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July 2016

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Neighbors is published monthly from
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REGIONAL NEWS

Free meals at CUMC

The Cassopolis United Methodist Church offers a FREE meal to all community members on the third Saturday of each month, from 4:30-6 pm. The meals are prepared in the church by church members, and menus range from hot ham & cheese sandwiches to chicken Parmesan with spaghetti.

All community members are invited and encouraged to come, enjoy a meal and fellowship with others. The church is at 209 S Rowland St., Cassopolis, with ample parking and handicap entrance at the back of the church, off O'Keefe St.

"The Dash Between the Dates"

"Genealogy and the Underground Railroad: The Dash Between the Dates" Cass County is rich with history and is a program at the Cass District Library Wednesday, July 6 at 6:30 pm will describe one family's journey from it's pre-Civil War southern roots to 20th-Century Cass County, using tools readily available to genealogists.

Caryn Adler has been collecting dead relatives for nearly 40 years, amassing over 7000 names in her family tree. She shares her passion for genealogy with senior groups, historical and genealogical societies and at special programs. As Life Enrichment Director at Brentwood Assisted Living in Niles, Caryn helps the residents use modern tools to construct their own family trees. The program is free, all are invited.

Summer Art Show Has New Artists

Regional and local artists will be showcased at the Cass Area Artists Summer Show on July 9.

Jewelry artist Darlene Troyer will be

Lakeview Diner opens in Cassopolis



The Lakeview Diner opened last week in the Mahogany Outfitters Boat Museum in Cassopolis. The diner is open M-Th from 11 am - 9 pm, F-S from 11 am to 10 pm, Sun from 11 am to 7 pm.

one of several jewelry artists participating in the show. Darlene works with precious metals and fused glass, and has been perfecting techniques that she has learned from master crafts persons and from teaching jewelry classes. She has won numerous awards and her art is currently featured in several Michiana galleries.

Artists from St. Joseph Michigan will include portrait artist Robert Williams and Irina Tikhonova. Irina specializes in seascapes and Robert will do on site portraits, which are especially nice for children. They are new to the Summer Art Show this year, along with noted clay artist Cathy Tapia from Buchanan.

Something to see will be new displays and affordable art in many media, including watercolor, glass, jewelry, digital art, clay, fabric, and oil color. The popular

wood turned bowls from Neil Benham and fine wood toys from Bob Knight will return, as well as the clay sculpture of William Becker of Edwardsburg.

Visitors to the show can win free artwork which has been donated by participating artists. Drawings for the free artwork will be held throughout the day so that winners can take the artwork with them.

With juried art, affordable prices and new artists, the Cass Area Artists show will showcase a wide range of visual art that will allow patrons to add to or update their collections with a fresh look and spend an enjoyable day in Cass County.

And, the day in Cass County might include a visit to the historic Bonine House and the Underground Railroad

Days which are located in nearby Vandalia on M-60.

The one day Cass Area Artist Summer Show is free and located on the outdoor track of the Lowe Center COA at M-60 and Decatur Road in Cassopolis. It will be open from 10 am until 4 pm.

Diamond Lake Triathlon

This year's Diamond Lake Triathlon will be on Saturday - July 2, with a NEW LOCATION! This year's venue host is the Park Shore Marina, 22230 Maple Street in Cassopolis. Triathlete, cancer survivor and Diamond Lake resident, Joe Fazini had such a good time at the last race that he has taken on championing the race this year! The race features a 500 yard swim, a 12 mile bike and 3.1 mile run in beautiful Cassopolis, MI. Proceeds will benefit Alex Stscherban, a local triathlete, 29, who suffered a cardiac arrest after completing a triathlon. Money raised will be used to help with his medical bills during his recovery. To register or for more info go to www.diamondlaketri.com.

Underground Railroad Days in Vandalia area on July 8 - 10

The Village of Vandalia and the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County (URSCC) will partner for the seventh year on Underground Railroad Days on July 8-10. This event is the annual celebration of the legacy of the Underground Railroad (UGRR) in the area.

URSCC sponsored events include Friday's 7 pm "Opening Night" presentation at historic Chain Lake Baptist Church. Saturday and Sunday feature presentations and displays in the Vandalia Youth Center, guided tours of UGRR

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REGIONAL NEWS

sites, a Civil War living history encampment, and music at the Ramptown Cabin in Milo Barnes Park. The historic Bonine House will be open for tours. The Village of Vandalia will sponsor a soul food dinner, family entertainment and vendor booths on Saturday and Sunday. There is a car show on Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm and a Sunday morning church service in Milo Barnes Park at 11 am.

Hours for Underground Railroad Days are Saturday 11 am to 7 pm and Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Admission and parking are free. For information on the car show and non-food vendor booths, call Vandalia Village president, Beverly Young at 269-476-2344.

More information can be found on www.urscc.org. A full schedule will be posted closer to the event.

Eagle Lake Triathlon

The Eagle Lake Triathlon will take place on Saturday, Aug. 6, beginning at Eagle Lake Marina. Races will include a long-sprint triathlon, a short-sprint triathlon, a non-competitive kid's triathlon, and a competitive kid's triathlon. The first wave of races will begin at 8 am. Packet pickup will be Friday Aug. 5 from 4-7 pm or race morning from 6-7:30 am. For more info email info@eaglelaketri.com.

"Outdoor Adventures: Paddles, Poles, Discs and Arrows"

Registrations are now being accepted for "Outdoor Adventures: Paddles, Poles, Discs and Arrows" at St. Patrick's County Park in South Bend.

During Paddles, Poles, Discs and

Arrows, campers will experience the best that the St. Joseph County Parks have to offer! They'll paddle canoes and kayaks, cast for bluegills, try out their archery skills and play a round of disc golf.

The camp, for eleven- to 13-year-olds, takes place on Wednesday, Aug. 10, from 9 am to 2:30 pm. Four other camps are offered at St. Patrick's County Park for other age groups.

For more information, or to request registration materials, please call 574/654-3155, or visit www.sjcparks.org.

Free Disc Golf lessons

Free Beginners' Disc Golf Lessons will be offered on Sunday, July 10 at 10 am and Saturday, August 6 at 1 pm at Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park in South Bend. Discs will be provided for use

at the lesson. The lesson is open to anyone and is designed for those who are just curious about disc golf and also beginners who want tips to improve their game. The gate entrance fee will be waived for anyone attending the lesson.

Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park has an 18-hole disc golf course with concrete tee pads. The course is open every day 10 am until park closing. Daily disc golf passes are \$4 for adults and \$3 for youth 15 and under. Disc are available for rent for \$2 each. There is a gate entrance fee charged on Saturdays, and Sundays of \$4/St. Joseph County vehicle and \$5/out-of-county car.

Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park is located at 57057 Ash Road, Osceola, Indiana. For more information, call (574) 674-9765 or visit www.sjcparks.org.



