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June 2016

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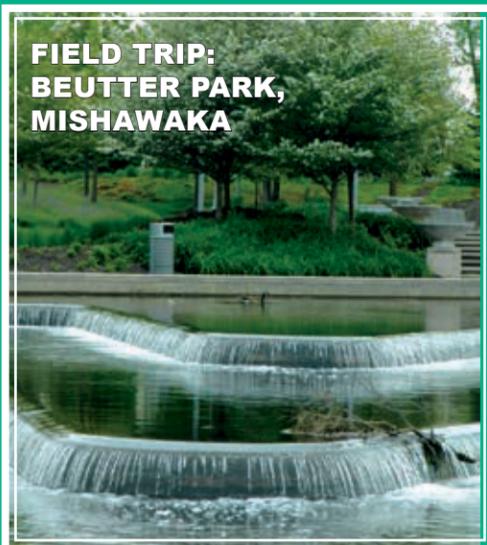
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Neighbors is published monthly from
March through December.

To contact Neighbors

(269) 228-1080
(269) 476-1680

<http://www.cassneighbors.com>

sailorphil@philvitale.com
jack@beanstalk.net

REGIONAL NEWS

Relay for Life

The Cass County Relay for Life will be from 6 pm June 17 to 6 pm June 18 at the Cass County Fairgrounds in Cassopolis. People who are interested in joining the planning committee, signing up a team for the relay or wish to donate can do so by visiting the Cass County Relay for Life webpage at <http://relayforlife.org/casscountymi>.

Three Rivers Relay for Life

Now is the time to register for the Three Rivers area Relay for Life event, scheduled for June 24 from 3 pm to midnight at the Three Rivers High School Track. Teams and individuals are welcome to walk and join the activities. Survivors and their guest are also invited to attend a special survivor recognition dinner. Registration forms are available at the libraries in Three Rivers, Constantine, Centreville and Mendon. Or you can register on-line. Just Google Three Rivers Michigan Relay for Life.

Second Annual Ranger Run, Walk

The Second annual Ranger Run, 5k Run/Walk will take place on Saturday, June 25, beginning at Sam Adams Elementary in Cassopolis. Registration will begin at 7:30 am, the race will start at 8:30 am. Cost is \$20 for early registration, \$25 for day-of-race registration. Register online at imathlete.com/events/rangerrun or mail to Ranger Run, PO Box 43, Cassopolis, MI 49031. For more info call John Adams at 591-1328.

Boating safety class

The Marine Division of the Cass County Sheriff's Office will have a Boating Safety Class at the Diamond Lake

Yacht Club (DLYC) on Sunday June 26.

Individuals may pre-register for the class by calling 269-445-1240 or register at the Administration desk at the Sheriff's Office (321 N M62 Hwy, Cassopolis).

Requirements include individuals must be a minimum of 12 years of age by the date of the class to attend. An individual's legal name, address, phone number and date of birth are required to register. Parents are encouraged to complete the class with their children.

Please arrive by 7:45 am; class hours are from 8 am-1 pm. Registrants are required to bring a #2 pencil, lunch and drink(s).

Upon successful completion of the class, attendees will receive a boating safety certificate which must be presented when stopped by marine law enforcement to avoid a fine. As space is limited, please register soon.

Cass County CASA Hosts 9th Annual Auction & Dinner June 24

The 9th Annual CASA Reception, Auction & Dinner will take place at Our Lady of the Lake Social Hall in Edwardsburg at 6 pm Friday, June 24. There will be a reception with Judge Dobrich followed by dinner and live auction and raffle.

Some of the live auction items include Notre Dame football tickets, 100 bottles of Craft Beer, 36 bottles of wine and a cooler, Indian Lake Progressive Dinner & Pontoon Cruise, Father Joe's Chal-dean Dinner, Mackinac Island Getaway: 2 nights at the Grand Hotel including meals, Chicago weekend at The Talbot Hotel, including dinner options and VIP passes, Hawks Head Golf Package, Weekend at a Diamond Lake Cottage.

The raffle winner chooses between Charleston Luxury Getaway, Sip & Soar through Napa Valley, or Scottsdale Championship Golf. \$6,000 value, tickets \$25 and available now.

For more detailed information, visit www.cassocasa.org. Tickets are \$75 per person and can be purchased from CASA board members or at the CASA office in Cassopolis. Tables of 8 are available. Tickets include the Friends of CASA reception hosted by the Honorable Susan L. Dobrich.

For more information or raffle tickets contact Erica Boulanger or Jim Ward at 445-4431 or cassocasa2@yahoo.com

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 OKeefe St.

Call for Artists 2016

The Cass Area Artists Summer Fine Art and Crafts Show will be held on July 9, on the grounds of the Lowe Center in Cassopolis. This multimedia show features juried, handmade, or original-concept art. Artists may apply as individuals or as part of an arts-organization booth. More information is available at our website: <http://www.cassareaartist.com/>

[art-show.html](#)

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.

CUMC Garage Sale

The Cassopolis United Methodist Church will have a garage sale at 21364 Shore Acres Rd. on June 24 and 25, during the Diamond Lake Garage Sale. The church hopes to continue to pay off the roof over the fellowship hall. To donate items for sale, call 445-3107.

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

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REGIONAL NEWS

presentations and displays in the Vandalia Youth Center, guided tours of UGRR 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.

Smith's Chapel open house

Smith's Chapel Historical commission will hold an Open house for Smith's Chapel, 29858 Redfield Rd, Niles, Mi 49120 (between Fir Rd and Brush Rd east of Niles) on June 25, from 10 am until 1 pm. Please come and learn the history of the oldest church in southwestern Michigan and tour the nearby cemetery and see the graves of the people that established the area

BWUN Women Learn and Connect

Business Women United Network (BWUN), in partnership with SCORE, is hosting a reception on Thursday, June 9, for people who want to learn more about BWUN and what they do.

The event will take place from 5 -

6:30 pm at the Windsor Park Conference Center, 4020 Edison Lakes Parkway, Mishawaka.

Flywheelers to host annual Swap Meet & Hammer In June 10, 11

Over 160 vendors selling everything from antiques to toys are expected at the annual "Swap Meet and Hammer In" at the Michigan Flywheelers Museum on June 10 and 11

This year marks the 20th anniversary for the fundraising event which includes a "Hammer In" and antique tractor pulls.

The two-day event will start at 8 am Friday, June 10 and run until 4 pm Saturday, June 11 at the museum which is located on 68th street.

Those coming on Saturday can also watch a tractor pull hosted by the members of the Lakeshore Antique Tractor Club. The pull starts at 11 am.

Held rain or shine, gates open at 8 am both days. Admission is \$2 per person and includes the Swap Meet, Hammer In and Tractor Pull. Children under 12 are free with an adult. Please note this is a pet-free event.

Camping is available during the Swap Meet. Cost is \$10 per night per camping unit plus daily admission per person. Electrical hook-up is \$10 extra. There is a \$15 registration fee for anyone bringing in personal transportation vehicles, such as golf carts.

All proceeds from the events are used for operational expenses and education projects at the museum.

The Michigan Flywheelers Museum is located at 06285 68th Street. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of antique farm machinery

and its history. It hosts one of the largest antique engine and tractor shows in the state every September. This year's show will be held Thursday, Sept. 8 through Sunday, Sept. 11.

For more information, contact Weniger at 906-1257 or the museum at 639-2010, www.michiganflywheelers.org, michiganflywheelers@yahoo.com or Facebook.

Preschoolers discover "Pond Critters" at St. Patrick's County Park

Preschoolers and an accompanying adult will learn how to identify animals found living at the bottom of ponds from 9:30 to 11 am on Thursday, June 16. The class includes story time, hands-on nature activities, an outdoor hike and a craft.

Program fee: \$5/child-adult pair and \$3 for a second child with parent. Pre-registration and pre-payment required by June 13.

For more information, please call 574/654-3155.

Crandall named Midwest CFO

Midwest Energy Cooperative has named Todd Crandall as the newly-appointed chief financial officer (CFO). Crandall joins Midwest from Telcom Management Services in Mayfield, KY where he served as CFO and was responsible for the financial operations of a group of telecommunications companies providing advanced communication services to customers in Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama.

As CFO, Crandall will manage development and execution of the financial strategy and budgets for all lines of business, and oversee all financial processes

including business modeling, forecasting, metrics, analysis, cash management, treasury, mergers and acquisitions, and profit improvement planning. He succeeds John Miner, who has served as CFO since 1998. Miner will continue to provide key leadership in other areas during the transition until he retires.

Crandall is a Certified Public Accountant with more than 25 years of financial management experience. As CFO at Telecom Management Services he directed financial reporting, budgeting and treasury activities of each company including the evaluation of strategic business opportunities, capital structure, and overall financial performance.

