



Midvale Messenger

January-February 2026

Calendar:

January 3: Friends of Sequoia Library Bookshop Sale, Market Square, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

January 17: Friends of Sequoia Library Bookshop Sale, Market Square, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

January 27: MHCA Board Meeting, Sequoia Library and via Zoom, 6 p.m.

February 7: Friends of Sequoia Library Bookshop Sale, Market Square, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

February 24: MHCA Board Meeting, Sequoia Library and via Zoom, 6 p.m.

February 28: Sustainability Share Fair, Sequoia Library Rooms A & B, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

March 7: Friends of Sequoia Library Bookshop Sale, Market Square, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

MIDVALE MESSENGER

The *Midvale Messenger* is published six times a year by the Midvale Heights

Community Association. Copy deadlines are the 15th of February, April, June, August, October, and December.

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President's Message

Resolve to Be a Great Neighbor

By Joy Cardin

President of the Midvale Heights Community Association

(See Vice President Troy Thiel's message on page 3.)

If you're like me, you try to usher in some new healthy habits and let go of some bad ones with the start of each new year. My resolutions include some of the old standards - I want to eat better, exercise more, read more books, and check off some travel list destinations in 2026. But I also plan to expand my resolutions to address the civic health of my community, the state of Wisconsin and beyond. I hope you will join me by volunteering for a cause you believe in, by donating to a need in the community, and by becoming a member of group that is trying to make a difference. You can also make sure you vote in every election this year. Be sure to seek out the information on the candidates on the ballot and the issues raised in the campaigns.



Also, please join me in making a resolution to be a better neighbor. In any way that makes sense to you. Shovel your neighbor's sidewalk sometimes if you have the ability and they have difficulty. Introduce yourself to a someone who moved in recently. Organize a block party. Share some extra garden vegetables or a freshly baked loaf of bread - if you have that talent. Maybe a neighbor who doesn't drive would like a ride to the grocery store when you go.

In addition, please encourage your neighbors to join the Midvale Heights Community Association and resolve to renew your own membership when it expires by the end of the summer. Tell them about the activities your dues help to fund - like the neighborhood picnic in June and the Summer Nights at Segoe park concerts in July. The MHCA also is involved in neighborhood safety efforts, environmental awareness forums and voter education events. As always, we welcome your ideas to make Midvale Heights an even better place for everyone. Feel free to contact your Area Director or me with questions and suggestions: <https://midvaleheights.org/>

Neighborhood News Briefs

Friends of Sequoya Library Appreciates You

By Nadine Pfothenauer
Friends of Sequoya Library

In January, for 2026, the Friends of Sequoya will once again give a generous donation to the Sequoya Branch Library to purchase new subscriptions, best sellers, e-books and numerous programs for all ages. Thank you for your help.

This can only be done because of the generous donations of books, CDs and DVDs we receive from the community which are sold at the Friends of Sequoya Shop for our monthly First Saturday sales. The Friends accept donations at Sequoya Library every day. You can use the Friends' drop slot (not the book return) or give them to staff at the front desk. We also take donations at the shop on Mondays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon. We ask that large donations are brought to the shop or leave a message at 608-288-9848 and we can arrange a pick up. If you have questions about donations or would like to volunteer with the Friends, ask at the Sequoya Help Desk, come to the shop to talk with us on our book sale or donation days or leave a message on our shop phone: 608-288-9848. The next sales at our shop in Market Square (6672 Odana Rd.) are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. January 3 & 17, February 7 and March 7. Find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofsequoyalibrary/>



MHCA Baseball Registration Opens in February

By Michael Pressman
Commissioner



MHCA is a fun league for players from 3 to 9 years old. It is a good way for players and parents to meet people. T-Ball is played on Tuesdays, Major Coach Pitch on Wednesdays, and Minor Coach Pitch on Thursdays. The games are played at Piper and Segoe Parks.

The season will begin the week of June 1 and end the week of July 20. The cost is \$50 per player, and each player receives a hat, T-shirt and baseball. Applications are available on the MHCA website in February. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Mike Pressman at mmpressman@charter.net or 608-288-0993.

See you at the fields!