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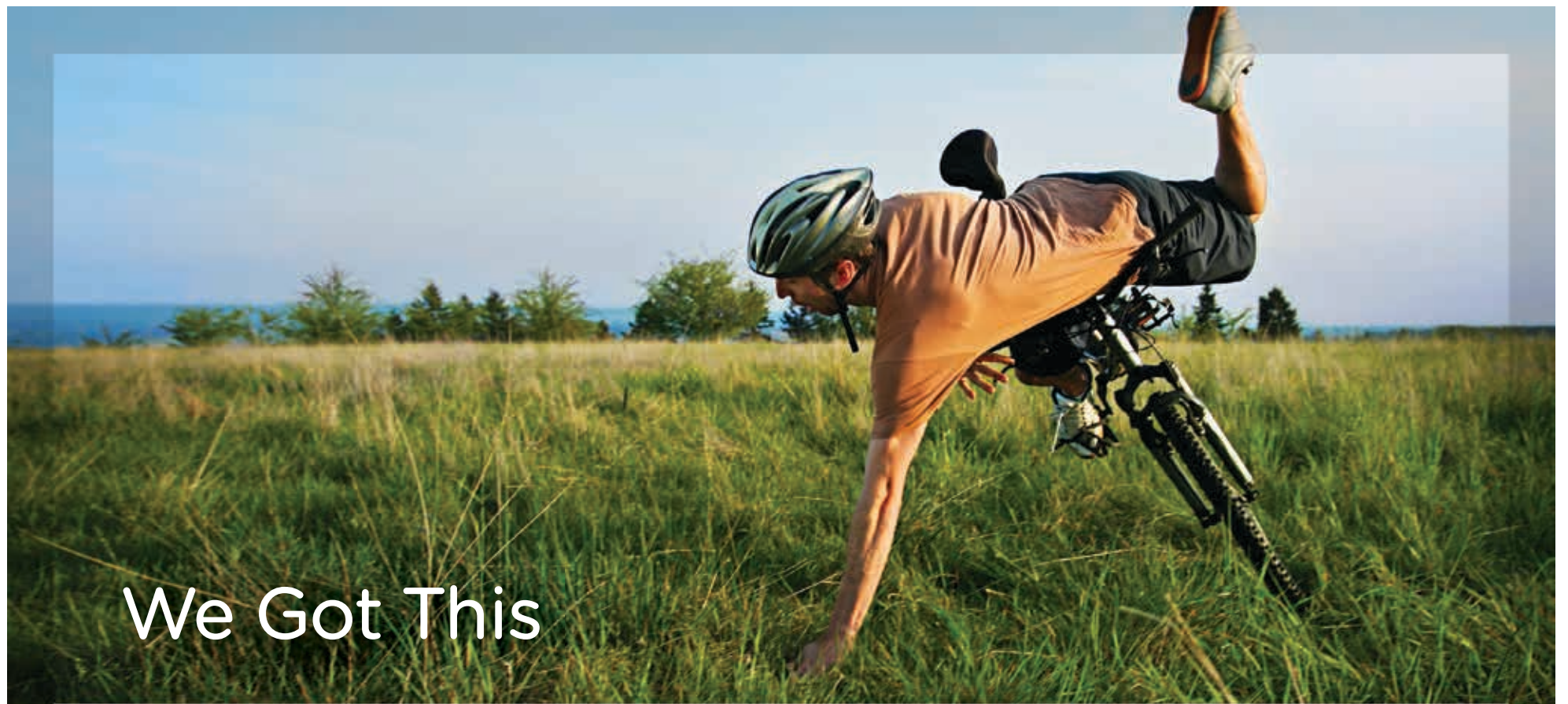
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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

July 2 – Diamond Lake Triathlon, 7:30 - 10:30 am, Park Shore Marina, Cassopolis, www.diamondlaketri.com

July 2 - Diamond Lake Fireworks, 10:30 - 11 pm, Fireworks Island (Ran/wind delay will be Sunday, July 3)

July 6 - Family Fun Night, 6:00 pm, Family games and fun for all, Cass District Library-Howard Branch, 487-9214

July 6 - "Geneology and the Underground Railroad: The Dash Between the Dates," Cass District Library, Cassopolis, 6:30 pm, 646-0401

July 7 - Pillowcase Project: Preparing Kids for Emergencies, 10 am, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822, 1 pm, Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

July 9 - Cass Area Artists Summer Fine Art and Crafts Show, COA Lowe Center in Cassopolis, <http://www.cassareaartist.com/art-show.html>

July 8-10 – Underground Railroad Days, Vandalia, 11 am - 7 pm Saturday, 11 am - 5 pm Sunday, 476-2344

July 11 - BollyFit Workshop: Indian Dance and Culture, 11 am, Cass District Library-Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215, 1 pm, Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821, 3 pm, Cass District Library- Howard Branch, 487-9214, 6 pm, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822

July 11-15 – Walk on the Wild Side Outdoor Adventure day camp, St. Patrick's County Park,

So. Bend, 574-654-3115

July 13 - Pillowcase Project: Preparing Kids for Emergencies, 10 am, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822, 1 pm, Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

July 14 - Family Fun Night, 7 pm, Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

July 14 - Elkhart ArtWalk, free, self-guided public art exhibit and sale, 5-8 pm, downtown

July 15 - African Kora: Family Music Program, 2 pm, Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

July 18 - Family Fun Night, 6 pm, Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

July 18-22 – Buzz, Hop, Soar Outdoor Adventure day camp, St. Patrick's County Park, So. Bend, 574-654-3115

July 19 - Go for the Gold Magic Show, 11 am, Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215, 1 pm, Cass District Library- Howard Branch, 487-9214

July 20 - Family Fun Night, 7 pm, Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

July 21 - Cold Blooded Creatures, 2 pm, Cass District Library- Howard Branch, 487-9214

July 23 - Summer Reading Club Ends, business hours at all Cass District Libraries, Show your reading log progress to receive a prize and be entered into a drawing. Cass District

Library- Main Library, 357-7822

July 25 - Math Scoops! Ice Cream Math Club Begins, business hours at all Cass District Libraries, 269-357-7822

July 25-29 – Art Week Outdoor Adventure day camp, St. Patrick's County Park, So. Bend, 574-654-3115

July 26 – National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting, 5 pm, Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

July 27 - How to Use Good Reads, 6:30 pm, Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

August 1-5 – Animal Adventures Outdoor Adventure day camp, St. Patrick's County Park, So. Bend, 574-654-3115

August 3-5 - Annual Book Sale, 9-5 pm, Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

August 6, 7 -Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Projects Open House, 10 am - 4 pm, South Riverfront Park, Niles, www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph

August 10 – Paddles, Poles, Discs and Arrows Outdoor Adventure day ca St. Patrick's County Park, So. Bend, 574-654-3115

August 23 – 5 pm – The National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting of the year at the

Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

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October 25 – 5 pm – National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting, Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

October 28 - Charity Run for Zachary Sweet, sponsored by the State Police, Warren Dunes State Park, Sawyer, 10 am, \$10/person, 313-401-3745 or lindsayr@michigan.gov

November 16 - Elkhart ArtWalk, free, self-guided public art exhibit and sale, 5-8 pm, downtown

December 6 – 1:30 pm – National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter annual holiday dinner at a site to be determined. No business meeting, new officers will be sworn in. Next meeting March 28, 2017. Jean Rowe, 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

Vote 'Yes' on August 2 Millage proposition for the CASS COUNTY COA

On August 2, Cass County residents will have the opportunity to vote on the Millage Proposition for Services to Older Citizens in support of the Cass County Council on Aging (COA). This millage accounts for approximately 65 percent of the COA's operating budget, funding services that meet critical needs for older adults in our community. The COA's programs include Meals on Wheels; in-home care; medical transportation; an Adult Day Service for individuals with dementia; a wide range of social, educational, and fitness programs; and much more. Approximately one in four Cass County residents is over the age of 60, so these programs reach a large percentage of individuals in our communities.

Over the last six years, the COA's income from the millage has increased very little. At the same time, expenses have increased significantly. Rising costs of food, transportation, and many other items have affected the COA's program expenses across the board. Throughout this time period, the COA has maintained a commitment to keeping programs and services affordable for area seniors. However, as costs continue to rise, it may become increasingly difficult for the COA to maintain all of its programs and services at the same low cost.