Health screenings in Cassopolis

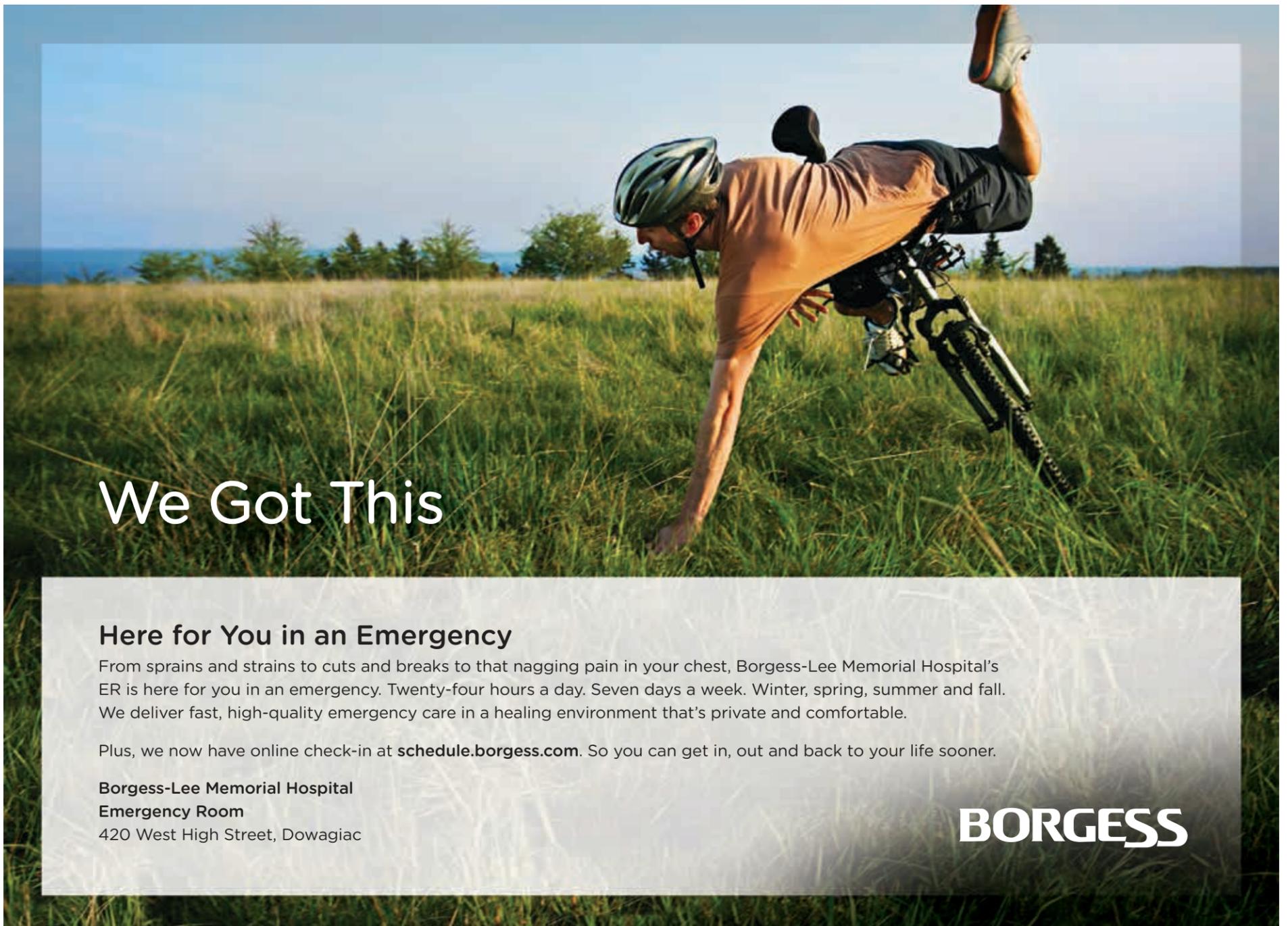
Residents in and around the Cassopolis area can learn about their risk for cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, and other chronic, serious conditions with screenings by Life Line Screening. Penn Friends Community Church will host this event June 17 at the church, 19107 Quaker St in Cassopolis.

Screenings can check for:

- The level of plaque buildup in your arteries, related to risk for heart disease, stroke and overall vascular health.
- HDL and LDL Cholesterol levels
- Diabetes risk
- Bone density as a risk for possible osteoporosis
- Kidney and thyroid function, and more

Screenings are affordable, convenient and accessible for wheelchairs and those with trouble walking. Free parking is available.

Packages start at \$149.



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BORGESS

REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

June 1 – Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market reopens, 9 am - 2 pm, Division and Railroad St., 782-8212

June 2 - Underground Railroad Wax Museum student performances, Bonine House, 10:30 am - Noon, Cassopolis

June 4 - Porter Township Clean-up Day, June 2 American Waste, Union, 8 am - Noon

June 4 - Diamond Lake Association Annual Meeting, 10 am, Diamond Lake Yacht Club

June 6 - Making Change: Homeownership Education Classes Begin, Monday and Thursday nights 5-8 pm, register at: www.changingthebalance.org, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822

June 7 Portage Lake Center Elementary Underground Railroad Wax Museum at the Bonine House, 10:30 am to noon, Cassopolis

June 9 - BWUN Women Learn and Connect reception, 5 - 6:30 pm, Windsor Park Conference Center, 4020 Edison Lakes Parkway, Mishawaka

June 10, 11 - Michigan Flywheelers annual Swap Meet & Hammer, 8 am Friday, \$2 per person, children under 12 free with an adult. 6285 68th Street., 906-1257, 639-2010, www.michiganflywheelers.org, michiganflywheelers@yahoo.com or Facebook

June 11 - Free Super Fun Color Run, 9 am, Registration at Cass District Library or www.cass.lib.mi.us, run at Cass County Council on Aging Track, 357-7822 for info

June 11 - Summer Reading Club at Cass District Library, regular business hours, Sign-up to participate in the reading club at your local Cass District Library branch, 57-7822

June 14 - Book Bunch Book Club, 5:30 pm, JCass District Library- Howard Branch, 487-9214

June 14 - Moving and Grooving Family Fitness, 5:30 pm, Tuesdays from June 14-July 9, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822

June 17 - Cass County Relay for Life, fairgrounds, Cassopolis, www.relayforlife.org/cass-countymi

June 17 - Life Line Health screenings, Penn Friends Community Church, 19107 Quaker St, Cassopolis, packages start at \$149, 877- 237-1287, www.lifelinescreening.com

June 20 - Little Twisters Yoga Storytime, 10 am Mondays until July 18, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822

June 20 - Lunch Bunch Storytime, Noon on Mondays until July 18, Bring your own picnic lunch, Cass District Library-Howard Branch, 487-9214

June 21, 22, 24 - Lunch Bunch Storytime, 10 am Tuesdays until July 12, A, Cass District Library-Howard Branch, 487-9214; Noon Wednesdays until July 13, Cass District Library-Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215; 10 am on Fridays until July 15, Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

June 22 - Shake My Sillies Out Storytime, 10 am Wednesdays until July 13, Cass District Library-Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

June 22 - Go for the Gold Magic Show, 11 am, Cass District Library-Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215; 1 pm, Cass District Library-Howard Branch, 487-9214

June 23 -- Craft Day, 10 am, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822; 1 pm Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

June 24 - Three Rivers Relay for Life, 3 pm - midnight, Three Rivers High School Track

June 24 - 9th annual CASA Auction, Dinner, 6 pm, Our Lady of the Lake Social Hall, Edwardsburg, 445-4431 or casscocasa2@yahoo.com

June 24, 25 - Diamond Lake All-Lake Garage Sale, Friday 9 am - 2 pm, Saturday, 9 am - Noon

June 24, 25, Cassopolis United Methodist Church garage Sale, 21364 Shore Acres, 445-3107

June 25 - Smith's Chapel Open House, 29858 Redfield Rd., Niles, 10 am - 1 pm

June 25 - Second annual Ranger Run, 5k Run/Walk, Sam Adams Elementary, Cassopolis. Registration at 7:30 am, race will start at 8:30 am, \$20 for early registration, \$25 for day-of-race registration. Register at imathlete.com/events/ranger-run or mail to Ranger Run, PO Box 43, Cassopolis, MI 49031 call John Adams at 591-1328

June 26 - Boating safety class, Diamond Lake Yacht Club (DLYC), arrive at 7:45 am, per-register at 445-1240 or register at the Administration desk at the Sheriff's Office (321 N M62 Hwy, Cassopolis)

June 28 - Craft Day, 10 am, Cass District Library-Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215; Cass District Library-Howard Branch, 487-9214

June 28 - 5 pm - National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting, Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

June 30 - Wildlife Safari Live Animal Show, 2 pm, Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821, Cass District Library-Main Library, 357-7822

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 26 5 pm - National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting, Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

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 11-15 - Walk on the Wild Side Outdoor Adventure day camp, St. Patrick's County Park, So. Bend, 574-654-3115

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

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

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

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

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

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

August 10 - Paddles, Poles, Discs and Arrows Outdoor Adventure day camp, 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. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

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

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

September 27 - 5 pm - The National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting, Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

October 25 - 5 pm - National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting, Super Buffet in Benton Harbor. All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

October 28 - Charity Run for Zachary Sweet, sponsored by the Michigan 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 will be March 28, 2017. For information call Jean Rowe, 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net



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HEALTH & FITNESS

I'm too heavy to exercise

By **Brenda Harris**
Cass COA

I'm going to tell you right up front that starting and sticking to an effective exercise program is not easy. The fact is that if you're very overweight and out of shape, you're likely going to face some obstacles — both physically and mentally — that will challenge you in every way.