**Your Neighborhood
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Hitting The New Year Running

By Troy Thiel

Vice President of Midvale Heights Community Association

As another year comes to a close and another new year dawns, many of us take stock of what we worked on and achieved in 2025, create a plan for 2026, and start the year committed to having a successful year working towards and realizing our goals. My best wishes to all of you in having a great year with yours.



Going into my second year on the board of MHCA as the vice president, I was happy to help work on several projects in 2025 (VP is the perfect spot to work on special goals), including helping coordinate the Membership Committee for our very successful 2026 Membership drive. (If you haven't signed up yet, or would like to share with your neighbors who might not be members, go to our Website to sign up.) Helping with various other activities and events also took a lot of my attention...and as 2025 drew to a close...my continuing efforts include some great new projects that are part of our MHCA goals for 2026. I will continue in that role as we "pump up" our membership drive this summer.

We have begun an in-depth review of our current website and marketing and have created a study committee on potential next-best options and steps for both. We will meet in mid-January to continue the project. Everyone thinks the organization finds itself needing to improve our "game" and we are committed to continuing the great long track record of work and service to our neighborhood that our webmaster Tom Jarvis had done for 20 years. Tom's done so much for our neighborhood! We are in his debt. With this discussion the committee will also work to configure updates to how we market MHCA and our

many events and other items.

Another key project for our area includes the need for safety improvements to our pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle infrastructure. With recent efforts on hold for Midvale Boulevard, the need for a comprehensive, best strategy to affect improved safety for all who move around and through our area is a paramount priority for MHCA. We have created a committee that has begun to address how to best address and improve our area. Our Alder, Bill Tishler, has been very helpful in this effort, and we will continue to grow the discussion, make connections to other stakeholders and city staff. There are some amazing ideas for great improvements to Segoe and many other areas and spots.

In all the above, and many more ways, MHCA is working to improve our neighborhood. None of it would happen without the great volunteering of so many fantastic people. And we could use more great people like you! Please consider attending our monthly meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. at Sequoia Library or contact me to discuss how you might be able to plug in to help the Association. It'd be great to have you! I can be reached at 608 514 6488 or at troythiel14@gmail.com.

Happy New Year!

Improving Safety Along Segoe Road

By Alder Bill Tishler

Madison Common Council District 11

As I look back on the past year, what stands out most are the concerns residents shared about improving public safety on our city streets. Many voiced concerns about excessive speeding, the need for safer crosswalks, and the importance of completing neighborhood sidewalks so people can walk safely to schools, bus stops, and community destinations like the Sequoya Library, local coffee shops, and places of worship.

No project highlighted these concerns more in 2025 than the Midvale Boulevard Resurfacing proposal and the public survey that was conducted. After listening to neighborhood feedback and discussing the project at city commission meetings, city traffic engineering staff are now recommending shifting away from a full resurfacing to a less expensive pavement-patching construction project to begin in 2026.

The updated pavement-patching plan for 2026 maintains existing street parking while adding several key safety improvements, including curb extensions to help calm traffic and shorten crossing distances, pedestrian-activated flashing beacons (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons) at Hillcrest and Heather Crest, and enhanced painted crosswalks for greater visibility and safer crossings. Protected bike lanes along Midvale Boulevard will be a possibility in the future when the City has the resources to do a complete street reconstruction that would also include new storm and wastewater sewer lines.

In addition to the 2026 improvements planned for Midvale Boulevard, the City will review nearby north-south bike routes for potential upgrades. This work will strengthen bike connections in the Midvale Heights neighborhood and support long-needed safety improvements on Segoe Road between Tokay Road and Mineral Point Road. Segoe Road's wide layout and grassy median often lead to higher-than-posted speeds,



even with three city parks along this stretch and no pedestrian-activated flashing beacons or curb extensions to support safe crossings. I've heard many thoughtful ideas from area residents about improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and I welcome continued input as City staff focus more attention on this corridor. In the coming months, I'll attend neighborhood association meetings and will host a town hall meeting to help guide 2027 budget decisions aimed at making Segoe Road safer.



County Board Update

By Keith Furman

District 10 Dane County Board Supervisor

I'd like to provide you with an update on Dane County's recent budget and the fascinating history being uncovered right in our backyard. In November, the County concluded our work on the 2026 budget and received incredible news regarding the archaeological treasures in Lake Mendota.