To help cover these increased expenses, the question on the ballot will seek to restore the COA to a one mill levy, which is a very small increase over the current level. While significant to the COA's operating budget, this increase would have minimal effect on homeowners. For instance, if a home has an assessed value of \$50,000, the increase would cost the homeowner approximately 40 cents per month, or less than \$5 per year. This small cost for individuals will allow the COA to continue its work through affordable programs and services for older adults throughout Cass County.

The Cass County COA is a community organization dedicated to enhancing life through programs and services for adults in all life stages. For more information, visit www.casscoa.org.

This message provided by the COA Millage Renewal Committee

Vote 'Yes' on August 2



ART SHOW

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HEALTH & FITNESS

Improving your strength

By **Brenda Harris**
Cass COA

It's a fact of life, you are aging as you read this article. With aging, our bones lose density and our muscles start to get weaker. Walking a fast pace can help control, and in some cases reverse the effects of aging bones and let's count the benefits from a fast pace walk. Fast pace walking gets your heart pumping, sending oxygen through your whole body. It strengthens your heart and the muscle groups responsible for movement.

Fast pace walking also burns fat. In place of stored fat, the body develops muscle. A walking program rewards you with a lean body, along with walking is good for your bones and joints: It's low impact, so even a fast pace shouldn't cause strain or injury to

knees, ankles, back, or hips. As you walk your feet and legs are working against the earth's gravity, which acts as a natural weight that your bones and muscles must counteract. The body will react to the stress of its own weight, building cells and tissue.

Walking gives you control over your whole exercise program. You have the final say in how fast or slow you go. No matter how you choose to walk, you should know proper walking techniques. Practice these walking tips:

- Follow through from heel to toe, pushing off the ball of your foot
- Keep your ankles straight, and try to avoid rotating your foot in or out
- Make your strides long and quick, with your knees bent for shock

- Wear shoes that fit well and are padded for support.
- Stretch before and after your walks to prevent cramps.

Walking also strengthens muscles, which tone and shape your body. Increased muscle mass boosts your metabolism. In return you will burn calories. Long or short walking times will all count up. If you don't have time for long walks, find time throughout your day for short ones.

Any form of walking burns calories and improves your muscle definition. So put a little pep in your step and burn those calories as you take each new step.

Get moving, get active, get energized!

By **Brenda Harris**
Cass COA

A lot of people ask me, "where do you get all that energy?" It comes from within me and my attitude. There are days when I feel like an "energy vampire" has sucked all the pudding right out of me.

Do I let that stop me?

Heck no, life is too short to sit there and cry or pout about it.

Do you know that 70 percent of our perceived energy comes from our emotional state?

Just think about it a minute. What does positive energy do for us? It increases vitality, and opens

yourself to creativity.

How do I manage my energy? The idea is to start small and take control.

Give yourself a few hours a week for some downtime to be good to yourself. We all have routines; and we are creatures of habit.

Try to do something different this week and spice it up. The more we take responsibility for our own energy, the more empowered and stronger we will become.

Emotional energy, can be draining or empowering to us. It all depends on you and how you handle it.

Ok, what about calm energy? Do you realize that

people regulate mood with food and exercise?

When and what you eat, how much sleep you get and whether or not you exercise will affect your mood. The link between mood, food, and exercise can and will calm your energy habits.

Example, if your exercise is unpleasant to you today, you may seek a pick-me-up food or drink to self medicate for a quick fix.

Why not do a mood booster by taking a quick 10-minute walk and be energized

So, stop racing around and going in circles. Instead, bring some focused energy to everything you do and have some balance too. Recharge your own battery, get energized and motivate.

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¹ The number of sold lake homes is up 22% from 4/1/15 to 3/31/16 compared to 4/1/14 to 3/31/15. ² Based on data from the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors, Sales of Inland Lake Homes and Properties, from 1/1/12 to 4/1/16 in Berrien, Cass and St. Joseph Counties. Sales of properties where agents represent both the buyer and seller are given 200% credit by the MLS.

LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Summertime ... and the livin' is easy!



by JANE BOUDREAU

Hello Neighbors! Doesn't this sign just make you feel happy? Its on the arbor that leads to our dock and little 'ol beach. I love a nice beach, large or small. I waded along the shoreline of Lake Michigan as a toddler and I've swam off all of our coast lines. We have a little beach at our home here in Michigan. My husband babies that space. He roto tills it every spring and rakes all the muck out. Then we have a huge truckload of sand brought in and half goes on the beach and the other half into the water so we can have a sandy bottom as we walk out. He does all of this himself. A very laborious job but it is so appreciated throughout the season. If you've never thought of tilling your beach ~ well, give it a shot!

I'm not so much of a beach bum as I was when I was younger but I love having my feet in the water. A few years ago we lost a glass patio table in a storm, as in it shattered. The umbrella and cement base were good so now we use



that on the beach to sit under. It's great for all the babies and redheads in the family. Oh, and the pole you see to the right...the beach has to be raked fastidiously every morning, my guys looks for those perfect lines the way some look for the patterns the vacuum makes on their carpet.

I hope all of you are ready for a big star spangled banner Fourth of July. I love when I can pull out that bin of decorations. I save everything I can from year to year even though you can find some great deals at dollar stores. You can go as simple as some patriotic flags or go all out with balloons and Chinese lanterns, decorative paper and plastic items and red, white and blue floral bouquets. I think I've done a bit of all of this over the years.

There are a few tried and true reasons for the way I do things the way I do now. I really want my family and guests to feel the festiveness of the holiday and I don't want to go overboard spending money. You didn't ask for it but you are going to get some of Jane's tips. Tried and true, if only by me, Jane. Here you go:

Keep your decorations in the areas which are most used by guests such as your outdoor and indoor tables and spaces where you serve food. I spread out some comfy quilts under an old maple for the kids to sit and eat and nap (as well as adults!), and I attach all sorts of flags and crepe paper and anything I can find to it with tacks or tape. You get more bang for your buck by grouping decorations rather than spreading them out all over.

I think of keeping kids happy. On a holiday like the Fourth of July they are anxious and getting tired long before dusk and the fireworks start. We love the annual water balloon toss, bean bag games and volleyball. Space activities out with a little rest in between. For the smaller ones I fill a large bin with chalk, bubbles, balls and outdoor games. Just walk down any drugstore aisle right now and you'll see a slew of ideas. Ask a teen

to supervise ... they thrive on being bossy.

Just a few things about food. First and foremost, keep it covered. I usually set up a buffet in the house even if we grill food. Bugs are always an issue whether its flies, bees or ants. If you have appetizers and snacks outdoors keep them covered with plastic wrap, foil or plastic platters. I don't even trust those screens you see all over to keep your food bug free. I've been known to be called a germaphobic but did you know... flies do everything we do in the bathroom as well as vomit before they start to nibble? A screen doesn't help in any way, shape or form. Keep the goodies covered and when it looks like the first thrill of noshing is over, cover the dish with foil. We alternate appetizers as we always have too many. Rather than put them all out to sit for hours, one goes on the table and when it's done we move out another. Another good tip is to keep a container of antiseptic wipes on your main table. Kids get dirty and then you have 100 hands diving into the chips and whatnot. SO gross.



You want to enjoy your guests and party (there have been occasions when I've wanted to collapse on a hammock for a few hours), but be aware of your surroundings. The more empty or half empty cups and plates you have laying about, the more bugs and simple unpleasantness you'll have. Keep a few trash cans nearby and make it a point to gather up used items and dispose of them. Make more space on your table by scooping small remainders of an appetizer or dip onto a small paper plate and get the big bowls and plates into the kitchen for later clean up.

