

Unwanted holiday cheer

Man dressed as barmaid charged after entering woman's home

It's time for some leftovers from the past two holidays. First up is Halloween.

A north side woman called Eau Claire police just after 3 a.m. on Nov. 1 because she came home to find a screen from one of her windows in the front lawn bent in half.

The woman told the responding officer she went inside the residence and found a 25-year-old Altoona man coming out of her bedroom.

The woman said the man was wearing a German barmaid outfit and white flip-flops.

The man told the woman he let himself in because neither the woman nor her roommate was home.

The woman asked the man to leave. The woman told the officer she has known the man for six months but he didn't have permission to enter her residence.

The incident earned the man misdemeanor charges of criminal trespass and criminal damage to property. Next up is Thanksgiving.



Street Scenes
Dan Holtz

As a means of revenge, this woman probably had an extra helping of turkey on Thanksgiving Day.

A 32-year-old Augusta woman was driving on Highway 27, near Highway SD, just after noon three days before Thanksgiving.

The woman told an Eau Claire County Sheriff's deputy she was driving south when she struck a turkey.

After the collision, the woman's vehicle went off the right side of the road and struck a tree.

The woman was not injured.

Attention getter

An Eau Claire police officer was sent recently to the 400 block of Eau Claire Street, near the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, on a report of a potential armed robbery.

The officer met with an 18-year-old Eau Claire man, who said he walked eastbound from the Hope Gospel Mission parking lot, across Farwell Street and behind the library.

When the man said he was outside the library, a man wearing a ski mask, blue hoodie and blue jeans tapped him on the back and said, "Give me my drug money."

The man said the robber took his Walkman, shirt, brown shoes and sunglasses.

The officer asked the man where the robbery occurred, and the man led him to the north side of the library.

The officer saw two video surveillance cameras in that area and told the man the robbery would have been recorded.

The man then said he lied and indicated the robbery took place by the nearby state Department of Health and Family Services building on Gibson Street.

When the officer said he would check video surveillance by the state building, the man said the robbery occurred past the tree line.

About 30 minutes later the man finally admitted he made up the whole incident because he needed attention.

The attention-grabbing incident earned the man a misdemeanor charge of obstructing an officer.

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UW Regents add three new majors

By Leader-Telegram staff

The UW System Board of Regents on Friday added two new majors at UW-Stout and one at UW-Eau Claire.

The regents, meeting at UW-La Crosse, approved a new bachelor of science major in science education and one in technology and science education at UW-Stout.

They also approved an interdisciplinary materials science comprehensive major at UW-Eau Claire.

UW-Stout officials said the new majors meet the growing need for teachers in the areas of science and technology, as well as engineering and mathematics. The state Department of Public Instruction has said there is a critical shortage of teachers in general science and technology education.

"These two new majors fit perfectly with UW-Stout's mission and its designation as Wisconsin's polytechnic university," Provost Julie Furst-Bowe said. "We are reacting to a need we have heard from around the state that high schools need more teachers in the science and technology areas and teachers who are certified

in both areas."

The materials science major at UW-Eau Claire is the first new academic program as part of the state's \$3 million NanoStem initiative. About \$2 million of the NanoStem funds support materials science, the study of condensed matter (solids and liquids), at UW-Eau Claire.

UW-Eau Claire also has established the Institute for Advanced Nanoscience.

Materials science employment is expected to grow by 9 percent in the next eight years.

The regents also unanimously approved a proposal to spend \$18 million to improve the heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems of the Memorial Student Center at UW-Stout and to remodel parts of the building.

The improvements would be paid for with student fees, and no state taxpayer dollars are involved. The project needs approval of the state Legislature and Gov. Jim Doyle during the 2009-11 capital budget process.

Also about half of the square footage of the student center will be remodeled.

Investors fire back over foreclosure

By Alyssa Waters
Leader-Telegram staff

CHIPPEWA FALLS — In response to a foreclosure action filed against the Wisconsin Renaissance Faire in Chippewa County Court, fair investors Kevin and Shannon Balts allege they were essentially barred from seeing any documentation on the business after September 2007 and that they are not at fault for the poor business practices.