2026 Budget: Compassion and Fiscal Discipline Following weeks of public testimony and committee review, the County Board approved the 2026 budget. This was a challenging cycle driven by state-imposed revenue limits and uncertain funding, but we passed a responsible plan that balances fiscal discipline with our values. The approved budget includes \$825.6 million for operating expenditures and \$90.5 million for capital projects. Most importantly for homeowners, we worked hard to minimize the financial impact. The property tax rate is set at \$2.48 per \$1,000 of equalized value. For an average City of Madison home valued at roughly \$481,300, this translates to a tax increase of just over \$15 for the year.

Despite the tight fiscal environment, we prioritized the services that keep our neighborhoods safe and healthy. Key wins in this budget include:

Public Safety: We preserved all



current Dane County Sheriff's Office positions to ensure public safety needs are met.

Social Services: We significantly reduced proposed cuts to community-based nonprofits, from 4% down to 1%, helping sustain vital health and social services.

Housing & Homelessness: We dedicated over \$1 million to the Bartillon Men's Shelter and additional funds for outreach, overflow capacity, and affordable housing initiatives.

Environment: Significant investments were made in land conservation and sediment removal to prevent flooding.

Work has already begun on the 2027 budget, which is expected to contain a significant structural deficit. I'm eager to work with the administration and my colleagues to ensure we figure out a budget that allows the County to continue to provide the crucial services our community expects and needs while recognizing our funding limits.

Lake Mendota: A 5,000-Year-Old Travel Network

On a cultural note, new findings from the Wisconsin Historical So-

ciety have revealed that Lake Mendota is even more historically significant than we realized.

Archaeologists have now identified **16 ancient canoes** submerged in the lake. While you may remember the recovery of a 1,200-year-old canoe in 2021 and a 3,000-year-old vessel in 2022, recent surveys in the spring of 2025 located six more. The oldest identified canoe is estimated to be 5,200 years old—dating back to around 3000 BCE, before the Great Pyramid of Giza was built.

Maritime archaeologist Tamara Thomsen and her team are developing fascinating theories about these vessels. Many were crafted from red oak, a wood not typically used for canoes because it absorbs water. However, the wood shows signs of "tyloses", a natural stress response in trees that blocks water movement. This suggests Indigenous ancestors may have practiced a form of bioengineering, intentionally selecting or stressing trees to make them rot-resistant and buoyant. The canoes were found in two distinct groupings, suggesting they were part of a sophisticated "community transit system," similar to a modern bike-share program, used by First Nations for travel and trade.

Please feel free to reach out to me via email at furman.keith@danecounty.gov, or by phone at 608-912-0000. You can also keep up with my work by following my blog at <https://keith.li/d10blog>.

The MHCA Green Team Goes Into Hibernation—and Other Winter Topics

By Wendy Weber and Jenny Pilling
The MHCA Green Team

We're resting up but first imagining what's up on our spring and summer calendar...invasive plants here where we live and learning amazing and valuable information about bees. Gathering for a Share Fair to learn from each others' garden and nature sustainability tips and tools. Please think about what ideas **you** have for events or activities as well.

Winter is valuable for ecological balance, providing rest for plants, controlling pests, and replenishing water supplies through snowmelt, while also offering unique human experiences like snow sports, holiday traditions, and reflective time for rest and clear thinking, all crucial for the planet's cycles and human well-being.

Ecological Importance

- **Water Resources:** Snow acts as a natural reservoir, slowly releasing water into rivers and reservoirs during spring and summer, vital for billions of people, especially in the western U.S.
- **Pest & Disease Control:** Cold temperatures kill off many insects and pathogens, reducing pest populations (like mosquitoes) and preventing disease spread in spring.
- **Plant Dormancy:** Short days and cold temperatures force plants into dormancy, allowing them to store energy for strong new growth, preventing weak buds and poor fruit production.
- **Climate Regulation:** Snow reflects solar energy, helping to regulate Earth's temperature.

