

Lego League team presents to city

NEAL PATTEN

Unified Newspaper Group

Each year, the FIRST Lego League launches a new annual challenge, intended to provide youth with experience in a real-world scientific area.

This year's theme is "city shapers," asking teams to answer the question "What if you could build a better world? Where would you begin?"

For six local competitors, their answer was downtown Verona.

On Monday, Nov. 11, Owen Welty, Will Wallace, Carter Pum, Jack Ross and Patrick Lindsey presented their vision to the Verona Common Council (Nathan Heil was not present) to fulfill part of their project.

The League is a partnership between the Lego company and the international nonprofit organization For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology or FIRST, which encourages



Photo submitted

The Destroyerbots team is made up of six boys from Savanna Oaks Middle School.

youth to build leadership and life skills in areas of science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM. The projects are scored on creativity, research, innovation and how well the team shares their ideas with a group of professionals.

"They wanted to fulfill the challenge requirement but also get legitimate feedback to see if it's a feasible idea," parent and coach

Errin Welty said of their presentation to the council.

The boys, all students at Savanna Oaks Middle School, presented a research proposal to improve the sustainability of the parking lot behind AJ's Pizzeria and Diner on Main Street. The boys estimated the cost of implementing their proposal to be \$222,301.

"They had to come up

with an innovative idea to address a local problem they found," Errin said. "The research project should create a more useful, more sustainable, or better experience to address a problem in the team's community."

Some of the problems they identified with the site included cracked pavement in the parking lot, lack of shade and excess heat, no place to sit or eat, and runoff.

"Our goal was to improve an underutilized space in our community. We chose the parking lot and blank wall behind AJ's pizza. We wanted to make it a more productive and appealing space while also making it environmentally friendly," Carter Pum said.

They proposed turning the blank wall on the backside of the building into a "living wall" which would use compost from food waste combined with rainwater to grow plants. They

talked to AJ's Pizzeria to calculate how much waste is generated by the business and estimated they could collect 21,996 pounds of compostable waste per year.

They also consulted with Upper Sugar River Watershed Association to understand runoff from nearby businesses into Sugar Creek.

They suggested replacing the concrete with more sustainable, permeable pavement to reduce runoff and flooding. One of these materials is TPR, made from plastic and glass, which is stronger than concrete or porcelain cement and takes less carbon to manufacture. They also suggested a material made from fly ash.

The council seemed impressed by the proposal from the six young men.

"I think it's excellent work, you guys have done an excellent job," Mayor Luke Diaz said in response

to the presentation. "I think this is how you end up with a good downtown — it's minor improvement on top of minor improvement. I'm super impressed by the research you've done, it's top notch work."

The team coordinated with the BadgerBOTS Robotics Education Center its first year but is now run independently, under the team name Destroyerbots, competing directly with other teams in the region in the FIRST Lego League challenge. This is the team's fourth year.

The FIRST Lego League's other annual challenge is the Robot Games, where teams participate in a series of robotics missions.

The Destroyerbots participated in the regional robotics tournament at Madison College on Nov. 16. They passed regionals and will appear in Waukesha Feb. 8 for sectionals.

VACT announces youth shows' casts

Around 400 kids will be performing

NEAL PATTEN

Unified Newspaper Group

Almost 400 area kids have been cast in the first four youth shows of 2020 for the Verona Area Community Theater.

VACT this month announced its casts for "Pajama Party," "Seussical KIDS," "Getting To Know... Footloose," and "Chicago."

From Thursday, April 2, to Saturday, April 4, 66 performers in kindergarten through first grade will perform in "Pajama Party!" a 20-minute musical about getting ready for bedtime. There are two casts, and each will perform two of the four April shows.

Being sold on the same ticket as "Pajama Party!" is "Seussical KIDS," a musical starring Horton the Elephant, the Cat in the Hat and other familiar Dr. Seuss characters played by 120 performers in grades 2-4.

As with "Pajama Party!" there are two casts for "Seussical KIDS," each performing two of the four productions.

Also from April 2-4, 100

performers in grades 5-8 will appear in "Getting To Know... Footloose," the famous musical adapted specifically for youth performers.

"Footloose" tells the story of a young man and his mother who move to a small rural conservative town from Chicago and the adjustment that follows for the young man.

