

# BREMER COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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Waverly, Iowa

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

## At inauguration, Wartburg's first female president articulates vision



Dr. Neiduski delivers her speech to the audience at Neumann Auditorium.

BY ROBERT LYNCH  
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Wartburg College inaugurated its first female President on Friday, Oct. 14 in a ceremony at Neumann Auditorium as part of Wartburg's Homecoming and Family Week celebrations.

Dr. Rebecca Neiduski, who has been named the college's 18th President, previously served as the dean of the School of Health Science at Elon University. As a hand therapist, Neiduski has received the Nathalie Barr Lectureship Award and the Paull Brand Award for Professional Excellence from the American Society of Hand Therapists. She is recognized as an international expert in flexor tendon rehabilitation, and has authored several peer-review publications and book chapters on the subject.

The ceremony began with live music, as talented Wartburg profes-

See WARTBURG, A2



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## Vines & Steins to fundraise for Waverly Chamber Oct. 20 at WAVP



BY ANELIA K. DIMITROVA /EDITORCFE@GMAIL.COM

Celina Peerman, of the Peerman Group, enjoys time with participants in last year's event.

BY WAVERLY NEWSPAPERS STAFF

With Oktoberfest in the rearview mirror, Waverly has another joyful October celebration to welcome before the winter sets in.

Vine & Steins is a fundraiser for the Waverly Chamber of Commerce.

See CHAMBER, A3

## Waverly hosts inaugural youth triathlon



With bubbles floating around him, a local athlete finishes the 800-meter run portion of the triathlon.

Waverly hosted its first youth triathlon when the inaugural TriByLittleKnight triathlon took place on the Wartburg College campus on Oct. 9.

See TRIATHLON, A3

## A GENUINE JUDGE

### District Associate Judge Peter Newell is on the Nov. 8 ballot

BY ANELIA K. DIMITROVA

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Judges come and go in Iowa history, but the decisions they write have enduring power which is ultimately reflected in the lives of everyday people.

An acute awareness of that impact – on institutions, culture and history – through the prism of individual lives has been one of the guiding principles for District Associate Judge Peter Newell ever since he donned the robe in 1996.

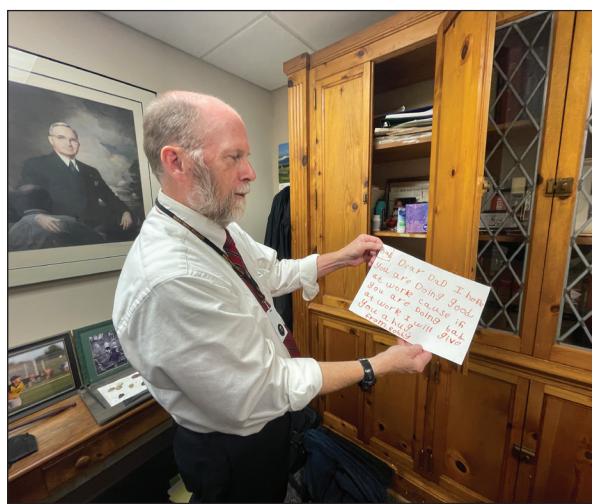
He is standing for retention on the Nov. 8 ballot, along with Iowa Supreme Court justices Dana Oxley and Matthew McDermott, and Iowa Court of Appeals judges Paul B. Ahlers and Gina Badding.

Since 1962, when a constitutional amendment was approved by the voters to use a merit selection system, Iowa judges have been standing for retention, which means that in order to serve the next term, they need to receive a majority of the votes. Among other considerations, the process is believed to curb the influence of political parties, and focus on professional qualifications of Iowa judges, giving the final say to the voters.

For Newell, this will be the sixth time he will be standing for retention. His name appeared for the first time on the ballot in 1996. In the beginning of his career as a judge, which started in 1995, the retention selection was for four-year terms for district court judges. That law was amended in 2003 and now the duration of the term is six years.

