage  
950 Benson St., River Falls

Open to residential customers of River Falls Municipal Utilities.

Visit [www.rfcity.org/cleanup](http://www.rfcity.org/cleanup) for ID requirements and additional information.

## Connect with us!

### Frequently called numbers

**General information:** 715/425-0900

**Utility Department:** 715/425-0906

**Police Department:** 715/425-0909

**Public Library:** 715/425-0905

**Municipal Court:** 715/426-3429

**Garbage/Recycling:** 715/425-0900

**Parks and Recreation:** 715/425-0924  
715/426-3422 (cancellations)



### Follow us

City of River Falls  
Emergency Medical Services  
Fire Department  
Kleinpell Gallery  
Municipal Utilities  
Parks and Recreation  
Police Department  
Public Library



Check out our new videos!

[YouTube.com/user/cityofriverfalls](https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofriverfalls)

## City of River Falls

**Mission:** *To coordinate and deliver essential services and ensure a sustainable future.*

**Vision:** *A distinct, vibrant, and safe community with an abundance of nature and easy access to metropolitan amenities. A place where families, students, and businesses flourish.*

CitySource is published three times yearly and mailed to all River Falls residents. It is also available at [rfcity.org](http://rfcity.org).

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Designed by Designwrite Studios

Comments or questions? Send an email to [mzimmermann@rfcity.org](mailto:mzimmermann@rfcity.org).



222 Lewis Street  
River Falls, WI 54022

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River Falls, WI  
Permit #1

## POSTAL CUSTOMER



River Falls resident Dan Koecher and his newly-adopted friend, Asher, helped inaugurate the first phase of the City's "wayfinding" project when 30 signs were installed throughout the City in November. An additional 90 are scheduled to go up over the next seven years. The project ensures a consistent look and feel to directional, welcome, street, and facility signs to help visitors and new residents navigate in and around River Falls.