I think it's great that we are seeing more and more people drinking good 'ol H2O rather than sweetened drinks, especially kids. Getting rid of the stickiness factor keeps things cleaner and I always purchase the 8 oz. bottles of water for the kiddos. I get a little weird when I see half empty drinks. I've been known to use a bright red permanent marker to write names on plastic cups and bottles.

I'm really beginning to wonder why anyone comes to my parties.

Last month I gave you some of my more stupendous tips on potted plants. Mine are doing really well and I love pops of color where we least expect it. I also love to have flower beds that border my home to have color and personality. This is where you can really use perennial plants or those that come up each and every year. This border is just off our patio. It was originally filled with gravel and try as I might, I couldn't get rid of it all and you can't plant anything in gravel so it's all about the pots. Years ago I started German Ivy, confusing it with the English Ivy I have swallowing my house. It's more of a ground cover but you can add plants like alyssum, ajuga or even shredded bark. This picture is from last year, I just poked some pots down in the ivy and added a bit of interest (or as my husband would call, "A lot of weird stuff.") like this bench. This year I pulled a ton of the ivy out, replaced the whiskey barrels and painted the bench a summery beach blue and white. As things fill out I'll share a picture next month.

Right now most of my borders aren't doing a lot of blooming so I'll go into more of this next month. At the risk of advis-



ing you of things you most likely know or could even advise me on, start with a nicely dug space that you have added topsoil and manure to. I've heard people who go so far as having the pH and acidity levels measured. I tend to throw caution to the wind. Sometimes I marvel over the fact that I get anything to grow. You can use a roto tiller that mixes things up nicely or you can just work it with a shovel and hoe.



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As far as plants we could go into all different directions here but I think the editors of this paper would frown on me taking up twelve pages so let me just say...choose plants that work in your space as far as shady or sunny. Plant the taller plants in the back. Choose plants that bloom consecutively such as spring, summer and late summer, etc. so you always have something blooming. Fill in empty spaces and spots where



plants have died off with annuals. Easy? Ahem, maybe not. Read up. Talk to your neighbor with the lovely yard. Have a list of questions for the people at your garden nursery.

These are yellow coneflowers we planted in the little English Garden I have going on at the lakehouse. These self seed as they die off in the fall, the seeds drop or the birds scatter them and before you know you have them everywhere. Love. This garden needs a lot of tidying up but that's just one of the responsibilities that goes with gardening. I walk around and pull weeds here and there almost every evening. For bigger jobs like trimming hedges or planting a bunch of flowers, I wait for a cool day in the mid seventies. The best thing I have is a garden wagon my husband bought me to carry my flats, mulch, bags of top-soil and potting soil around the yard. Forget those images you have of gardeners as frail old folks occupying time 'put-

tering' in the garden. We are a strong group! We have the big muscles, low back pain and sunburn to prove it.

Have you guys started to hit the farmer's markets and farm stands yet? How fun! I can shop them every day of the week. Summer is such a great time for the Midwest as we know our fruits and veggies haven't traveled long and far to get to us. If you're lucky enough to grow your own veggies, good for you. Even better, have a good friend or neighbor who does.

One lesson I learned about getting or buying organic produce, rinse it well in your sink and let it sit a bit before you pat it dry, store or use it. My daughter was recently trimming Brussels sprouts when she started screaming over a large green wormy like critter crawling out from the leaves. I asked her if they were organic. Of course, she said a bit defiantly. Well, there you go...no pesticides so you are bringing all sorts of unwelcome stuff into your home. So rinse, rinse, and don't be so jumpy.

I found an exceptional salad a few weeks ago and I never got as far as making the actual salad. The highlight was the grilled shrimp that topped it. I've made it several times since, in fact I'm bringing it as a chilled appetizer to a barbecue Sunday. In this picture you can see that I served it over a bed of thin rice noodles (find them in that grocery store near the Asian foods, they are lighter than pasta). The shrimp are so versatile and quick to throw together. You can buy your shrimp peeled and deveined but I try to save a few bucks and do it myself. The rest goes together very fast.

Cilantro Lime Grilled Shrimp

- 1/2 to 1 lb jumbo shrimp
- 1/3 c packed cilantro, roughly chopped
- 1/4 c fresh lime juice (2-3 limes)
- 1/4 c olive oil
- 1 T honey



- 1/2 t chili powder
- canola oil for cooking
- S & P

Blend all of the ingredients except the shrimp in a food processor (or blender). Place the shrimp in a large zip lock bag and pour the marinade over. Place in refrigerator for no longer than 10 minutes or the shrimp will actually 'cook' in the acidic ingredients.

Heat 1 T canola oil in a skillet or grill pan. You can also do this on an outdoor grill pan. Place each piece on and grill 1 minute on each side until lightly charred. As I write, I'm doing these babies chilled on a simple bed of lettuce as an appetizer. Have fun ... you may even want to try the marinade on other seafood, it's out of this world!

Enjoy the beautiful month of July. I

have to keep reminding myself that summer is really here. We have so many warm and fun filled days on the horizon. Mild weather came so soon for us in the Midwest that I get a little confused that it might just be mid summer with the never ending warm and beautiful days.

Stay cool this month, enjoy the sun and breeze and warm grass or sand under your feet. Roll with things, don't fuss. Plan ahead and make things easier for yourself in the long run. And if all else fails, jump into that hammock and take a long nap!

Until next time ...

~Jane

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

What do you know about the Baby Boomer generation?

By **VICKI BROSSMAN**

Kemner-Iott Benz Agency of Cass County

What is a baby boomer? Baby boomers were born between 1946, the end of World War II and 1964, the largest generation of Americans born in history.

- This generation has remained the single largest group of people at every stage of their lives.
- Baby boomers were the first generation with television allowing world events into their living rooms. Notable world events are the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King. They watched as Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. The Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, Watergate, and the Cold War occurred. Rock and Roll was born – Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones.
- The baby boomers were responsible for the youth movement of the '60's, the culture of excess in the '70's, and the "Yuppies" of the corporate world in the '80's.
- This generation is shifting from the largest working generation to the largest retired generation. This being the case, they are changing from the largest group of people putting money into Social Security and Medicare to the largest

group taking it out.

Baby boomers moving into their senior years will face the challenge of managing their assets to last as long as they do. If you are a member of this generation, don't forget to review your insurance needs.

Auto

- Let your agent know when you retire. By changing the usage of your vehicle from commuting daily to pleasure, you may qualify for a lower rate. Some companies offer a discount if your annual mileage is 5,000 miles or less.
- Many companies offer a discount for senior drivers who have completed a safe driver course.
- Review your coverages. Is your liability limit enough to protect your assets should you be involved in a lawsuit? A higher deductible will lower your premium; however, can you afford the higher deductible should your vehicle be damaged in an accident?

Home

- Did you pay off your mortgage – let your agent know so they can remove them from your homeowners policy. Some companies offer a mortgage free discount.
- If your home is deeded to your trust, have your agent add the trust to your policy.

- Review your coverages – do you have adequate coverage on your home and belongings? Can you afford your deductible? Is your personal liability enough to protect your assets?

Personal Umbrella

- What if the liability limits on your auto and home policies are not enough to protect your assets? A personal umbrella policy adds another layer of protection above what is provided by these policies.
- Already have a personal umbrella? Is the current limit enough?