In November, A-1 Excavating of Bloomer filed the foreclosure notice against Stirling Bridge, also known as the Wisconsin Renaissance Faire, at 2303 Nelson Road in Chippewa Falls.

The Baltses, original co-investors of the fair with Shane and Lisa McVey, claim the Stirling Bridge board of directors failed to appropriately monitor the actions and business

judgment of the company's officers since September 2007. The couple also claims the McVey's, among other things, terminated the Balts' relationship with Stirling at that time.

Since then the McVey's and Sterling have refused to provide access to Stirling's financial records or business operations to the Baltses.

In the original civil suit filing, it details that owners of the Wisconsin Renaissance Faire owe more than \$845,000 on two loans to a Bloomer investment firm. Defendants in the suit include Shane and Lisa McVey of Eau Claire, Chad and Mary Kay McVey of Menomonie, the Baltses of Chippewa Falls and third-party litigants J.H. Larson Electrical of Hudson.

A-1 Excavating issued a \$700,000 loan to the Wisconsin Renaissance Faire on Oct. 25, 2006, then

issued another loan for \$160,000 on June 1, 2007.

J.H. Larson Electrical is a defendant because it may claim an interest in the mortgaged property because of a construction lien against Stirling Bridge in the amount of \$34,482, dating to Nov. 5, 2007.

Shane McVey is the Wisconsin Renaissance Faire president.

The organization bought the 121-acre lot, in the southwest corner of Chippewa Falls, from the city for \$1,000 an acre in 2005. The grounds now have nearly 40 permanent structures.

The fair has been open for three summers, with an annual five-week weekend run from mid-June to the end of July. The fenced-in village created a story line for fairgoers from the 1340s, with a focus on activities like jousting, stage acts, medieval

food, arts and crafts and costumed actors.

Earlier this year, McVey said the fair drew about 10,000 customers in 2006 and about twice that in 2007.

The fair's Web site, www.wirenaire.com, has not been updated since July.

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Town/Caves may house rare bats

from Page 1B

The property has a network of caves, with the largest over 1,000 feet deep.

The caves may be used by the northern long-eared bat, a rare species in Wisconsin, said Britta Kelly, conservation coordinator for the land trust. They don't know this for sure, but the rare bats are known to use a cave system nearby, Kelly said.

Department of Natural Resources bat expert Dave Redell said he hoped to have a look at the caves this winter.

Some Wisconsin bats migrate in winter and some hibernate in caves, he said. The ones that use caves have specific requirements: If the cave is too cold they will freeze, if it's too warm their metabolism will be too high and they will starve before winter ends, he said.

Bats will come from a great distance to use a cave that has the right temperature and humidity.

"Hibernation sites are kind of a limiting resource. There's not a large abundance of these places throughout the state," he said.

The caves on the Freiberg property could be a winter home for four species of bat, Redell said.

Barbara Freiberg said if a bat expert wants

to explore the caves that's fine, but she's not interested.

"You have to crawl on your belly to get in there. There's no way I'm doing that," she said.

A group from UW-River Falls mapped some of the cave network and found the caves have some larger rooms once you get inside, Barbara Freiberg said.

A channel that now is the headwaters of Cady Creek was a dry ravine until the Eau Galle River was dammed at Spring Valley in the 1960s to form Lake George, the Freibergs said.

"It was a dry creek bed for years and years. When they made the dam in Spring Valley it must have raised to the water table, and it started flowing again," she said.

The creek now originates upstream from their property but picks up some spring flow through their land.

After extensive habitat work, Cady is one of the better wild brook trout creeks in west-central Wisconsin. The stream was shallow and mud-bottomed with steep, eroding banks.

Now, the banks have been sloped, the stream runs narrower and deeper over beds of gravel and the trout population has gone from about 300 per mile to 7,000 per mile.

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