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news
BRIEFS

Rock County
Forbeck appointed judge: Gov. Jim Doyle appointed Kenneth Forbeck of Beloit to a Rock County Circuit Court judgeship Nov. 21. "Kenneth brings a wealth of legal expertise and experience to the bench and I know he will serve the people of Rock County well," Doyle said. Forbeck has been an attorney at Forbeck, Elliott & Monahan in Beloit for the past 34 years, and previously worked in the Rock County District Attorney's Office. He is active in the Statelyne Boys and Girls Club, the Roy Chapman Andrews Society, Beloit 2020 and serves as vice president of the Beloit Public Library Board of Trustees. "I intend to undertake this responsibility and to serve the citizens of Rock County with the fairness, the integrity and the compassion required of the position," Forbeck said. He will fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Judge John Roethe.

County board sessions: Rock County will conduct two information sessions for people interested in serving on the county board. The sessions will take place at 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Monday in the Courthouse Conference Center on the second floor of the Rock County Courthouse, located at 51 S. Main St., Janesville. The purpose is to provide information about the responsibilities of board supervisors. All 29 seats on the board will be up for election in April 2008. Call (608) 757-5510 for more information.

LOOK IT UP

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COVER STORY

SHE'S GOT THE WRITE STUFF

Beloit children's author shares the secrets of her success

BY LYNN VOLLBRECHT
STAFF WRITER

BELOIT — Beloit newcomer Brenda McGrath made a splash recently when she released the first books of her two new children's series, and the author, illustrator and single mother of four says she is far from finished.

"This is just the beginning of a major whirlwind," said McGrath, who sold 54 books in an hour this month at a Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event at Turtle Creek Bookstore.

To say that McGrath's work is in demand is an understatement.

"We're working on getting a broader base of her titles," said Peter Fronk, the bookstore's manager. "She's got a lot going for her right now — really up and coming."

McGrath, a native of Wheaton, Ill., currently is working on two series, "All Around Our World With Our Little Friends," which features animal characters addressing common childhood fears, like being afraid of the dark, or issues like learning to share; and "Chase Ryan's Adventures," which are stories about a young boy traveling the world with his mother. The books in the "Chase Ryan" series come with flashcards

Please see Author, page 4



LYNN VOLLBRECHT/STAFF
Author and illustrator Brenda McGrath works on a colored-pencil illustration of Skipper, the featured character in her upcoming book "Skipper the Wise Quacker - What?!" a children's book about a wise-cracking duck from her "All Around Our World With Our Little Friends" series.

Free Educational Series

Join healthcare professionals in the hospital's auditorium for useful information about today's health issues for the whole family. For special accommodations, please call (608) 364-5637.



Now You're Alone... What to Do Financially

Bonnie Wetter, Vice President, Marshall and Ilsley Trust Company
Tues., December 11 • 1:30-2:30 p.m. or 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Whether it's through divorce or death, people need good advice when they find themselves alone. Join Bonnie Wetter for this informative presentation addressing how to deal with overcoming the planning and financial hurdles ahead: pensions, wills, death

benefits, investments, social security and more. In most cases one spouse has managed the couple's financial matters and the other is left unprepared. Knowledge can help you maintain your independence. Getting organized and getting good advice is key.



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YOUR TURN

Question: With the odds of a recession increasing, according to economists, do you intend to change your shopping habits this Christmas season?

Chris Schreier
Beloit



"Not really. I am a college student so I don't have a lot of money anyway, but I intend to still buy for my family."

Gayle Kobelt
Beloit



"With the price of everything going up lately, I try to find more sale items and good deals."

George Crahill
Rockton



"No I don't. I have been hearing for years how this country is heading toward a recession and so far it hasn't happened. Until it actually happens, I am not going to change anything."

Kyle Ostic
Beloit



"No. I only buy what I can afford anyway, so it won't really affect my spending habits this holiday season."

Sue Mueller
Beloit



"I already have. Ever since the price of gas has gone up, I have been a little more thrifty with my money because I have less of it."

'WORTH' QUOTING

"The problem with winter sports is that — follow me closely here — they generally take place in winter."

— Humorist Dave Barry

WEB POLLS

To vote in Stateline News Web polls, go to:

www.statelinenews.com

The Stateline News is ... People You Know

Name: Philip Owens Jr.
Age: 70

Hometown/residence: I was born and raised in Portage and live in Beloit.

Occupation/civic memberships: Rock County supervisor for District 16 representing Beloit Wards 8, 9 and 10. I serve on the General Services and Education, Veterans and Aging committees. I am retired from the Armed Forces after serving 14 years in the Army and 18 years in the Navy. I am currently on the board of directors for Southern Wisconsin AirFest, past president of the Beloit

Evening Lions Club, former first vice of the Beloit American Legion, and former president of the Wisconsin Aviation Academy.

Family: Wife Evlynn, sons Philip III, Leif Eric, Kirk and daughter Ann Marie.

Favorite food: Steak.

Favorite music: I like just about anything other than hard rock and rap. I grew up on music.

Favorite movies: The "Star Wars" series.

Favorite books: Anything by Edmond Bordeaux Szekely.

Favorite vacation place: Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.

In my spare time I: Bowl and am currently building a four-person passenger plane.

I think the most important issue in the Rock County area is: There are a lot of important issues right now. One is coming up with a way to solve the current Rock County Jail issue.