Health

- Has the use of your home changed? Do you rent it during the winter months when you are in a warmer place? Do you have a part-time business at home? Call your agent if the use of your home has changed.
- Already have a personal umbrella? Is the current limit enough?
- Before you make the decision to retire, you will want to research health insurance. Will you be able to afford the cost?
- Most people age 65 and older are eligible for Medicare through the federal government. Medicare has two parts: Part A – Hospital Insurance which helps pay hospital bills and Part B – Medical Insurance which helps pay doctor bills. Medicare will not pay all your health insurance costs, so you will want to pur-

chase a supplement to fill in the gaps.

- If you are under 65 and not eligible for Medicare, the cost of health care may be the determining factor in making the decision to retire. Before making the final decision, see your insurance agent. He will be able to show you what options are available. Or would Cobra through your employer be a better choice for you?
- If you are retiring, you will have a limited time called a special election period to sign up for your health coverage. If you miss this period, you will have to wait until Open Enrollment which begins on October 15 with coverage effective January 1.

Do you need to make a change in your life insurance? Did you know that Medicare does not pay for long-term care? As you can see, talking to your insurance agent is important in making the decision to retire. Proper insurance coverage will help protect what you have worked for all your life so you can enjoy your "Golden Years."



Investors are human, too

Provided by **Greg Schoenfeld**
Compass Wealth Advisors

In 1981, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Robert Shiller published a groundbreaking study that contradicted a prevailing theory that markets are always efficient. If they were, stock prices would generally mirror the growth in earnings and dividends. Shiller's research showed that stock prices fluctuate more often than changes in companies' intrinsic valuations (such as dividend yield) would suggest.¹

Shiller concluded that asset prices sometimes move erratically in the short term simply because investor behavior can be influenced by emotions such as greed and fear. Many investors would agree that it's sometimes difficult to stay calm and act rationally, especially when unexpected events upset the financial markets.

Researchers in the field of behavioral finance have studied how cognitive biases in human thinking can affect investor behavior. Understanding the influence of human nature might help you overcome these common psychological traps.

Herd mentality. Individuals may be convinced by their peers to follow trends, even if it's not in their own best interests. Shiller proposed that human psychology is the reason that "bubbles" form in asset markets. Investor enthusiasm ("irrational exuberance") and a

herd mentality can create excessive demand for "hot" investments. Investors often chase returns and drive up prices until they become very expensive relative to long-term values. Past performance, however, does not guarantee future results, and bubbles eventually burst. Investors who follow the crowd can harm long-term portfolio returns by fleeing the stock market after it falls and/or waiting too long (until prices have already risen) to reinvest.

Availability bias. This mental shortcut leads people to base judgments on examples that immediately come to mind, rather than examining alternative explanations. It may cause you to misperceive the likelihood or frequency of events, in the same way that watching a movie about sharks can suddenly make it seem more dangerous to swim in the ocean.

Confirmation bias. People also have a tendency to search out and remember information that confirms, rather than challenges, their current beliefs. If you have a good feeling about a certain investment, you may be likely to ignore critical facts and focus on data that supports your opinion.

Overconfidence. Individuals often overestimate their skills, knowledge, and ability to predict probable outcomes. When it comes to investing, overconfidence may cause you to trade excessively and/or downplay potential risks.

Loss aversion. Research shows that investors tend to dislike losses much more than they enjoy gains, so it can actually be painful to deal with financial losses.² Consequently, you might avoid selling an investment that would realize a loss even though the sale may be an appropriate course of action. In some instances, the intense fear of losing money may be paralyzing.

It's important to slow down the process and try to consider all relevant factors and possible outcomes when making financial decisions. Having a long-term perspective and sticking with a thoughtfully crafted investing strategy may also help you avoid expensive, emotion-driven mistakes.

All investments are subject to market fluctuation, risk, and loss of principal. When sold, investments may be worth more or less than their original cost. Past performance does not guarantee future results.

- 1) *The Economist*, May 1, 2015
- 2) *The Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 2016

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

The housing market in Cass County and SWMI

Overall, the number of houses sold in May in Cass County dropped 13 percent (52 vs. 60). Year-to-date, the number of houses sold overall increased 8 percent above the number of houses sold by the end of May 2015 (238 vs. 219).

The number of waterfront homes sold decreased to 14 from 16 in May 2015. Non-waterfront home sales were down 14 percent compared to May 2015 (38 vs. 44). Year-to-date, waterfront house sales were up 38 percent (54 vs. 39) and non-waterfront house sales were up 2 percent (184 vs. 180).

In May, the average selling price in Cass for all homes was \$208,619; up from \$200,076 in May 2015. The median selling price for all homes in May increased 3 percent to \$128,450 from \$124,450 in 2015.

The waterfront home average selling price in May was \$426,379 compared to \$384,703 in May 2015 for an 11 percent increase. The median selling price for waterfront homes increased 57 percent (\$349,500 vs. \$222,550).

The average selling price for non-waterfront homes in May dropped 4 percent to \$127,392 versus \$132,938 in May 2015. The median selling price rose to \$121,050 from \$104,000; for a 16 percent increase when compared to May 2015.

The median price is the price at which 50 percent of the homes sold were above that price and 50 percent were below.

In Cass County, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a part of all closed transactions in May decreased to 13 percent from 18 percent in April.

For comparison, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions in Southwestern Michigan was 11 percent in

May the same as in April. This is the lowest percentage for the year. The lowest percentage in 2015 was 9 percent. The highest percentage, in February 2009, was 75 percent.

Overall in SWMI, the housing market in May was record setting in many ways. We continue to see month over month increases in the number of houses sold this year. However, in May the number of houses sold reached 357. In our history, we have only reached this number of closed sales three other times; once last year and twice in 2006. We consider 2006 to be the peak housing market year for our area and the number of homes sold in May is the highest number in a month of May for any year going back to 2006.

Throughout SWMI, comparing housing sales to last year in May the market was up 20 percent (357 vs. 297). May sales surpassed sales in April 2016 by 34 percent. Year-to-date, the number of houses sold was up 14 percent from May 2015 (1247 vs. 1098). Both the average selling price in May and the year-to-date average selling price became the highest since 2006. The average selling price in May increase just a little over 2 percent from May 2015 (\$207,614 vs. \$202,729).

The median selling price of \$135,000 in May dropped 6 percent from the \$144,000 set in May 2015. The year-to-date median selling price was up 4 percent from a year ago (\$130,000 vs. Jan selling price also broke the record to become the highest year-to-date median selling price since 2006.

Overall in SWMI, the mortgage

rate held the same as in April at 3.73. In May 2015, the rate was 4.02. Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in May also did not increase. It was 3.61 in April and in May it was 3.60 percent.

For comparison, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a part of all closed transactions throughout SWMI decreased to 13 percent from 18 percent in November from 12 percent in August. The 9 percent reached in July and October in 2015 set in July was the lowest reached since 2009. In February 2009, 75 percent of all transactions were bank-owned or foreclosed homes.

Overall in SWMI, the mortgage rate increased

from 4.10 in November to 4.6 in December. The rate has not change much throughout the year. In January, the rate at 3.67 was the lowest and it peaked at 4.19 in July. Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in September December 3.96 dipped to 3.94 from 3.91 in August in November for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

This data reflects home sales across Berrien, Cass and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren counties and should not be used to determine the market value of any individual property. If you want to know the market value of your property, please contact your local REALTOR®.