**Career Highlights:**

Prior to coming to the Second Judicial District, where Bremer County falls, Newell worked an assistant county at-



BY ANELIA K. DIMITROVA /EDITORCFE@GMAIL.COM

Above: Judge Peter Newell poses for a picture in the hallway behind the courtroom on the second floor of the Bremer County Courthouse on a recent Friday. Left: Judge Newell's office is a reflection of his life outside the courthouse. It is filled with drawings from his children and family photos.

torney at the Black Hawk County Attorney's Office, before relocating his family to Waverly.

In the past 26 years on the bench, he has grown into the role and evolved with the changes in the law

and technology, among others. In all that time, Newell has stayed true to his principles in his practice – respecting the humanity of all who come before him and apply-

See JUDGE, A3



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# A GENUINE JUDGE

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ing the law to the facts with rigor.

He is known to his peers as soft-spoken and considerate in the courtroom and outside of it. Many call him “genuine.” That term captures the authenticity of his character and the way he fulfills his duties on the bench and in the community.

His office is a reflection of his personality.

And it is a combination of courthouse history and personal mementos.

The cabinets along the wall there, for instance, were salvaged after the renovation of the courthouse and Newell asked that they be put in his new office as a nod to history but also out of respect for the work of the craftsmen who created them.

The left wall in his office is adorned with his diplomas as is customary in a professional's office, but the most notable part of the space are the loving notes from his children, and crayoned pictures they had created on various notable occasions years ago. Newell's four children are now grown adults, Ella is a lawyer in Des Moines; Robby is a photojournalist with the ABC affiliate in Madison, Wisconsin; Andy works at the Waverly hospital while contemplating graduate school and Malcolm is a senior at Wartburg College, also headed for graduate school.

But even though time has marched on, Newell, in his role as a dad, cannot bring himself to take down some of these heartwarming tokens. In fact, he has more of them inside the cabinets.

“Dear Dad,” one handwritten and signed by Robby reads, “I hope you are doing good at work cause if you are doing bad at work, I will give you a hug.”

Newell took a moment to reread the note, and as he looked at the labored writing, his emotions overcame him briefly, before he put the note back in the cabinet.

Behind his desk is a framed print of Harry Truman, whose role in world politics Newell deeply ad-



BY ANELIA K. DIMITROVA / EDITORCF@GMAIL.COM

**Above: In his office, Judge Newell poses for a photo before the beginning of the Friday afternoon courtroom duties. Right: The robe is on and Judge Newell is ready for the Friday afternoon cases.**

mires.

A gavel, a universal symbol of justice, is sitting on a small table behind Newell's desk, but it is more of a prop than a working tool.

“I can only remember using it once in a juvenile proceeding when the juvenile asked me to use it, so I did,” Newell said.

The son of a dairy farmer and an English teacher, Newell was born in Yale, Michigan. He earned a bachelor's degree from Western Illinois University in 1984, and his plan was to become a history teacher, but on a friend's advice, Newell took the law exam and earned a scholarship to Drake University Law School. He graduated in 1987 and in shot order took a job in Waterloo at the County Attorney's Office.

Today, his dedication to the profession is measured by the rankings issued by the Iowa Bar Association, which were released recently.

In all the categories, which include knowledge of the law, temperament and demeanor, attentiveness to arguments and testimony, among many others, all of his scores are over 4 on a 5-point scale. Of the 67 respondents, all of whom are members of the Iowa



Bar Association, 91% agreed that Newell should be retained. In all his time on the bench, Newell has helped make Iowa judicial history and witnessed changes including electronic filing, which was implemented eight years ago.

The result, he said, was more efficiency for the process, as the parties now spend less time in the courtroom and the accessibility of the documents speeds up the workflow.

However, this means that judges spend less time with attorneys, a development Newell is nostalgic about.

“I miss the contact I used to have,” he said.

During the pandemic, the judge, along with his peers in the judicial branch, learned how to conduct court online, and then, how to

work with the court staff and the public as the restrictions began to ease.

He said he is glad that annual judicial conferences have resumed and he was able to reconnect with colleagues from across the state this year in person as being a part of a judicial branch community is an important professional bond for him.