If I could change one thing: I would change people's attitudes towards the environment. We need to take care of the planet we live on.

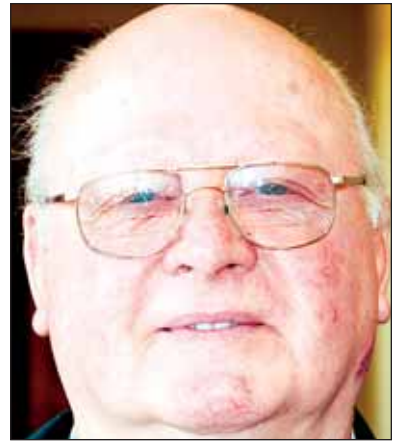
Peak experience: Receiving my submarine qualification.

Pit experience: Was when my son was in a bad car accident.

If I could sit down to supper with anyone, living, dead or fictional? Nikola Tesla.

Most people don't know I: Was a professional water skier for four years for Tommy Bartlett.

I can't stand: Our two major political parties. They are more



PHILIP OWENS JR.

interested in themselves than the people.

I wish I knew how to: Play the piano.

Motto, inspiration or favorite quote: Anything the human mind can conceive and believe, the human mind can achieve.

AUTHOR

Continued from page 1

featuring foreign words and phrases, and the books of "All Around Our World With Our Little Friends" come with audio recordings.

In December, she and her staff will move into studio space in the Beloit Fine Arts Incubator, and within the next several years she hopes to have an animator working with her in Beloit.

McGrath, who has been writing for the last 20 years, began having some of her books professionally animated this spring. She was thrilled.

"It's been the most exciting thing for me," she said. "It's been my dream to do it." She's currently in negotiations regarding the animated versions of her work.

"I felt like I was ready to explore that avenue," she explained. "I've been approached by many different companies, networks, and I've approached them myself."

She works with an animator from Chicago — the director of animation for a college there.

"He had me send him some literature, and he said he'd love to work with me," she said.

That process is time-consuming; only one of her books, "Ding Bat," is completely animated thus far. Creating a standard episode of an average animated cartoon can take 18 months. Negotiating with networks to put her work on the air could take years, she said.

McGrath moved to Beloit two years ago, in part because of fond

memories of vacationing in Wisconsin as a young woman, and also for a change of pace.

"It was just beautiful," she recalled. "I always wanted to move up north. I always wanted to move to Wisconsin."

In Beloit, McGrath believes she has found the artistic and business support network she needs to make her publishing company, All Around Our World, Inc., successful.

"My plan is to stay here," she said. "I love it here too much."

As for her work, drawing came before writing. Drawing has been a lifelong comfort and escape, she said. She even started to study architectural drawing in college in hopes of someday building her own house. That changed, though, as the birth of her eldest daughter, inspired her to begin writing stories for children.

"I had her when I was very young," McGrath said. "We'd draw pictures together, and I'd tell her little stories about the picture. That's what inspired me to get going with it."

In her 20s, McGrath self-published nine books, but became bogged down trying to juggle a family, a business and health problems.

"While I was trying to create, I was trying to do the sales, the marketing," she said. It eventually became too much, and she went back to other jobs in order to support her family. In order to develop her self-taught business acumen, she strived to reach managerial positions in any job that she had, and eventually got back into the creative scene by selling artwork in Chicago galleries.

BRENDA MCGRATH



UPCOMING EVENTS:

■ McGrath will present her work at several upcoming events, including a first-ever pajama party at Turtle Creek Bookstore from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 14. The store is located at 444 E. Grand Ave., Beloit.

Information: (608) 363 2375 or Beloit.bkstore.com

■ She also will be appearing at the Children of Beloit International Film Festival, sponsored by Culver's, which will provide food and busing for an All Around Our World sing-along, reading and book signing. The event is from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Jan. 19 at the Rotary River Center. It's for children in pre-school through sixth-grade

■ A preview of the animated version of author Brenda McGrath's work is available at: <http://allaroundourworldinc.com/series.htm>

Her children, ranging in age from 5 to 20, are her inspiration, and they in turn have a deep appreciation of their mother's work.

"She sat at that drawing table for hours on end creating the most beautiful pictures I'd ever seen to sell for us to survive," said Amanda, 20, McGrath's oldest daughter. "I remember how hard it was for her to let some of the pictures go. But now, she places them all in her books, so she will have them forever."

Melissa, 14, also is proud of her mother's creativity and work ethic.

"She works so hard. It excites me when people ask, 'Oh, your mother wrote and illustrated that book?!' I'm so proud of all that she has done for us," Melissa said.

While their have been obstacles in the path to her current success, McGrath is pressing onward, knowing that hard work now will continue to pay off. She is developing a 10-year business plan, and

tries to offer her children the support she lacked when trying to get her work off the ground.

"Are you crazy? I heard a lot of that," she said of the early days.

As her successes multiply, however, she remains focused on her children.

"I don't want to be rich and famous," she said. "I want my kids to be happy."

And they are.

"I know my mom went through a lot to get where she is now, and I have seen the pain and sacrifices she made to raise us all as a single mother," Amanda McGrath said. "I'm so proud of her."

The hard work has been worth it, her mother said.

"It's been a long road," Brenda McGrath said. "Anybody who has a vision, there is no reason that they can't conquer that dream. I think when people work very hard, it does pay off one way or another, no matter how much sweat and tears. Even if it takes 10 years."



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