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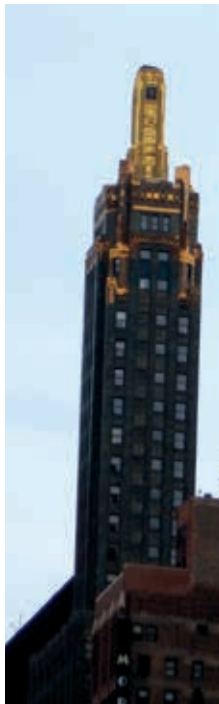


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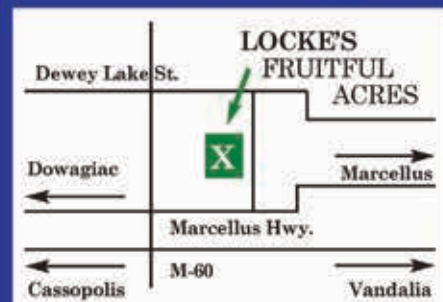
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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of our area's past

In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes in our area.

Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20 years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the

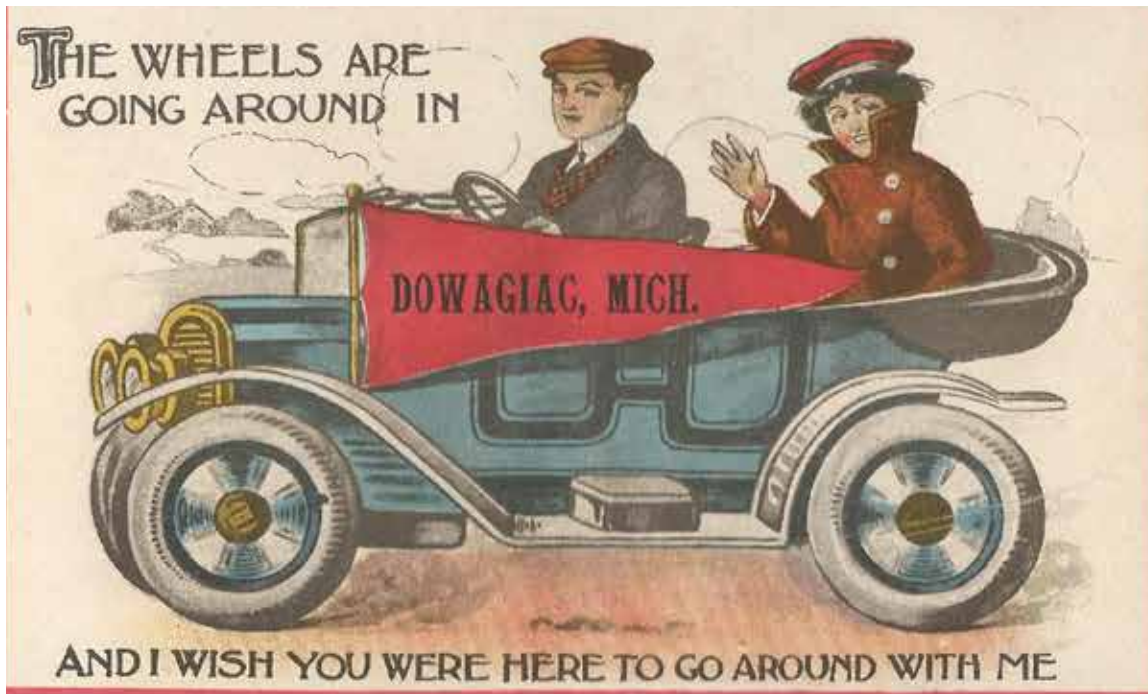
publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

Among other places, the book may be purchased at the Jerdon Real Estate office on M-62 West, and at Whistlestop Gifts, which is operated by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: www.arcadia-publishing.com

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of Dowagiac and the 4th of July.

In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities and countryside.



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OUR CHILDREN

Managing pesky behaviors

by **SANDY FLEMING**

It's definitely summer vacation-loads of fun, relaxation, and recreation. It's also a time when too much togetherness, boredom, bickering, and sibling rivalry rear ugly heads and threaten to spoil family time or raise your stress level to the breaking point. This month, let's take a look at some strategies to solve pesky behavior problems without losing your cool.

Let's start with some behavior management basics. Most of this is common sense, but reminders never hurt. We start with some basic assumptions. Kids want to be good. They want to please the adults and they like to minimize stress just as much as we do. When they have behavior problems, there is likely an underlying discomfort or problem that can be resolved. There's a big difference between a "bad kid" and a "bad behavior." Never, ever tell a child that they've been "bad." That kind of language can leave scars that never do truly heal. Instead, make sure to separate the judgment on the behavior from the child's worth and personhood.

All behavior has a goal, and the goal is not "to get under my skin." Whether the child is conscious of it or not, they want something and they sometimes use inappropriate actions to get what they want.

Behavior is the observable part of what is going on, and it's what we can teach kids to control. Feelings are never wrong or bad; they just need to be expressed in positive and productive ways. The goal of behavior management (and parenting in general) is to raise self-sufficient, productive human beings. To do so, we use various forms of discipline when the situation calls for it. However, punishment is one of the least effective forms of discipline. Prevention, distraction, rewarding desirable behaviors, and redirection are all preferable strategies. Remember, the root word of "discipline" is "disciple," which can be a verb (an action) that means "to teach or train." Whatever strategies we use for discipline need to be designed to teach and help the child learn something.

Whining

You know that tone of voice, and if you're like most adults, you dread hearing it. Whenever someone doesn't get their way, they raise the pitch of their voice and turn on that ugly tone. What to do? Well, for starters, don't get mad. Responding in that way will only encourage the behavior. Don't give in, either. That will reward a behavior that you definitely want to decrease

instead of increase.

Check for an underlying cause for the whining. Many children, especially young ones, whine when they are overtired, stressed, hungry, or otherwise uncomfortable. Address those situations and frequently the whining will disappear. If everything is in order and the child is still whiny, chances are that you are dealing with a habitual whiner. This child has been rewarded for whining, usually by someone in his or her life that gives in and gives them what they want when they use that tone of voice.

The best cure for whining is ignoring. Not only ignoring, but making sure that the outcome of the situation is the opposite of the child's goal is very important to decreasing whining. Get all of the adults in your child's life (parents, grandparents, child care providers, teachers) involved with this project, and make sure NO ONE is giving in to the whining. Once everyone is consistent, it takes very little time to get rid of this pesky behavior.

Sometimes this is easier said than done, however, if you don't have control of every minute of your child's day. In this case, just make sure as many of you as possible are consistent, and children will quickly learn to modify their behavior around you.

If your whiner is of school age, one very good cure is to have him or her put the request or comment into writing. Not only is it really good practice for school work, it is virtually impossible to whine in writing!

Bickering

Kids usually bicker when they don't have anything better to do. Bickering can also be a sign that someone feels they are being treated unfairly. When the kids seem to be at each other's throats, there are a few good cures. Try engaging all of them in an exciting project that only is allowed to be used when they are civil to one another, and gets removed when they pick on each other. Some ideas that work for many include water play, sidewalk chalk, cooking projects, making a movie, and similar highly motivating fun. Just make sure to stop the project at the first sign of incivility.

Make sure that everyone really is being treated fairly. Sometimes older kids will take advantage of younger, and other times, younger kids think they can get away with causing trouble just because they are younger. Monitor carefully to make sure no one is treating others unfairly behind your back.

Enforced separation is usually the best cure for bickering. Send everyone to their own spot in the house or yard

for some alone time, and try being a group again later in the day. Another effective idea that works if you have more than two combatants is to start a chart. When someone has a complaint about someone else, the child puts a mark by his or her own name and by the name of the person they are unhappy with. At the end of the day, the child with the fewest marks can get a reward.