There is only one cast performing all four "Footloose" shows.

One hundred actors in grades 9-12 will star in the high school edition of the hit musical "Chicago" from Thursday, April 16, to Saturday, April 18.

This adaptation of "Chicago" removes the sexual references and adult language of the regular production. It still tells the story of two jailed women on trial for murder who share not only the same lawyer but also share the same desire for fame and publicity.

Some actors in minor roles will appear in all four performances, while the lead roles will be split between two actors each performing in the roles twice.

For the cast lists for these four shows and to purchase tickets, visit vact.org.

Cheese raffle set for Jan. 5

Local youth athlete with Spina Bifida will benefit

NEAL PATTEN

Unified Newspaper Group

A cheese auction next weekend will help a Savanna Oaks Middle School seventh grader participate in high school track and field in spring 2020.

Andrew Cassiday has Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair. Paul's Party, a nonprofit that raises funds for kids with physical disabilities, is hosting the event, from 1-4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 5 at the Wisconsin Brewing Company, 1079 American Way.

Proceeds from the cheese raffle will help him purchase a special racing chair and a throwing stand for shot put.

The raffle is open to the public and there will be free food sponsored by Sugar River Pizza. Emmi Roth donated the cheese for the raffle.

Attendees may buy a paddle to participate in the raffle and can win cheese, drinks and T-shirts.

Both of Cassiday's brothers are runners, and he is looking forward to being able to compete in track and field at VAHS just as they did.



Photo submitted

Andrew Cassiday looks forward to participating in track in spring with a special racing wheelchair.

While he will compete in different races from those of other runners, he will still be on the same team.

Paul's Party helps youth with physical disabilities afford sled hockey equipment, racing wheelchairs, adaptive bikes, summer sports camps, and other

items that are more expensive for disabled kids than for able bodied kids. The nonprofit is in the midst of an initiative to find kids throughout the state to buy track gear for, so they can compete on their school teams.

Cassiday is currently a member of the Wisconsin Skeeters, a sled hockey

If You Go

What: Cheese raffle fundraiser for Andrew Cassiday

When: 1-4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 5

Where: Wisconsin Brewing Company, 1079 American Way

Info: paulsparty.org

team enabling youth and adults to play hockey sitting down in an adaptive sled. He also has played on the Mad City Badgers wheelchair basketball team.

Fitchburg resident Kathie Kiesau Natzke founded the charity in honor of her son, Paul, who also had Spina Bifida and died when he was 15 in August 2017. Paul, too, was a member of the Wisconsin Skeeters and the Verona High School track team.

"With some sports, you have to be on a team adapted for you, but the cool thing about the individual nature of track is that you can be a member of the regular team while competing in wheelchair events, which is an honor," Natzke said.

Neal Patten, Verona Community Reporter, can be contacted at neal.patten@wcinet.com.

Candidacy filing deadline for spring elections nears

KIMBERLY WETHAL

Unified Newspaper Group

Anyone interested in running for public office in local or regional races has until Jan. 7 to file candidacy papers.

For offices in the city and town of Verona, Verona Area School District

and Dane County Board of Supervisors, the deadline to turn in all required documents is 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7. There are a few townships throughout the county that instead rely on a caucus system to decide candidates for the Tuesday, April 7, spring election.

Most races require declaration of candidacy and signatures from residents who live in the respective district in order to file for the election. Other races require the candidate to file campaign and personal finance statements.

The majority of seats in the Verona area will have an

incumbent, with the exceptions of town Sup. Manfred Enburg and county Sup. Jason Knoll.

To confirm the requirements for each race, contact the clerks for the city, town and school district. For Dane County Board of Supervisors, visit clerk.countyofdane.com.

MONT REST INN
on the Mississippi River

The Special Occasion Place

GIVE SOMEONE A MEMORY FOR CHRISTMAS
A gift certificate good into 2021!

Special Packages from \$159 - \$998*
*And get up to \$100 in Special Extras

Choose from Thirteen Luxury Jacuzzi Suites

563-872-4220

www.montrest.com

300 SPRING STREET • BELLEVUE, IA 52031

Est. 1893

adno=129605
TripAdvisors 2018 Certificate of Excellence