This is a reminder to take advantage of the gift of the Garden and Green Living Expo at the Alliant Center Friday, February 13 - Sunday, February 15. It's a great place to think spring, see visions of it and be informed: <https://wigardenexpo.com/>



This February, connect with seasoned gardeners and environmental enthusiasts at this vibrant three-day celebration of gardening, landscaping, local food culture and ecological responsibility! Learn from 150 educational presentations, browse through the exhibitor mall, chat with UW-Madison Extension Horticulture experts, enter a floral design competition and explore the PBS KIDS Backyard family area. Explore ideas for reducing waste, conserving resources and creating eco-friendly spaces at home and in your community.

Share Fair and Other Events

We are delighted to kick off the 2026 Events Calendar with a Sustainability Share Fair – an informal discussion where community members and resources share their best practice for more sustainable living.

Let's Talk and Learn at the Sustainability Share Fair

- Saturday, February 28, 2026
- 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
- This event is an opportunity to bring our ideas, resources, and questions about gardening and more and how to be sustainable in new and fun ways. There may also be some experts in our midst!
- Be sustainable and bring your own coffee mug!
- Sequoia Library Rooms A and B

This event is co-sponsored by The Midvale Heights Green Team and Sequoia Library.

Life in the Winter Garden

By Wendy Weber and Jenny Pilling
The MHCA Green Team

Native landscaping in winter embraces dormant stems, seed heads, and evergreens for structure, food for wildlife (berries, seeds), and habitat, and provides texture, color, and pollinator support. Plants with winter interest like winterberry and red twig dogwood provide crucial year-round ecosystem services and look great. A "dead"-looking native garden provides vital resources, is an essential part of a natural cycle – and, with a simple mindset shift, dormancy is as beautiful as any season.

Native Plants in Winter - Benefits

Food & Shelter: Seed heads feed birds; berries sustain wildlife; hollow stems house insects; and fallen leaves provide critical habitat to beneficial insects such as native bees, butterflies, moths, firefly larvae, beetles, and predatory insects and wasps.

Structure & Beauty: Dormant [native ornamental grasses](#), dogwood twigs, and evergreen ferns, such as [Christmas Fern](#) – a native, woodland fern with dark green, leathery fronds – provide color, texture, and groundcover when most other plants are dormant.

Ecosystem Support: Adapted to local winters, native forbs, grasses, shrubs and trees support biodiversity even when seemingly "dead".

Winter Interest Plants

Berries: [Winterberry Holly](#) is a good choice for wet/damp, acidic soils, possibly a raingarden. With sufficient space, Nannyberry is a native power player, with fall berries that often linger to winter.

Color/Texture: Red twig (AKA red osier) dogwood has bright red stems, [native grasses and sedges](#) look wonderful in snow, and goldenrod provide beautiful seed heads.

More Information: [Wild Ones](#), the [UW Arboretum](#) and [Johnson's Nursery](#) all have information and resources on Wisconsin/Dane County native plants and shrubs.

Winter Planning & Prep

Observe: See what wildlife visits your dormant

plants. If you mulched with leaf litter or compost to protect roots and support pollinators, have faith – much of the activity is underground. Also, explore the [UW Arboretum](#), [Dane County Parks](#) and [State Parks](#) and [Natural Areas](#) on foot, snowshoes or skis for inspiration.

Plan: Use a planting log to map successes and plan expansions. [Wild Ones Madison](#) typically offers a low-cost native garden planning session at Pinney Library in winter. Check Facebook or library schedule for details.

Winter Sow: Start native seeds in jugs for next season, suggests [Homegrown National Park](#). (Salad tubs also make great winter sowing containers).

Learn: Sign up for a class at Olbrich, such as [Sustainable Gardens from Scratch on a Budget](#), [Gardening for Hummingbirds](#), [Modern Meadow Plantings and Their Maintenance](#) or [Your Native Plant Toolkit: Gardening With Native Plants](#) (virtual) or [Gardening for Birds, Butterflies and Bees](#) (online) at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Attend a [Native Garden Learning Hub Community Gathering](#) (3/15/2026, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m., \$5) at Lussier Family Heritage Center to learn about garden design, garden prep – hold off the spring cleanup! – gardening for birds and for bees, and to Plant This, Not That.

Read! Explore native garden and [landscaping books](#) and websites: [Homegrown National Park](#), [Prairie Nursery](#), [Good Oak Ecological Services](#) or [Xerces Society](#)