Tattling

Tattlers are usually wanting attention. If you have one (or more) that are constantly running to you to report minor infractions, try these ideas. First of all, make it clear what kinds of problems you do want to hear about. Injuries, gross misconduct or dangerous behavior are often high on the list. Make it clear to your tattler that other problems need to be solved by the kids. Be sure to teach and model conflict resolution skills so the youngsters learn to mediate their own differences of opinion.

Nagging

Ok, this may be more of an adult problem than a child one, but it's caused by noncompliance from the kids. We all have times when we feel like a broken record, constantly asking the kids (or telling them or yelling at them) to do the same routine things. We figure they should KNOW that they are supposed to do these things without being told, or at least the first time we ask them. They get negligent and we get angry after having to repeat ourselves so many times. This too, like so many other troublesome behaviors, is often a habitual problem, and it takes a bit of effort to make it stop, but there is a cure.

The cure is for us to stop nagging. Now, that doesn't mean that the kids get to slack on their responsibilities or on doing what we ask. WE just need to stop asking over and over again without putting any teeth into the request. The secret to eliminating nagging is to ask once and only once for something to be done, give the kids a clear deadline, and state a consequence if the chore or deed is not accomplished by the deadline. Then say no more about it until the deadline has passed, and implement your chosen consequence. The key is consistency. Be positive that you can and will follow through, and then be absolutely sure that you do. So instead of constantly asking the kids to make their beds throughout the day and becoming increasingly frustrated when they do not comply, simply remind them once (or not at all if they are older!), set a deadline (say by 9 AM

daily), and state a consequence (if the bed is not made, you will not be allowed to watch television until it is). Then enforce it. No questions asked, and no compromises or bargaining. Try it; it works!

Another cure for nagging is a checklist. If the troublesome activities are routines, develop a checklist for daily or weekly use, and let the kids check off items when they are finished. Don't forget the deadlines and consequences, and be sure to set up a reward for accomplished goals. Presto! No more nagging because kids know exactly what is expected by when and what will happen if they choose not to comply.


You'll need to follow through on your consequence a few times to let them know you mean business, but after that, it's going to be pretty smooth sailing.

Rewards and Consequences

Which brings me to another very important set of concepts that apply when you are trying to change a child's behavior. Remember, in the beginning of this article, I mentioned that all behavior has a goal and a purpose? Everyone (you, me, your spouse or partner, and your kids) works towards goals with everything we do. Sometimes these goals are obvious, like working for a paycheck or eating right to lose weight. Sometimes the goals are hidden or even subconscious, like working to change relationships or to fulfill ideals. The key to managing behavior is to figure out what the goal is, and then provide an alternative route to get it accomplished. Provide a more enticing reward for doing the right thing and the desirable behavior than what doing the wrong one offers. Remember that rewards and positive motivation systems are far more effective and powerful for changing behavior than working to avoid a consequence or a punishment, so try to set up systems where kids are trying to earn pleasing things rather than trying to avoid harsh things. Everyone will be less stressed, and you will be on your way to a delightful summer when you can enjoy one another's company most of the time.

Sandy Fleming is an educational consultant, writer and private tutor living in Edwardsburg. Be sure to check out her website at <http://sandyflemingonline.com> for resources and tips to keep the educational ball rolling for all ages this summer.

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NATURE NOTES

Extinct Carolina Parakeet featured

This week I'd like to feature an extinct bird, the Carolina parakeet, being the only native parrot to the United States.

The bird in the photo was part of a collection of stuffed museum mounts and study skins at Niles High School for many decades.

Back in the 1920s until perhaps the early 1950s, Russell Payne of Niles taught biology for Niles High School. This included ornithology, the study of birds.

In those days studying birds meant collecting birds, meaning students went out and shot wild birds, then brought them back to the lab where the dead birds were prepared as study skins, or posing them with wire and cotton as "life-like" mounts.

Those studying ornithology would also place a skin tag, or label, wired to the birds foot. The tag would include species name, sex of the bird, possible age, location collected and collector.

Unfortunately, the Carolina parakeet mount that had resided in Niles High School for decades was never known to have a skin tag attached to it, which could have confirmed or denied the species as having occurred in Michigan. No other museum specimens are believed to have been taken in Michigan.

It has been suggested that the Niles High School bird study skins came from the defunct "Barron Museum", which was started in Niles in 1837 by Clement L. Barron. Barron's museum was known nationally for its natural history collections. In 1869 Barron's museum had the states only known specimen of a paddlefish (Poydolon spathula).

"Paroquets" were observed in the St. Joseph River Valley in 1718, by French missionaries but it is not known whether the observer saw them north or south of the Indiana-Michigan line.

In the early part of the 1800s, the Carolina parakeet occurred from Florida, west to east Texas and north to Colorado, and perhaps Iowa. Early account describe the species northern range limits as Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

It was more common in the southern United States, living in floodplain forests near river banks in addition to forests clearings.

Behavioral trait which led to its downfall are that it liked to eat fruit and grain crops intended for humans, and it was a very noisy bird, drawing attention wherever it resided. The parakeet was easily shot, or captured and sold in the pet trade.

The clearing of the eastern forests along with unregulated shooting of the species led to its demise. The last authenticated record of a Carolina parakeet in Indiana was in 1860.

By the early 1900s they were likely gone north of the Ohio River and soon became very scarce everywhere.

In 1904 the last authenticated wild Carolina parakeet was killed in Florida. The Cincinnati Zoo owned a pair of Carolina parakeets, and the last one died on February 21, 1918. Sight records of the bird continued to be reported from remote areas of Florida until the 1920s.

So, the Carolina parakeet has never been authenticated as having occurred in



Museum mount of stuffed Carolina Parakeet. Our only native Parrot in North America became extinct by 1920s. No authenticated records from Michigan are known. Although the specimen is somewhat faded, it still retains the basic color pattern of green body, with orange forehead, bright-yellow head and neck, and blue tipped wings. Male and females were not distinguishable unless in hand. Photos by Pat Underwood of Love Creek County Park.

Michigan. I think they almost certainly did, but in science we need proof such as

specimen, or in modern times clear photographs to document rare species.

LOCAL HISTORY

Thomas Bond's Civil War Diary

Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch

Thomas Faxon Bond was serving in the 19th Michigan Infantry during the Civil War. Bond was wounded in his back on May 15, 1864 and spent considerable time in hospital. His brother Frank died October 15, 1864.

During the 1860s the extended Bond family lived in and around Dowagiac, specifically in Wayne and Volinia Townships, likely living on property that is located between the current roads Fosdick and Crane Streets, northeast of Dowagiac.

It is believed that Thomas F. Bond lived in Volinia Township with his wife Clara, often referred to as "Darling" and young child in 1864.

During December of 1864, T.F. Bond was in the Army Hospital at Louisville, Kentucky.

Friday, December 16, 1864 -- Felt pretty well & had not much to do in the afternoon. Wrote letter to Amos & Abbie, and one to Clara in afternoon. The battle still progressing at Nash[ville] our men have captured five

thousand prisoners and several pieces of artillery, and move the army about 7 miles. No letter from home. What does it mean[?] Was sick in the night Papers came from town.

Saturday, December 17, 1864 -- Felt very bad all day Had [...?] diarrhea again. Helped distribute papers in the forenoon, and in the afternoon did not do much except bring up some Coal. A foggy morn., but afterwards came up very fair. Not a word from my loved ones. How can I wait until next week before I get a letter[?].

