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Success STAFF

**General Manager/
Executive Editor**
Richard Roesgen

Managing Editor
Michael Mentzer

Copy Editor
Gary Clausius

Contributing Writers
Dorothy Bliskey, Karla Kremer
Breister, Harley Buchholz, Gloria
Hafemeister, Colleen Kottke,
Russell Plummer, Lee Marie
Reinsch, Laurie Rittger, Michael
Rogers, Sharon Roznik,
Joann Schrauth, Heather Stanek,
Monica Walk, Doug Whiteley

Photographers
Aileen Andrews, Harley
Buchholz, Patrick Flood, Gloria
Hafemeister, Anna Kirkland,
Joann Schrauth

Advertising Director
Lisa O'Halloran

Advertising Manager
Jen Memmel

Circulation Director
Greg Fyvie

THE REPORTER
fdireporter.com

Conversation Inspiring Change.

P.O. Box 630
Fond du Lac, WI 54606-0630
Phone: (800)822-4600 | 1.800.261.7323
FAX: (800)822-5388
www.fdireporter.com

GANNETT
Wisconsin Media

Success makes its presence known in how we feel

MICHAEL MENTZER
Managing Editor | The Reporter



The Reporter's annual autumn Success section has become a tradition.

This marks the seventh annual Success venture featuring stories from Fond du Lac, Dodge and Calumet counties, and beyond. Stories also include former local residents who have achieved success in a variety of ways across the country.

In this section, there is a story about the Ketterhagen "kids," a brother and a sister from Fond du Lac who are experiencing their measure of success—one on the East Coast, the other on the West Coast. But Luke and Anna Ketterhagen have a special regard for the heartland because Fond du Lac remains their "home" and this is where their parents chose to raise a family.

The section has been popular since it made its debut as a somewhat hastily designed "experiment" in 2006.

Success has received several newspaper and advertising awards over the years from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association in its annual Better Newspaper Contest.

Striking a Chord

The special section has struck a chord with online and print readers and has sparked numerous comments and suggestions for future Success sections.

There is no shortage of good people, organizations and businesses to be featured.

In its first years, someone on staff voiced concern that we faced the prospect of running out of good ideas for stories.

That has never been an issue. In fact, each Success section has been greeted with suggestions for other stories for the next year. The list has multiplied with ideas over time.

Ideas trickle in throughout the year from readers; and staff writers, correspondents and editors squirrel away ideas and thoughts for future Success reference.

It's been apparent since Day 1 that people enjoy reading upbeat, uplifting stories about their friends, neighbors, fellow citizens, civic groups and businesses.

Success provides a balance to other news items—the shocking, deflating, sometimes depressing stories that are always a part of the news.

Reflection of Community

But a true reflection of a community can never be all "bad" or all "good" news. The reality of yearlong coverage can be found in the balance of events, good or bad, that occur in a community.

As noted in a Success section from a previous year, there is no shortage of positive, upbeat, "successful" people in our little corner of the world. The most difficult part at times is convincing people that they do indeed have interesting and inspirational stories to tell.

It's important that they share their stories for the overall common good.

This collection of stories isn't about materialistic gain or awards. It's much more about community service, volunteerism, overcoming challenges, building a community, appreciating family, providing a service, sharing a legacy.

Two stories struck a particularly responsive chord with me this time around. Both stories focus on military veterans—one from the ongoing war in Afghanistan; the other from the war in Vietnam more than 40 years ago.

Josh Wigo, formerly of Wauscousta, is featured on the cover and as the first story in this section. He lost both legs below his knees in a roadside explosion in Afghanistan.

Richard Vander Velde of the Mount Calvary area anchors the center spread of the section. He carries injuries and scars of another kind from his stint in Vietnam.

Both have battled back. Their stories are inspiring.

They embody a measure of success that provides the theme of this annual undertaking.

on the cover... The main photo on the cover highlights Josh Wigo of Wauscousta as he sits on a bench outside of the gym of his old high school, Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac. Wigo has excelled in the two years since losing his legs in a blast in Afghanistan. He was selected for the elite Washington Nationals Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team. The team travels the country playing games against able bodied teams of police, firefighters, military members and celebrities. Others shown on the cover are, top row, from left, Corrie Ramthun, owner of Kettle Moraine Natural Landscaping near Dundee; Dave Rose of Eden, an expert in bovine genetics; and Jan White, owner of Jan's Optical in Waupun; second row, Dean Wild of Brownsville, writer of horror stories; and Karen Kalsbeek of Fond du Lac, organizer of the Books Between Bites program; third row, opera singer and medical student Elizabeth Hillebrand, formerly of Fond du Lac and now of Brooklyn, N.Y.; and Chuck and Kathy Wilke of the Campbellport area, carver and watercolor artist respectively; and bottom row, Sister Stella Storch of Fond du Lac, advocate for justice, peace and ecology; and Richard Vander Velde of the Mount Calvary area, a Vietnam veteran who strives to help modern-day veterans as they return home.