These obstacles are not obstacles to exercise, they are the same challenges that stand between you and the life you want for yourself. If you meet these challenges head on now you can become successful at making exercise a part of your daily life. Self-management skills and the confidence you need to handle just about anything else life might throw at you. Exercise can help you lose some unwanted pounds and baggage as well.

All this talk about exercise may sound pretty dramatic but you have to start. Just getting started and getting off your backside and into motion brings you face to face with all the parts of yourself that had helped getting you into this mess.

Oh ya, you can become real good at excuse making, procrastination, and rationalization. Then there is the part that is afraid of what other

people might think about you; the part of you that doesn't think you have what it takes to lose weight; the part of you that is afraid of what might happen if you reach your goal; and yes, even the part that just liked sitting on the couch with a bag of chips a lot more than all of the huffing, puffing and sweating of exercising.

You may be one of those people that have tried all types of weight lost programs. After years of yo-yo dieting and trying one miracle diet after another, your path beyond all these obstacles starts with a very slow, and maybe painful, walk around the block or on a treadmill. Let's talk about some of the challenges you might face, and how you are going to handle them.

The first thing is to focus on getting to a safe yet effective start. One of the biggest mistake is making assumptions about what they can't do without checking with someone who knows how to determine that. You may have a physical problem, ranging from a medical condition that limits what you can do, to effects of years of obesity and a sedentary lifestyle. Some of these problems are weakness, muscle pain and inflexibility. The first step is to sort out what really can't be done, from what can. That begins with a visit to the doctor, to get a medically approved

exercise prescription. Once you get the ok to start a program, go see a trainer and ask for help to get a fitness plan that you can take back to your doctor for approval or modification. Between these two sources, you should get ideas to start safely.

Find something that fits you that works. Look for a gym that suits you — if you get down on the floor, you may not be able to get up again by yourself, and your body just doesn't bend or let you get into positions others can do. You've been to the gym, but you don't even fit into half the machines there, and you felt like you were going to throw up after two minutes on the elliptical machine. To make things worst who thought it was a good idea to put those mirrors everywhere?

The solution to this is: almost every exercise can be modified so you can do it in a way that meets your needs. An example is a chair exercises that allow you to do many strength and stretching exercises that otherwise would have to be done on the floor or standing up the whole time.

The main idea is to start where you are right now and adapt exercises to your needs and capacities instead of trying to use exercises that aren't right for you. Don't give up, there is a exercise workout for you!

Vacation Healthy Choices

By **Brenda Harris**
Cass COA

Vacation season is here. You deserve a break, working hard the last few months, becoming a fitter, healthier you. While on vacation is a time to be stress free and relaxed, it is also a time to get out of the daily routine. But it shouldn't be a break from your healthy habits.

All it takes is a little planning to keep on the right path of healthy choices while on vacation. Whatever your plans — a family road trip, a boat cruise, relaxing on the beach, you can avoid packing on those unwanted vacation pounds by packing some healthy foods and workout gear.

On the road trip

If you are traveling by car it is important to

schedule several breaks into your itinerary. Pack a cooler full of healthy snacks such as chopped veggies, fresh fruits, bottle water, low-fat yogurt, peanut butter sandwiches, popcorn and pretzels. Don't skip meals, and try not to go more than 4-5 hours without eating.

It is important to plan exercise and stretching breaks. Just three 10-minute activities add up to 30 minutes of workout time. Example of some 10-minute activities are quick walk or jog, stretch and run around with the kids, and even chasing after the dog.

Plan for fitness every day. Cruises usually offer complete gyms, aerobics classes, trainers, running tracks and pools. Go dancing in the evening and play plenty of beach games when docked. Take a morning walk around the track

while enjoying the sights and the fresh air.

Staying in Shape

As the demand for healthy eating and exercising rises, hotels are listening to their guests. There's no reason not to work out or eat right just because you are away from home. Before leaving home, find out what fitness opportunities the hotel offers. While most will have a pool, others may offer tennis, walking paths, bike rentals and full gyms. Then don't forget to pack exercise clothes and gear. If your hotel does not have a gym, ask if they are affiliated with a nearby local gym.

Many will offer day passes at a discount for hotel guests. Ask the hotel about healthy restaurants, markets, parks, trails and maps. Design your own hotel room workout. All you need to pack is

some lightweight, cheap equipment: resistance bands, a jump rope and a sticky mat. Most bands will come with illustrated exercises. You can also do push-ups, crunches, lunges, squats, and triceps dips.

Remember to pack walking shoes, a swimsuit, exercise equipment and loose, comfortable clothing. Don't forget your sun glasses, hat, and sunscreen.

It is really worth all the work planning your vacation agenda. You most likely won't lose weight on vacation, but maintenance is possible. Vacation should be fun! Try new things, sightsee on foot, go rock climbing and enjoy the good food without blowing what you have worked so hard to be. Being healthy is a lifestyle, not a quick fix.

Have a great and healthy vacation!!

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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

If you're reading this, it's June!

by JANE BOUDREAU

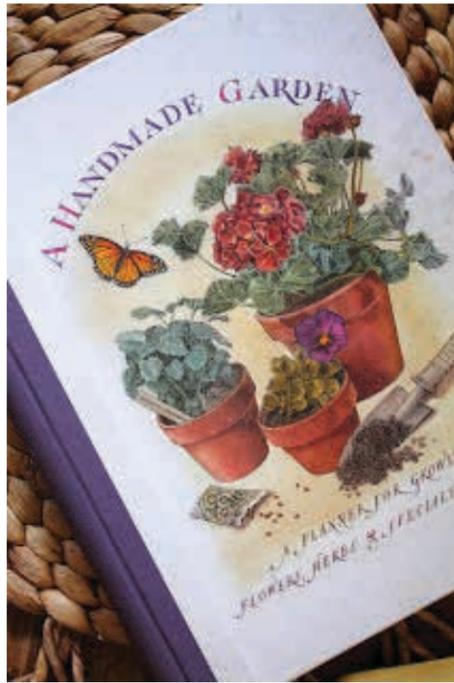
Hey Neighbors! If you are reading this then June is here! Yay! I've always thought it was the perfect month of summer. Mild temperatures, clear blue skies, the vibrant colors of flowers popping up everywhere and the lush green grass, trees and plants. After June has come and gone we can feel entitled to stay inside with the air conditioning running, the sprinklers on outside, drinking ice tea and watching game shows. Our dear and gentle friend, June, has headed out and its up to us to sail on into the dreaded dogs days of summer. But for now we are having fun and I love a good time!

Do you have a lot of planting going on or are you one who has perennial plants that come back every year to reward you with their faithfulness? I've gotten in the groove of planting them over the past ten years or so and I could kick myself for not having done this sooner. I never realized how planting them would free up my time for years to come and that they would multiply and spread over time. I've learned how to dig up these plants and divide them to fill in other garden spaces. How economical is that?

Of course you may want pops of color here and there other than garden beds and that's when we have beautiful annuals to rely on. The petunias you see in this picture are a variety that really spreads out, you can barely see the pot. My husband loves his boxwood hedges and I love pots of flowers wherever I can sneak them in. Pretty colors on your patio and deck can transport you right into the middle of a gorgeous garden without the work and weeding. We have a very large patio at our lakehouse and these are some of the things I've learned over the years about planting flowers in pots:

1) Buy good potting soil. Yes, spend a few extra dollars because you can reuse it from year to year. In the fall remove the spent flowers and the soil around its roots. You can then store the pot with the remaining soil and the following spring add a bit more, mixing up well. If storage space is a premium, empty the soil into a large plastic container, maybe a large storage bin with a lid from a Dollar Store and just keep it next to your shed or in the garage until spring. Then you can stack your pots to save space.

