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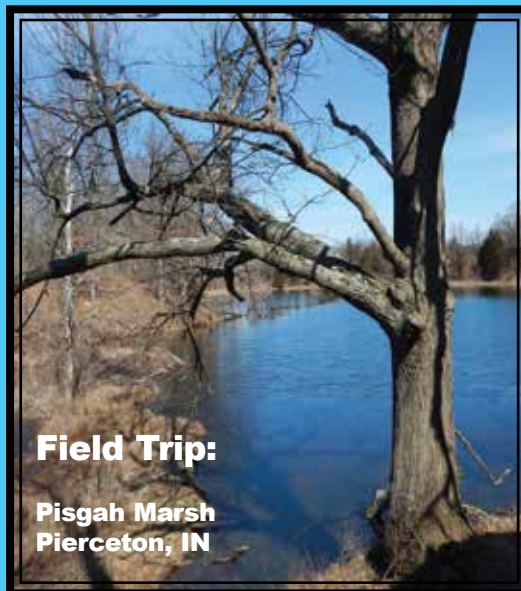
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Neighbors is published monthly from March through December.

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(269) 228-1080
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<http://www.cassneighbors.com>
sailorphil@philvital.com
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REGIONAL NEWS

Spring luncheon planned

Cass County Medical Care Facility invites members, friends and guests to come and join them for a delicious luncheon (\$7) on Thursday, May 10, beginning at 11:30 am at the Cass County Medical Care Facility dining room. Reservations are due by May 4. Membership dues of \$5 will be collected at this time.

Send payment for dues and luncheon tickets to Joyce Settle, 62460 Eagle Point Rd., Cassopolis, Mi. 49031. For more information call 445-3198.

'Dearly Departed' at Beckwith

The Beckwith Theatre will present "Dearly Departed," a comedy by David Bottrell & Jessie Jones on April 6-8 & 13-15. Friday & Saturday performances will begin at 7:30 pm, Sunday matinees will start at 2 pm. Tickets are \$15.

Call 269-782-7653 to reserve seats (tickets are purchased at the box office at the time of the performance).

The event is sponsored by Edward Jones Investments (John Seculoff) and Oil Can Alley, opening night wine reception is sponsored by Vineyard 2121, Second Friday beer tasting is sponsored by Greenbush Brewing Company

Dearly Departed is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

Michigan Lake and Stream Conference

The Michigan Lake and Stream Association will host its 57th annual conference on Friday & Saturday, April 20 & 21, at Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville, MI. For more information email info@mlswa.org.

Spring History Program Series

The Niles History Center and Niles District Library are co-hosting a special spring program series. All programs start at 6:30 pm at the Niles District Library. Admission is free but donations are welcome! The series will include:

Thursday, April 12: Connections with Michigan History and X: A Novel, by Dr. Michelle Johnson

Thursday, May 10: History of the Bonine House, by Cathy LaPointe.

Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery programs

The Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery Visitor Center in Mattawan, Michigan (Van Buren County), opened for the 2018 season April 3. Hours of operation for the spring season, through Memorial Day, will be 10 am to 4 pm Tuesday through Saturday, and Noon to 4 pm on Sunday.

The visitor center will offer a variety of opportunities to learn more about Michigan's natural resources this spring. Upcoming programs include:

Hatchery Tours — Discover how the DNR raises millions of fish every year to stock in Michigan's lakes, rivers and streams. Tours are approximately 30 minutes. All ages are welcome.

Regular Spring Hatchery Tours — Weekdays: Call for availability; Saturdays 10 am, Noon and 2 p m, Sundays Noon and 2 pm only, Spring Break Week (April 3-8) Tuesday through Saturday 10 am, Noon and 2 pm, Sunday Noon and 2 pm only.

Introduction to Wildlife Photography, Saturday, April 7, from 8 am to Noon

Designed for those with little or no experience in

wildlife photography, this class will introduce photography basics, equipment requirements, how to photograph wildlife, and managing and editing photographs. There will be an optional hike on the grounds of the hatchery after the class for anyone interested in becoming familiar with the trails and learning where to find the best opportunities for photographing wildlife. Part of the DNR's Outdoor Skills Academy, this class is open to those 12 years of age and older. No camera is required to take the class.

