



PICKLEBALL

Lions break ground on 4 pickleball courts, Page 8



WRESTLING

Youth wrestlers earn medals at 3 contests, Page 9



GYMNASTICS

WB gymnast, 15, selected for Team USA, Page 10

WEST BRANCH TIMES

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West Branch hardest hit by hail storm

Golf ball to baseball-sized hailstones smash windows, rooftops

By Gregory R. Norfleet
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Wait just a second — is that really one piece of hail or did you pick up a bunch and mash them together like a snowball?

According to National Weather Service meteorologist Timothy Gunkel, who



Submitted by Samantha SammieRose



Submitted by Alicia Lane Gray



Submitted by Brody Johnston

reviewed reader-submitted hail photos on the West Branch Times' Facebook page: They're real.

And West Branch saw some of the area's biggest hailstones — some as big as baseballs — in the March 10 storm that swept through southeast Iowa.

"A lot of them do look legit and they probably are," Gunkel said. "That can happen in the clouds, bump-

ing together and aggregating together. It's possible a lot or many (are real)."

And those big pieces, at least one measuring more than five inches across, prompted dozens of phone calls to local insurance agencies.

Bigger storms with stronger, tree-toppling winds will cause far more damage than

Hail Page 2



Hailstones significantly damaged the West Branch High School greenhouse roof on March 10. The school district alerted an insurance adjuster to ask for a repair estimate. Gregory R. Norfleet/West Branch Times

Hail significantly damages 45-year-old HS greenhouse

Super wonders if insurance will repair or replace building

By Gregory R. Norfleet
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There's a lot of blue sky showing through the greenhouse roof.

The March 10 hailstorm shredded the arching shingles of West Branch High School's greenhouse, leaving hundreds of holes of various sizes in the structure.

"Our greenhouse is basically uninhabitable now because of the damage," Superintendent Marty Jimmerson said.

An insurance adjuster will review the damage and generate an estimate for repairs, but the superintendent said ice pellets sidelined FFA plans to use

the building after spring break.

"We're looking for alternative places," he said.

While chunks of ice rained down on the West Branch area for nearly half an hour, the "biggest impact" on school property was on the greenhouse, the superintendent said.

Residents posted pictures of large hailstones on the West Branch Times' Facebook page, some measuring four or five inches across.

In a 2019 report, "Variations in the Free-Fall Velocities of Hail," engineer Jim Koontz wrote that a 1-inch piece of hail would strike a roof with just under one foot pound

of impact, while a three-inch hailstone strikes with about 120 foot pounds. In other words, the smaller hailstone would feel like dropping a baseball three feet, and the larger stone would feel like dropping a 10-pound bowling ball 12 feet.

When the greenhouse damage estimate comes in, the Board of Education will need to consider whether the insurance money will make it feasible to replace or repair the building.

"That's definitely something we'll be looking at," Jimmerson said. "It's really dependent on what we hear from insurance."

In October 2024, a school Greenhouse

Steering Committee estimated replacing the 45-year-old building at \$800,000. The committee reported a worn-out foundation, an inoperable sprinkler system, and other concerns.

The FFA hosts an annual fundraiser by selling plants, vegetables, and flowers grown in the facility.

At the time, Jimmerson said the "sticker shock" made replacement difficult and the committee considered raising money through private donations and possible grant funding.

After last week's storm, the superintendent noted

Greenhouse Page 8

Tisinger hits 1M miles of safe driving

Truck driver hits milestone after 17 years hauling materials

By Gregory R. Norfleet
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Imagine that:

1. There's a prominent sign on the wall where you work: "3,396 days without an OSHA-recordable injury," and,

2. Two deer dart out in front of your truck while you are on your way to receive an award for 1 million miles and 17 years of safe driving.

It happened to Matt Tisinger.

"Just this morning I had to slam on the brakes to miss a couple of deer," he said.

Thanks to his quick reflexes, he rolled into the Wausau Supply Co. warehouse lot just after noon on Feb. 19 without a scratch on a temporary truck.

Wait ... temporary?

Wausau hoped to surprise him with the lunch-time honor, so coworkers made up an excuse to get him to leave his main truck behind. But Tisinger seemed suspicious, and they assumed he knew something was up.

While Tisinger drove his route delivering building materials, Wausau had Tisinger's name added to the doors on his main set of wheels.

And, just behind the doors, they placed a large decal reading, "1,000,000 SAFE MILES DRIVEN" across the mountain from the company's logo.

When Tisinger pulled

in behind the warehouse around lunchtime, he saw his supervisor running a grill, waving and smiling at him. Inside, the staff laid out tables next to his newly adorned cab and a nice spread of all kinds of picnic-style food.

"He's a great employee who is willing to help out with whatever we need," Senior Distribution Manager Tom Donovan said.

Before sitting down to a meal, Matt's wife, Heather, and other family members stepped out of a side office to see him honored.

"Our drivers are the face of the company," Logistics Director Brian Vandiver said. "To have somebody as dedicated as Matt is outstanding. He's a huge value to the company."

"It's quite an accomplishment," Tisinger said. "I wasn't sure that I'd get there, actually. (But) after you think about it, it doesn't take much to add up."

Seventeen years of driving isn't much?

"Well," he said, listing off some of the farther routes he's taken, "it's a nice company to work for."

While the company recognizes drivers hitting the 1-million-mile mark, by the time they organized this particular recognition, Tisinger already passed 1.2 million miles.

He worked for Wausau for seven years, then left,

Tisinger Page 2

J-Term: From dancing to tin-foil hats

Middle school pupils host Showcase before spring break

By Gregory R. Norfleet
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They want to survive. They want to solve. They want to sing.

West Branch Middle School on Friday hosted their annual J-Term

Showcase to display much of what they learned and accomplished from March 5-13.

In Jacqui Hart's fifth-grade class, the "It's a Mystery" course taught how to use DNA and fingerprints to find clues at a

crime scene.

Fifth-grader Christian Brown said they pulled DNA off a dented trailer in their mystery scenario.

"We learned how to trace things to see who did the crime," he said.

Fifth-grader Caleb

Sariana said he learned the difference between double-loop, ulnar loop, and accidental whorl fingerprints.

"Certain types of fingerprints are unique," he said, which allows comparisons to suspect finger-

prints.

In Anthony Tometz's math and science classroom, pupils engaged in the "Survival of the Fittest" course.

Seventh-grader Allen Mast said the course taught how to survive both outdoors and indoors.

Showcase Page 7