2) Pots. I love simple clay or ceramic pots but they dry out very fast and that mean more time and money watering. If you are a traditionalist, find a smaller plastic pot that will fit into the clay pot



snugly. Voila! Your plants stay moist and no one will see the plastic as the flowers spill out.

3) Arrange your pots in groups, one here and there just won't have the same impact. This not only applies to the surface of your space, but on tables as well. Odd numbers work well, I'm not sure why, but they do. As far as the effect you want to achieve, you can arrange them by coordinating the colors of the flowers or by the shape and size of the pots. Use your imagination.

4) Height is everything when using planters near your seating area(s). Unless you are an elf you aren't going to see your pretty blooms sitting on the ground even when sitting. Metal plant stands can be found just about anywhere

and very inexpensively, so elevate a few pots. I am really loving urns now as well. For the longest time I thought they were too expensive (not true, try Amazon.com) and that they would require about 40 pounds of potting soil. No, no, Nanette! Stick something, anything down into the pot to take up space; a large rubber ball or a few small ones. I've used small plastic flower pots and even empty plastic coffee containers, upside down of course. Anything to take up room so you don't waste soil. Plastic is your best bet, you don't want anything that will mold or leach out any chemicals (I plant a lot of veggies in large containers).

5) Buy a bag of hardwood mulch and scatter some on the soil in your pots soon after planting. You'll keep moisture from evaporating and therefore save time and money.

At this time of year I'm really at the mercy of my planner. You can find these books anywhere but if you want a wide choice to suit your purpose and style, again, check out Amazon. I didn't have any interest in gardening until I was married and had kids. I figured if they were going to be outside playing all day so was I. :-D My mother didn't garden nor did her mother. But I found I thoroughly enjoyed getting my hands and knees dirty. The seed catalogs that arrived in the winter had me making lists and diagrams. I went to the library and read up on everything from simply throwing a handful of seeds into the ground to making compost. And I learned to push myself. I have allergies but I took a little pill to hold them off while I enjoyed my time outdoors. I have a bad back but I've learned to use a cart

for heavier items and to take breaks for stretching. Once you learn the right ways to use your body you can actually strengthen your core muscles and by doing that my back has improved. Just be easy on yourself.

I'm rambling. I like a planner because I'm not all that great with identifying perennials that pop up just by recognizing the leaves (or my waning memory). Now I have a record of my plantings. If something doesn't work well, I make a note of it. The other way around, too. I take pictures, print out them out at Walgreen's for 4 cents a piece and tape them in so I can be reminded how well they did. If you can get a book with folders that's a plus, too. You may want to keep the picks with instructions or empty seed packs.

I'm very much a garden enthusiast as you can see. I like to gather information, and I love a pretty setting. But ... I can be veeeeeeery lazy so I keep my work quite simple and I think you'll know what works for you. Next month I'll talk garden beds. That a whole other story.



There's nothing I like better than spending a summer afternoon driving down the old dirt or gravel back roads to wherever they take me. Look at this perfect Michigan sky and the corn ... must be after the 4th of July as it's definitely knee high. It reminds me of growing up on the prairies of Illinois with wheat fields as far as you could see. But I have a hidden agenda. I look for yards sales, barn sales, junk at the end of a driveway if I really must confess! I love old and dusty, vintage and battered. I really enjoy finding new purposes for pieces of furniture or odds and ends and I like bringing something from way back when back to life with some fresh paint and then a little distressing with sand paper to keep that 'old' feeling. It's all out there waiting for you in the country. I'll share more as time goes on.

One day while taking a drive in the country I spotted what looked to be like birdhouses hanging on a wood post fence. I pulled into the driveway and there was



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a man sitting there strumming his guitar. He wasn't old by any means but he had the longest darn beard I've ever seen. And just as much as I like to take what's around and give it a new breath of life, he was the same. He made birdhouses with scraps of wood, tree branches a nice touch of leather. Most of the leather was from old horse reins so it was really cool to have this sort of history.

Anyway I bought this birdhouse. We hung it up in late fall so the earliest birds come spring could spot it and sign the lease. Well, long story short, we didn't take much notice of the birdhouse until that May. I was looking at how intricate and stable that nest was, how it fit so compact and perfect above the ... what? The crazy birds built their nest on top of the house! When we were not scratching our heads in disbelief, we were laughing hysterically. Some friends and neighbors offered possible reasons for this clear refusal to respect our hospitality. The birds were the 'outdoor' type. They loved to sleep under the stars. They were actually house guests and there was a family living inside (there wasn't). We never got a look at the birds but we wager it was a

species that was too large for the opening. I am keeping an eye on who decides to rent it out next. And whether they choose to share the rooftop.



There's a lot more to think of when we begin to spend more time outside. This is about prevention of sun damage and also a little pampering. Men, you may find some of this helpful. :) And yes, that's yours truly above after a recent cut that I badly needed.

First, protection. I know you know the scoop. Sunscreen. I've been pretty good about it over the years but one thing I could never get used to is wearing sunglasses. I'm paying the price for some extra lines around my eyes that I don't see my sun glass wearing friends having. But it's never too late. Wear them.

I've always hated putting goop on my skin after using my favorite body wash in the shower and a spray of perfume before heading out on a summery day. We can now get sunscreen in a spray formula and I'm loving it. In particular,

Coppertone Sport, a long time respected product that you can find in your local drugstore. With an SPF of 100, I really can't imagine anyone being harmed by the rays. Redheads take note! Another fave is Acure Organic which is a brand offered by the people who make products such as Method and Mrs. Meyer. Finally, The Honest Company provides a safe and gentle sunscreen spray that's great for kids as well. Ditch the cream. You can cover lot more area with a spray and keep your hands clean, too.

When it comes to keeping my face moisturized and safe from the sun's rays I am loving Cera Ve products which are pretty new and tops with my dermatologist who treats me for eczema and atopic dermatitis. Their facial lotion has a sunscreen in it and they have other skin-friendly products like shower gel and my favorite, make up remover cloths. Quick, quick quick. Find all of these at your local drugstore as well.

Finally, I love a good hair mask. I know, we're out having fun in the sun and you're acting like you are at a spa. But the heat from the sun makes a hair mask work overtime. I use Macadamia Natural Oil Deep Repair. You can find it at Drugstore.com. It smells heavenly. Don't be shy ... comb it through your hair and you'll look like you just jumped out of the shower, lake or pool. Or ... you can tell your friends or neighbors that you love deep conditioning your hair. Maybe they'll want to try it! Most of all, I hope I'm making YOU want to try this! :-D

I love having a recipe for you, one that celebrates the season and fits into your menu plans and entertaining. You are going to love this Watermelon Salsa. I have a fancy grocery store nearby that sells 8 ounces of mango salsa for \$6.99. My recipe is going to give you more than you need. Just refrigerate it and come up with other uses (tacos, topping for chicken or pork, mixed in with rice or

served in a salad, just to name a few). I really hope you tear this out of your paper. Stick it on your fridge to remind you to pick up the ingredients. I brought it to a Mother's Day event and it was devoured. Here you go:

Watermelon Salsa

- 1/2 seedless watermelon, cubed small (about six cups)
- 1 yellow pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 red pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and diced
- 1/2 red onion, chopped small
- 1 large palmful (about 1 cup) chopped cilantro, stems removed
- 1 lime, halved and juiced
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt & pepper each



Toss the fruit and vegetables together in a large bowl along with the cilantro. Squeeze the lime over, add the salt and pepper and stir well. Chill for at least 2 hours. Serve with tortilla chips.

Serves a mammoth crowd.

So this is it for June. As I write I'm ducking outside to plant a few more containers. It seems we always buy more than we can use. I'll get some pics for my next column and as promised, I'll share some of my flower beds. I'll also have a great recipe for you. Hmmmm ... something light and summery and maybe a tall cool drink with some spirits (if you know what I mean!)? A quick appetizer for entertaining or bringing to a summer fete?

Happy Summer to all! Until next time ...

~Jane

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Let's Party ... but is it safe? Is it covered?

By **VICKI BROSSMAN**
Kemner-Iott Benz Agency of Cass County

Whether a graduation party, backyard barbecue, or 4th of July celebration, summer is party time in America, especially in this part of the country where the "good" weather season seems too short. When trying to fit in all the outdoor activities, don't overlook safe practices.

- **Grilling** – did you know that July is the peak month for grill fires? Roughly half of the injuries involving grills are burns? Practice these safety tips and you should be on your way to safe grilling:
 - Propane and charcoal grills should be used outdoors away from the home, deck railings, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
 - Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grill area.
 - Remove grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
 - Never leave the grill unattended.
 - Make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.
 - Charcoal grills - if using starter fluid

use only charcoal starter fluid and never add more starter or other flammable liquids to the fire. Allow the coals to cool completely before disposing of them in a metal container.