**Job duties:**

As a district associate judge, Newell handles criminal cases in Bremer, Butler, Franklin and Floyd counties. He is also a juvenile judge in Bremer, Butler and Franklin, as directed by Chief Judge James Drew, of the Second Judicial District.

Even though Newell is deep into his career journey, he recognizes the influence and role modeling of

judges before him, like Paul Riffel who retired in 2007.

“The longer I have been at this, the wiser he looks,” Newell jokes of his mentor, Riffel.

A dutiful coach of the mock trial team at the Waverly-Shell Rock School District for over two decades, more recently, Newell is sharing some of his accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the law with students at Wartburg College, where he and his wife, Magistrate Karen Thalacker, teach.

In teaching, as in life, he does not sweat the small stuff. An eloquent storyteller, he explains how he was worn the same robe for 27 years, and quips that when he first started, he realized that all the robes in the courthouse were for tall judges, like Riffel.

One time, Newell put on Judge Riffel's robe.

“When I put it on, it hit me, the sleeves were hanging off, down past my fingertips,” he laughed. “They had big guy robes, but they needed little guy robes.”

Once he got his own robe, properly sized, Judge Newell held onto it. He never wanted it replaced, not even when the zipper broke. In fact, he didn't even bother to object to the one he wears in Floyd County, which has the wrong middle initial on the back.

“Judges go, but robes stay,” he said. “I am focused on the people I work with. The dedicated people who are social workers, attorneys, law enforcement, everyone has a harder job than me.”

“What I love about my job is being able to help people. Sometimes someone comes up to me at Walmart and says, ‘You helped me turn my life around.’”

Newell always responds to such praises with, “You did the work and I am very happy for you.”

He says that when that happens, if he is in the company of others, they usually step away, so the judge can chat a bit with the person who has been through turbulent times.

“It's really nice to hear when someone has turned their life around,” Newell said. “And then the adoptions. They are the best, they are my favorite part of the job.”

## Waverly hosts inaugural youth triathlon

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The race, which featured kids aged 5 to 16, included a 50-yard swim in The W's indoor pool, a 2-mile bike ride around the Wartburg campus, which

takes two loops, and an 800-meter run inside Walston-Hoover Stadium, Wartburg's football field.

The event featured 75 participants, and was made possible by the work of 62 volunteers.

This year's inaugural triathlon was

designed to be an optimal experience for both the kids and spectators, with the goal to promote enthusiasm for the sport, as the children were not chip-timed. Participants received an athlete bag, a shirt, a swim cap, and a finisher medal.



JULIE DREWES PHOTOS

**Above: The 50-yard swimming portion of the youth triathlon takes place in The W's indoor pool. Right: A local participant flexes his muscles at the annual TriByLittleKnight triathlon. Below: Youth athletes bike two loops around Wartburg's campus for the two mile bike ride portion of the triathlon.**



## Vines & Steins to fundraise for Waverly Chamber Oct. 20 at WAVP

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Commerce and will take place from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Waverly Area Veterans Post. The Peerman Group, headed by Waverly's Celina Peerman, is the headline sponsor for the event for a second year in a row.

Founded in 1937, the Waverly Chamber of Commerce has been an important driving force for economic development in the town and the area.

Vines & Steins is a great way to celebrate the accomplishments, network with peers and reconnect with colleagues and neighbors.

This year's wine list will feature 11 wine and beer vendors, appetizers and a silent auction.

Craze Home Brewers, Bremer Brewing Company, Hy-Vee Wine & Spirits, Second State Brewing Co., Textile Brewing, United Beverage and Fareway are among the vendors.

Tiffany Schrage, the Chamber's Tourism & Special Events Director, said that auction has “something for everyone” with items from local donors such as Rada Manufacturing, Thompson Shoes, Wartburg College, Sasquatch Jacks.

She added that among the items are also non-local experience items, such as a weekend in St. Louis, the Children's Museum, Autographed sports memorabilia and more.

Tickets will be available at the Waverly Chamber of Commerce office for a \$25 free will donation.



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