Sunday, December 18, 1864 -- A misty, foggy day which was very disagreeable. Had service in the forenoon. the men turned out pretty well. Received a good letter in the afternoon from Clara. The folks at home were all comfortably well, and Cynthia better. Were having very Cold weather and plenty of snow there. Oh! that I might be with them, as how I am of no benefit here.

Monday, December 19, 1864 -- A Stormy day again, and Oh! how gloomy. Quite a number of men came in, and 200 transferred to Covington. Orders to put up tents for four hundred more men from Nash. The news good from all quarters. The weather changed and froze through the night. I remained at the room

most of the day.

Tuesday, December 20, 1864 -- A Cold morning but the sun came out and was very pleasant. Thawed some and was quite muddy. Some men came in during the day. Quite a number of tents put up. I remained at the room most of the day. wrote a letter to Clara in the afternoon, sent five dollars to her for paper. Report of another three hundred thousand call for troops. Sent papers home.

Wednesday, December 21, 1864 -- A very snowy unpleasant day and Cold. But there were more tents erected for the men who are expected. I felt very bad all day. The Chaplain did not remain up here but a little while. George Washburn came over in the afternoon and wrote some letters. Not much news from any quarters.

Thursday, December 22, 1864 -- Was Cold and frosty in the morning but the Sun came out and was a pleasant day but Cold air. Thawed some. Got the papers from home and a handkerchief with them. Wrote two letters in the afternoon for Adam Smith in ward 11, was wounded in the left hand. No news from the front. Few men came in the hospital this day.

Friday, December 23, 1864 -- A beautiful day but cold

wind. Went to the City and had a negative taken for 1/2 dozen photos and had one dozen Pherrotypes [ferrotype, aka tintype] taken. The City all a bustle and confusion making preparation for Christmas. Got me a diary for next year. Very encouraging news from the army. How much I would like to be with my loved ones for the Holidays.

Saturday, December 24, 1864 -- A beautiful day again, but much warmer than yesterday. Gave a picture to Prouty & sent one to Corp Hyde and gave one to George Washburn & Chaplain took one. Wrote a letter to my darling and sent one to her & one to Cynthia. Had a great time in the afternoon unpacking boxes sent to Chaplain for the sick soldiers containing many luxuries which were gratefully received.

Sunday, December 25, 1864 -- A stormy day and did not feel very well., but went over and put the hall in readiness for the meeting which was attended by few, but a good sermon. I remained at the room most of the afternoon felt lonesome and sad, without one word from my loved ones. But the time will come soon, I hope when I can return to them.

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THE LAST WORD

Ok, I'm sorry about the peanut butter jar thing

So, spring was nearly over and the days were taking a definite turn towards summer; the early hours were still cool but by 10 or so it was getting on to stupid-summer humid and hot.

I really wasn't paying too much attention to the change of seasons ... it seems to happen every year about this time whether I'm paying attention or not.

It was a pretty ordinary morning. The alarm rang at 5 am as it always does. And as I always do, I silently recited my daily mantra of curses at it in my semi-conscious half-slumber until the snooze alarm sounded 5:15 and forced me to my feet. I stumbled to the front door, hooked the leash to the dog's collar, grabbed a flashlight and blindly felt my way into the street so my little puppy could take care of her morning business.

Pretty routine. Nothing new here. Until the pup went nuts.

Not normal dog crazy ... she went on full alert, jumped straight up into the air about 2 feet and let out a yelp that meant something between "bad dog alert," and "aliens have just landed, and they look like they're hungry for dogs!"

As groggy and disoriented as I already was, it scared the hell out of me.

Temporarily stunned into a rigidity that verged near-rigor mortis, my eyes darted into the shadows at the edge of the road, scanning frantically for the vile, certainly rabid beast that was about to pounce on us and turn our average morning into a nightmare of terror.

I counted the heartbeats that were

throbbing my ears as I waited for almost certain death.

My dog, who is apparently more accustomed to facing such imminent peril than I, recovered first, dancing backward in an almost "I dare ya" prance, her ears flattened, her hackles raised. She crouched into a killer attack pose, curled her lips back to expose fangs and emitted a fierce-some growl into the dark.

For the 2,345 years that passed in the next half second, we waited for the fight to begin.

Finally, she lowered her nose almost to the pavement, sniffed indignantly and then stood and began barking loudly at a tiny, glowing speck on the asphalt.

The light blinked out, then re-lit in bright yellow. The dog jumped backward again, barking and snarling in fear. The nearly dead lightening bug was unimpressed. It didn't flinch an inch.

I started to breath again, a little embarrassed to have been so shaken by firefly. Memories of my childhood flooded my brain ... lightening bugs had been one of the first insects that my parents had let me handle. I remembered being six or seven years old and rushing into the house at dusk to find an empty (or near-empty) peanut butter jar, hastily rinsing it and poking holes in the top with a bent fork (a long story of misplaced youthful ebullience that ended in a lecture and an hour of tine straightening), filling it with pieces of grass (we all assumed that lightening bugs ate grass and would be grateful for the snack in their captivity).

I remembered catching dozens in one

evening and cramming them into the glass prison, frantically trying to keep the earlier prisoners from escaping. And then sneaking the glowing, strobe-light of a jar into my bedroom so I could watch them all night ... only to awaken hours later to discover that one or more of the makeshift air holes must have been overly large and a sizable population of the beasties were now loose in the night, blinking silently over my head (yet another lecture and a summer day's mid-morning wasted recapturing the buggies and releasing them to the wild out the window... parents can be pretty unreasonable when there are a few insects that get loose in the house).

The dog's gesticulations and snarls brought me back to the present.

"Silly dog," I chided. "It's only a little lightening bug."

Then it dawned on me ... despite the balmy weather, this was the first lightening bug I'd seen this season. How had I not noticed their absence? When I was a kid the first lightening bugs were as important in marking summer time as the first dime-store Santa was in alerting me to start a Christmas list of goodies I wanted, no, expected, my parents to buy for me. The coming of the fireflies was a psychological harbinger, an explosion of memories of all things good about being a kid in the summer ... of swimming holes and fishing poles and bike riding to the city pool and afternoons so hot the sweat soaked the collar of my shirt and dripped off my forehead and chin onto the dirt of the infield where I stood sentinel as shortstop supreme in the annual brag-

ging-right sandlot summer-long tournament.

The image of the little flashing neon-yellow creature stayed with me all that day, hauntingly reminding me at first of the sweetness of my youth, but morphing into a bittersweet and almost surreal tang of the reality that invariably accompanies carrying an AARP card ... of wrinkles and arthritis and high blood pressure and hearing loss and the bald spot on the top of my head and the tire around my waist and the medicine cabinet full of tinctures, medicines, salves, salts and relief-promising snake oils.

By supper time I was angry at the vile creepy crawlies ... I blamed them for tainting my youth, stealing my vitality, of single-handedly (or feeler-handedly) making me feel so old.

"I hope I never see another of those horrid things," I thought to myself as the sun began to set.

But, as life often does, just when you think things couldn't possibly get worse, they do ... and when I took the dog out for her after-dinner business, we were greeted by an entire army of those evil torch bearers rising in silent, mocking malevolence from the corn field across the road at the top of the hill.

Hundreds and hundreds of tiny firelights reminding me I'm not a boy anymore ... No matter how much I'd like to, there are just too many to stuff into a jar ... and even if I could, the chase would probably cripple me.

I guess Mother Nature is paying me back for the peanut butter jar thing.

Oh well. At least it's summer.



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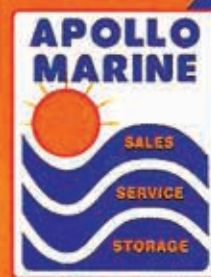
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