- **Eating Outdoors** – keep your food safe: from the refrigerator/freezer . . . all the way to the picnic table. Never let your picnic food remain in the "Danger Zone" – between 40 degrees and 140 degrees – for more than two hours, or 1 hour if outdoor temperatures are above 90 degrees. Bacteria in food can multiply rapidly, and lead to food borne illness.
- Cold food should be kept at 40 degrees until serving time. If the food reaches the "Danger Zone", throw it away. Foods can be kept cool by placing the serving dish in a pan filled with ice. Drain off the water as the ice melts and replace with more ice.
- Hot food should be kept at or above 140 degrees. Wrap it well and place in an insulated container until serving. Once again, if the hot food reaches the "Danger Zone," throw it away.
- **Water Activities** - Each summer, news reports include swimming and

boating tragedies. Don't let yourself or a family member become a statistic.

- Never swim alone or allow anyone else to swim alone.
- Do not swim in unsupervised areas. Observe warning signs – "No Lifeguard on Duty," "Dangerous Undertow," "Beach Closed to Swimming."
- Always watch children and never leave them unattended around pools, lakes, or any body of water.
- Test water depth before diving. Do not dive into shallow or unfamiliar waters. If you are unable to see below the water's surface, don't dive.
- Before the maiden voyage, make sure your watercraft is ready to ride the waves with a tune-up and safety equipment check including life jackets, a flotation device, a tow line, jumper cables, extra paddles, a fire extinguisher, and a first aid kit.
- Learn the lay of the lake and know the rules of the water. Maintain a proper lookout and a safe speed.
- Always have a spotter sitting at the back of the boat. Review the basic hand signals with the spotter when water ski-

ing, wake boarding, or tubing.

Make sure the propeller is stopped before climbing aboard a boat from the water.

- Stay away from water during electrical storms.

• Never swim or operate a boat if you are tired, overheated, under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications.

Summer parties often include other activities. You will find information on the Internet regarding safety tips for everything from swimming and boating safety to biking, skating, and skateboarding, to fireworks and bonfires, to sun and heat safety tips.

Before hosting a summer event, check with your homeowners insurance agent to determine whether you have the proper protection should there be a mishap.

HAPPY SUMMER!!!



Expressing your wishes in advance

Provided by **Greg Schoenfeld**
Compass Wealth Advisors

It's not pleasant to think about the possibility of being unable to make your own medical or financial decisions. That may explain why many people don't take the time to draw up appropriate documents expressing their wishes.

Regardless of your age or health, it's better to prepare now — and hope you never need advance directives — than to force your loved ones to make difficult choices without knowing your wishes. Here are some documents to consider. Be sure to consult with an attorney who is familiar with the laws of your state.

Durable power of attorney for health care (also called a health-care proxy). This health directive enables you to appoint a representative who would make medical decisions for you in the event you are unable to make them yourself. You can appoint anyone of legal age (usually 18 or older) and specify how much power your agent will have. A health directive should be HIPAA compliant so your representative can access your private medical information.

Living will. You can use this document to outline which medical procedures you would want to be used to prolong your life. Some states do not recognize living wills, but you may still want one as a way to document your wishes.

Durable power of attorney for finances. A DPOA enables you to authorize someone to act on your behalf in financial and legal matters. The person you designate



as your agent could pay everyday expenses, watch over your investments, and file taxes, among other tasks. A DPOA may become effective immediately or when a triggering event occurs, such as a doctor certifying that you are physically or mentally incapacitated.

You can select the same person to serve as the agent for your health-care and financial powers of attorney, but you aren't compelled to do so. Be sure to discuss your wishes with the person you select and let him or her know where you keep the documents. Consider giving copies to your representative, your doctor, and

key family members, and review these documents regularly to make sure they continue to express your wishes.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Collaborating (sharing) with a friend

Looking to collaborate with a friend on some projects? Working on an assignment for high school or college?

Need to share files or articles with other people?

You may ask: "What's the best way to do so?"

Here are the top 5 (FREE) tools for the trick!

- 1.) Evernote – Not only is this good for collaborating, but it's also nice for keeping "scrapbooks" for yourself on various articles or any text you find. There is an Evernote "Web Clipper" you can download and install in your web browser. By using the "Web Clipper", you can save various pages right in your Evernote "Notebook".
- 2.) Trello – Collaborate via a "To Do"

Computing over Coffee

By **Ed Marshall**

Got a computer-related question for Ed? Email him at ed@computingovercoffee.org

- 3.) Google Docs – Work with others on

presentations, documents and spreadsheets. This allows for "live-editing", so you and a friend can edit together at the same time. It's definitely a useful tool.

- 4.) DropBox – Share files and folders with your colleagues. It will appear like a folder on your computer, which can be shared with whomever you give permission. Share documents, pictures, and more. Not to mention, you can use this on your iPad or iPhone and can access it from anywhere.
- 5.) Skype – Chances are, you know someone that uses this – or you use this yourself. Skype is great for chatting about topics or work via live video. You can invite multiple people into your chats and work from there.

No matter your purpose, when it comes to working with others through the tools

of technology, here are some great resources for you.

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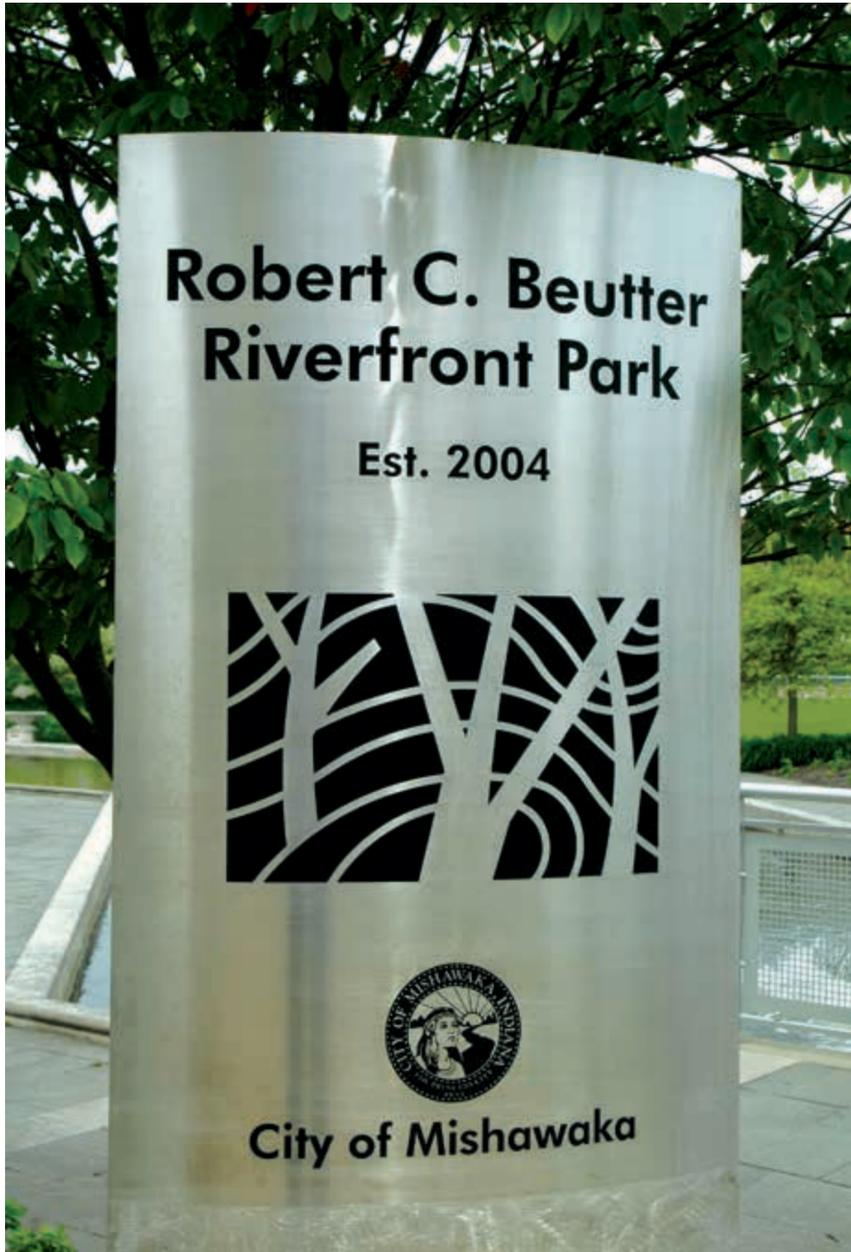
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For the Record:

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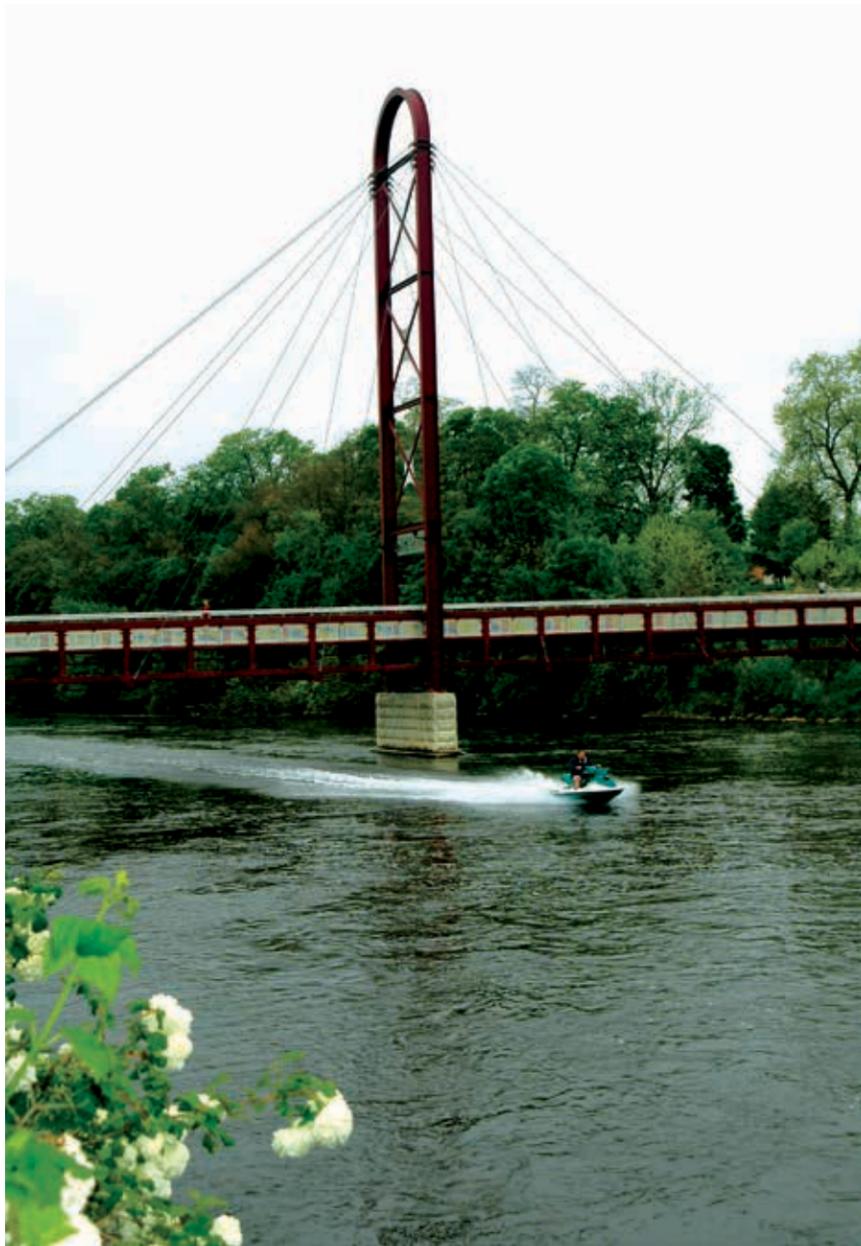
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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

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

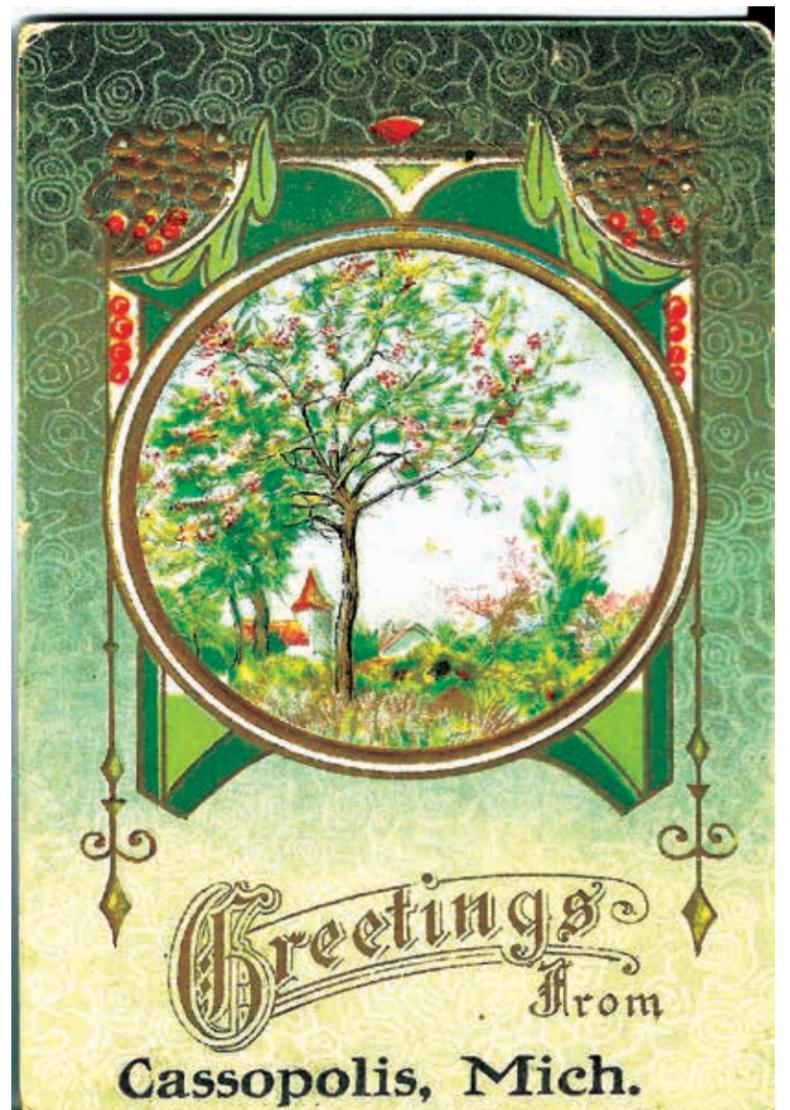
publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

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 Cassopolis and Diamond Lake.

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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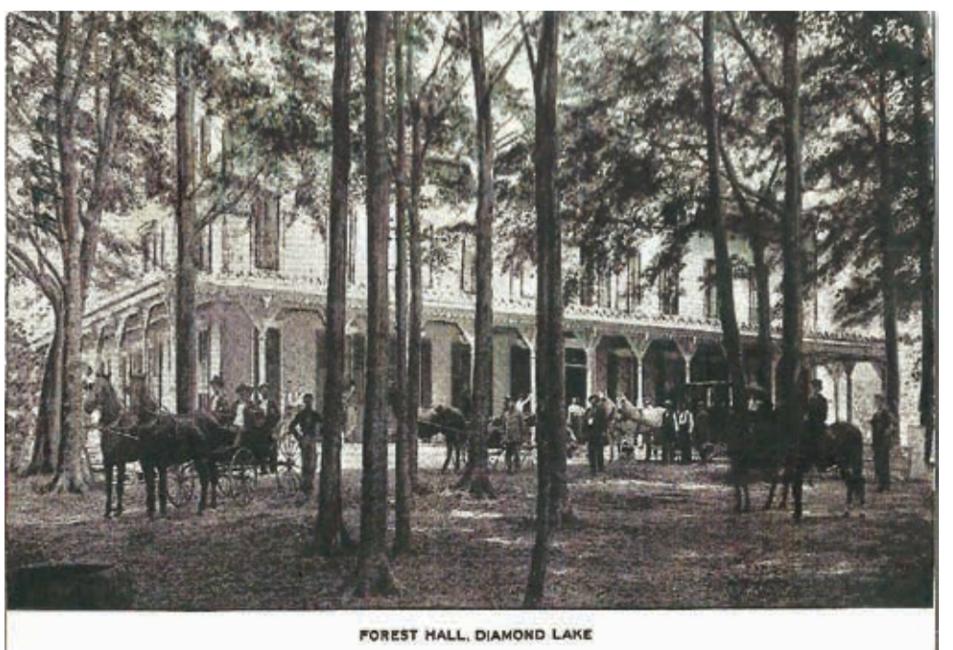
Main St. Looking South,
No. 104 Cassopolis, Mich.



LOOKING S. E. FROM COURT HOUSE, CASSOPOLIS, MICH. PHOTO BY CURTIS H.



Park Shore from Boat Landing, Diamond Lake, Cassopolis, Mich.—31259-R



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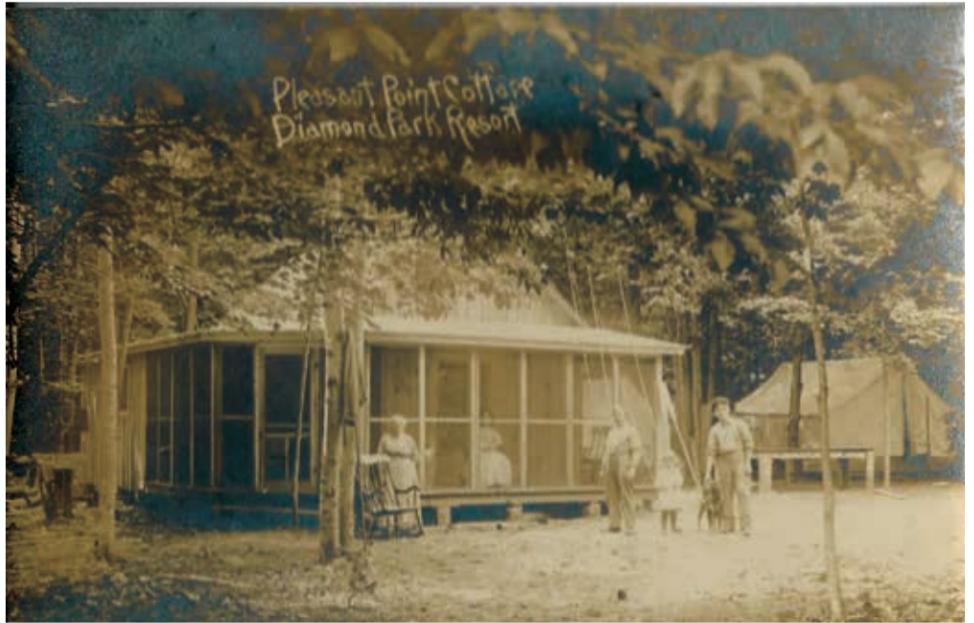
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OUR CHILDREN

Game night, anyone?

by SANDY FLEMING

Most families have them hiding in closets or drawers and sometimes they come out to play on rainy days. I'm talking about the many board games that we have in our homes. They may have been gifts from the grandparents or perhaps they were carried over from your own childhood. However they came to your house, they are an invaluable treasure for your kids. You just have to convince the youngsters of that!

Many games have been around for countless generations. Commercial games like Chutes and Ladders and Sorry! actually have their roots hundreds if not thousands of years ago in other cultures. Did you ever stop to ask yourself just why these games have withstood the test of time? It's because they are so much more than fun. Most games teach valuable skills to kids. And in this day and age of too

much screen time, our society as a whole is losing sight of just how important table games can be.

The Academic Value of Games

Scratch the surface of any game and you'll find a host of important academic and social skills playing a role. It's well worth the family's time to drag these games out of the closet for a lot of different reasons.

Any teacher would be proud of the math skills involved in common games. Dice games teach counting, modular games (where you go around and around the board) teach modular math. That is, if you are on the second space on the side of the Monopoly board, and you roll a ten, you know you can just go to the second space on the next side without stopping to count. Many games use various denominations of play money that needs to be sorted and counted, building skills such as place

value and skip counting. Some finance games even use percentages and have players doing complex calculations of interest. Roll doubles on the dice, and all of the sudden you are multiplying by two. Calculate how many more spaces to go before the end of the game, and you are doing some complicated problem-solving and subtraction. There are games that focus on counting and number recognition for young players, including favorites such as Hi-Ho Cherri-o and Cootie. Young or old, table games build math skills.

And that's just scratching the surface. Got a box of dominoes laying around the house somewhere? That's another great tool for building math skills. Many domino games require players to add up scoring dominoes in specific positions. Card games are great, as well. Any game that has tricks to be "taken" will teach children the relative value of numbers so they quickly learn that six is greater than two. Try Rack-o for a great exercise in number order, too.

You want reading skills?

Games have them, as well. What games can you think of that have penalty and bonus cards or spaces that need to be read? How about the need to read and refer to the written directions? Other games have written clues. Reading abounds in the world of games.

Games can teach basic readiness skills to the youngest players, too. Commercial games like Uno and Skip-Bo will help the little ones master matching, cause and effect, and colors. Nearly all games will build those all-important fine motor skills. Try memory games to help youngsters learn to remember and recall information, and play matching games like Lotto to help them get good with recognizing parts of wholes.

There are tons of games that teach strategy and problem solving. Check out checkers, chess, Chinese checkers, and even tic-tac-toe. These games pit one player's ingenuity, knowledge and planning against another's.

The Social Value of Games

This is one area that electronic versions of these pastimes cannot touch: interaction with other living, breathing human beings on the other side of the game board or table. Face-to-face games teach skills such as turn-taking, persistence, and graceful winning or losing. They build conversation skills and the ability to get along in nearly any social circumstance. Games build confidence, reasoning, and much, much more.

A person who knows how to play a

lot of different games typically can occupy himself or herself easily. He or she can turn any boring situation into something fun with just a few common tools, or even none at all, since there are a lot of games that are played with no supplies whatsoever. Games can help a shy introvert develop the tools and confidence to be comfortable in many more kinds of social situations.

Get Them Playing

Children can join into the right games as early as 18-24 months, and everyone should be playing by age three or four. Make games a priority in your home, and you will be astounded at the growth you see in the kids in many areas.

First of all, dig the games out of the closet or wherever you have them hiding. Make them accessible and organized so that everyone knows just where to find them and where to return them. Make sure you have a selection of age-appropriate games for your group. Be aware that younger kids can play many games with just a little modification of the rules, and older kids often enjoy playing the simpler games intended for younger kids. Just make sure everyone is past the stage of putting things in their mouths or risking choking on small parts before you give the kids free rein with unsupervised play.

Now, set an example. Make time to play, hopefully every day. If you can't do games daily, try for a game night once a week with the whole family. Take turns choosing the game, and put kids who can read in charge of researching, learning and teaching a new game to the group every once in a while. Play games with just your spouse or partner after the kids go to bed-they are still listening and learning.

Encourage game play when they need a break from rowdy outdoor play or when they are bored. Suggest games (and play with them if you can) when they come to you claiming there's nothing to do. It takes time and practice, but sooner or later, they will choose to play on their own, without prompting. When they do, you know you have them hooked for life, and they will pass the joy of games down to their children when the time comes.

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor, writer and educational consultant living in Edwardsburg. She grew up with an overflowing game closet and now her grown daughters have more games than they know what to do with. Check out Sandy's website at <http://sandyflemingonline.com> for more great ideas about how to put fun into learning and help kids over academic hurdles.

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NATURE NOTES

June brings many birds, mammals

A photo of a Kentucky warbler is a bird I have been wanting to run in this column for a long time.

The Kentucky warbler is seen nearly annually in Berrien County, but usually one or two sightings occur per year. It is a species of bird from the wood warbler family, and is more common during the breeding season in the southern US.

Extreme southern Michigan is the northern range limit of the Kentucky warbler. Because the species has a habit of frequenting damp woods, among thick underbrush. Hence, it is a bird not often photographed.

Males and females of the species look quite similar except the female has a tinge of gray about the facial pattern, whereas the male is jet black.

Note the facial markings of the yellow "spectacles" in conjunction with the black "sideburns." The nest of the Kentucky warbler is concealed among dense undergrowth foliage. Confirmed nests in Cass County are rare.



Kentucky warbler at Warren Woods State Park, April 25, 2016.

photo by Brad Anderson

It is quite possible that because Southwest Michigan lies at the extreme northern part of the species range, that males and females have a tough time finding one another despite the males loud song, similar to that of a Carolina wren, or an ovenbird.

Anderson located this particular Kentucky Warbler in Warren Woods State Park which is one of the most reliable places within Berrien County in which to find the bird. Other places where they are often found, albeit in small numbers, are Warren Dunes State Park and Grand Mere.

Kentucky warblers overwinter along the Gulf Coast, south through Mexico to Panama.

I have received many emails this

week of the return of such common songbirds as rose-breasted grosbeaks, Baltimore orioles, house wren, and many additional wood warblers.

Brad Anderson also provided a photo of a red fox, with an apparent deformed lower jaw, taken in late April 2016, at his home in Bridgman.

Red fox are the more common of the two fox species that inhabit Southwest Michigan. The other being the gray fox.

In middle to late spring, adult red foxes are tending to the young fox pups. The female stays with the young around the den, likely a burrow in one of the dunes, while the adult male is out hunting for the family. Cottontail rabbits, squirrels, mice, rats and other small mammals often fall prey to foxes, as do small birds.

Last month, we ran a photo of a young great horned owl, taken by Mark Parren of St. Joseph. Since last Friday, mark has returned to Ox Creek where he found the owl and was lucky to have found and photographed one of the adults. Parren also found two young nestled together on a tree limb for warmth, as they wait for their next meal to be supplied by their parents.

Both the red fox and great horned owl adults are generally nocturnal, but as is the case with parents of new born young, they keep no regular hours and are on call twenty-four hours, seven days a week until the young can fend for themselves.



Adult great horned owl perches on a cottonwood tree, watching as Mark Parren photographs the bird from his canoe. The distinctive ear tufts of the owl are extended. Often called "horns," they are nothing more than feathers.



Red fox with an apparent deformed lower jaw. Taken within the limits of Bridgman on April 24, 2016.

Photo by Brad Anderson.

LOCAL HISTORY

Thomas Bond's Civil War Diary

Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch

Thomas Faxton 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.

It is believed that Thomas F. Bond lived in Volinia Township with his wife Clara and young child in 1864. Thomas Bond was likely living on property that is located between the current roads Fosdick and Crane Streets, northeast of Dowagiac.

Sunday, December 11, 1864 -- A very cold day which was extremely tedious for the men in the wards. But the Chaplin came from the City and visited the wards, as

usual afterwards had services in the dining hall at the usual hour, but few men, but one of the Christian Commission preached a good discourse. Rec'd letter from D.S. Van Blarcum in reply to mine. All well at Girard, also him.

[Editors note: "D.S. Van Blarcum" is David S. Van Blarcum, a Corporal in Company C, of the 19th Michigan Infantry. Girard is a Township in Branch County, Michigan where David S., and his brother Martin resided. Martin Van Blarcum enlisted in Company C of the 19th Michigan at Girard on September 5, 1862. He was the Drummer Boy of the outfit. Both brothers survived the war, but David S. was wounded in action at Thompson's Station in Tennessee on March 5, 1863.]

Monday, December 12, 1864 -- A very frosty morning but the sun came out and was a pleasant day, but did not thaw much. Chaplain came up as usual, but not feeling very well. Went through the wards and found the men who came in yesterday, badly wounded [fighting around Nashville]. Two deaths during

the day in the hospital. Received a good letter from my loved ones, but poor Cynthia is sick. Wish I was with my darling ones again.

Tuesday, December 13, 1864 -- Felt pretty well in the morning. The Chaplain passed through the wards and found seven men who wanted letters written. Wrote five letters in the afternoon for men in the Gangrene ward, which kept me very busy. Received a letter in the morning from cousin Em. Was taken with Diarrhea in the night, which made me feel very bad. No news of importance.

Wednesday, December 14, 1864 -- Was feeling pretty bad in the morning but made no Complaints. Had nothing to do, and felt better in the afternoon. There were several men [that] returned to duty from the hospital. A very pleasant day, but muddy after the rain. No change in the movement at Nashville. My thoughts are continually with my darlings at home. Oh! for the time when I can return

to them.

Thursday, December 15, 1864 -- Felt some better and went through the wards with the Chaplain, and a delegate from the Christian Commission found several men who wanted letters written in the afternoon. I wrote three. Not one word from home, Washburn and one other New York man came back from furlough. A successful battle at Nashville. Stormy day.

Friday, December 16, 1864 -- Felt pretty well & had not much to do in forenoon. Wrote letter to Amos & Abbie, and one to Clara in the afternoon. The battle is still progressing at Nashville and our men have captured five thousand prisoners and several pieces of artillery, and moved the army about seven miles. No letter from home. What does it mean.[?] was sick in the night. Papers came from town.

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THE LAST WORD

An irresistible force meets the Reverend Phil

So, what seems like about a million years ago, just after my wife and I'd moved into our new house at the lake, I found myself alone at the end of the pier, calmly and methodically drowning worms that I'd attached to the barbed end of a fish hook on the end of an overpriced but cheaply made monofilament fishing line.

Even though the fishing sucked that day it was still one of the most pleasant things that had happened to me recently, the blatantly bureaucratic bullsnot of closing having just hours before ended in a flurry of finger-cramping paper signings, initialing and quasi-official witnessing, stamping and collating and filing.

My mind was still reeling from the absurdities and artificially constructed Catch 22s of such legal necessities as signing duplicate papers to attest to the fact that we had actually seen (although not necessarily read) the papers we chose not to sign, or initializing places we were intentionally ignoring ... only someone earning over \$200 an hour would even think it important to draw up such paperwork, and only someone who made their living by administering to the forms of such a sadistic Satan-spawn would take pride to being a professional at administering such nonsense, I'd surmised as a psychological defense.

But I held my tongue and signed, mostly in deference to my beloved spouse who had earlier mentioned to me that unless I shut up, made nice and signed the stupid papers, various body parts to which I had become quite accustomed

would be in peril and/or missing entirely in the very near future.

Then, finally, the deeds were done and the house was ours (so long as we abided by the terms of the mortgage, another amazingly obfuscatory document that had, no doubt, also been constructed by someone who could charge an hourly rate that would make The Donald smile).

And then, finally, there I was at the end of that pier communing with all the nature that could fit into one plastic cottage cheese container with holes punched in the top, a splash of lakefront that was measured by how far I could cast a baited hook and a slip bobber, and all the good clean spring-warmed, sun scoured atmosphere that chose to hover over my personal biosphere of angling solitude ... when all of a sudden, what can only be described as a Force-7 gale of confusion and noise arrived in a thundering storm of footstomps that shook the pier, sent ripples of fear across the top of the water and rent the solitude I thought I'd just given a pound of my own flesh to own.

Shaken to my core I spun my head around in a quick circle like that little girl in *The Exorcist* to see what all the devilry was descending on me ... and came face to face with what I've since discovered to be one of the most powerful forces of nature ever to be documented in the vicinity of Birch Lake.

The neighbor girl, Katie.

At first glance, I horribly underestimated her. At first glance she seemed to be a normal looking young girl. Somewhere around 7 years old, I guessed. Slightly knobby knees (the

right one was skinned I think). She was slender and smiling (disarmingly), and the whole package was topped by a flowing mop of impossibly red hair that streamed behind her as she scurried down the pier toward me.

I briefly considered jumping into the lake and swimming for it ... surely I could out swim this waif ... but a wave of false bravado overcame me and I puffed up my chest and turned to face her, offering the virtual visage of a gruff, grumpy neighbor who was going to be unimpressed.

"Hi, I'm Katie, and I live next door," she shouted through a blinding smile of teeth that were so white the sun's brilliance paled to a dull gray. "I like to fish, too ... I know where all the good fishing spots are around here," she went on without once taking a breath (a trait I've witnessed regularly over the years since). "And they're all right here on your pier."

The little-girl smile twisted into an evil smirk of avid anticipation. Disguised as a seemingly innocent gesture from a cute Raggedy-Ann lookalike, she was apparently waiting for me to make some sort of noises of welcome and acceptance, and expecting her charms to win an offer for her to feel free to come fish from my pier at her leisure.

She was almost salivating like a vulture over a road-killed squirrel; the game was afoot. But little did she know her charms and guile were misplaced. Having raised two young "ladies" to adulthood by that time, I easily saw through her antic for the gambit it was.

She wasn't just saying hi to the new neighbor. She wasn't trying to make a

new friend. And she certainly wasn't offering fishing tips. She was staking a claim. She was informing me of her intention to rape my new personal marine larder; to deplorably depopulate my dearly purchased angling paradise; to catch the very fish from under my feet. She was letting me know that deeds-be-damned, she intended to maintain virtual possession over all she surveyed.

I quickly scanned the shore of the neighboring houses looking for her parents. I knew this might be the only chance I'd ever have to toss her into the lake and hold her under the water until the bubbles stopped ...

Ok, I'm exaggerating, I didn't really consider drowning her. Maybe scaring her a bit ... But I didn't.

Maybe it was the smile, but despite my better judgment, I actually found myself telling her she could fish off my pier if she wanted.

Well, like I said, that was what now seems like a million years ago. Since then Katie and I came to terms not just about the fishing, but we discovered a mutual appreciation for the lake in general, and for sailing and frogs and snakes and a hundred other lakey-things. And, since then we actually became friends.

But when that gangling, awkward, forward little carrot top, who is now all grown up, asked me recently if I'd find some way to officiate at her wedding, I shouted "NO! Not a chance in the world," I promised myself! Then she smiled ...

And now they call me Reverend Phil.

Maybe I should have drowned her when I had a chance.

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