The cost for the class is \$10. Register for Introduction to Wildlife Photography online. Payment must be made within seven days of registration to hold the slot. Cancellations must be made at least one week prior to class in order to receive a full refund.

Women's Fly Fishing – Damsels Fly, Saturday, May 5, from 9 am to 5 pm — This all-day workshop offers women the opportunity to learn enough of the fly-fishing basics to get out on the water and fish with confidence. Participants will learn about gear, casting, knot-tying, reading the water and more. Several guest speakers and experts in the sport will teach the class, presented by the DNR Outdoor Skills Academy in partnership with the Kalamazoo Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The cost for the class is \$25. Lunch and giveaways will be provided, and participants will receive a free one-year Trout Unlimited membership. No equipment is needed for the class.

Register for the women's fly-fishing class online. Payment must be made within seven days of registration to hold the slot. Cancellations must be made at least one week prior to class in order to receive a full refund.

For more information about upcoming programs, contact the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery Visitor Center at 269-668-2876 or ramseys2@michigan.gov.

Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery is located at 34270 County Road 652 in Mattawan. Learn more at www.michigan.gov/wolflakevc.

Free wildlife and pollinator habitat workshops for landowners

Landowners who want to attract deer, songbirds, pheasants and pollinators like butterflies onto their property, while improving air, water and soil quality, are invited to attend a free workshop on Tuesday, April 24, at 5:30 pm at Camp Friedenswald, 15406 Watercress Way, Cassopolis.

The workshop is hosted in part by the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative Coalition. The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative is a conservation initiative to restore and enhance Michigan pheasant habitat, populations and hunting opportunities on private and public lands via pheasant cooperatives. The initiative works by acquiring state and federal resources to assist landowners.

For more information and to register to attend a workshop, please visit www.mucc.org/pollinators or contact Anna Mitterling at amitterling@mucc.org or 517-346-6454 with additional questions.

History Museum lecture series

The Dowagiac Area History Museum 2018 Spring Lecture Series continues April 11 with "The Power of Sculpture" by Artist Tuck Langland.

The May 3 program will have David O. Lyon of the

Gilmore Car Museum presenting "The Automobile: Beyond the Limits of Design," and Historian David Bainbridge will close out the series on June 6 with "A History of the Beckwith Theater."

The programs are free to museum members and \$5 for non-members. Children under 18 are admitted free. Membership will be available at the museum. The museum is at the corner of Division and West Railroad streets. For more information, call the museum at 783-2560 or visit www.dowagiagemuseum.info.

Lubeznik Center presents ArtBash

On June 23, 2018, at 5:30 (CDT), the Lubeznik Center for the Arts (LCA) will host its premier annual fundraising event, ArtBash 2018, "When the Lights Glow Down," at Blue Chip Stardust Event Center in Michigan City, IN. All proceeds directly support LCA's mission to enrich the quality of life in the region through the arts. Admissions and donations to the event support participation in academically-enhanced art classes and field trips for local youth and acclaimed contemporary arts exhibitions.

The emcee for the evening will be Michigan City native, Mary Ann Bergerson Ahern, NBC 5 News Chicago Political Reporter. Attendees will have the opportunity to bid on unique items and experiences in the silent auction; buy into a "wine and spirits grab" for an opportunity to take home some very expensive bottles; enjoy the glow in the dark decor; and dance the night away to the DJ spinning the best dance music of the 1960s to the present.

LCA Executive Director, Janet Bloch, said "LCA provides outstanding art exhibitions for our region, such as the upcoming 'Warhol: Icon & Influence,' and creative opportunities that ignite the imagination of our community.

Daily admission to the Art Center is free to all. Each year, nearly 2000 students come through our doors to experience the power of the arts for educational and uplifting learning tours - nearly all of them are provided free of charge.

LCA is offering special pricing for early commitments through June 8. Individual tickets are currently available for \$150 and tables of 10 for \$1500. Starting June 9 prices increase to \$165 for individual tickets and \$1650 for tables. Purchase online at lubeznikcenter.org or by calling 219-874-4900.

Lubeznik Center for the Arts is located at 101 W. 2nd St., at the lakefront in Michigan City, IN. Weekday hours are from 10 am to 5 pm (CDT). Weekend hours are from 11 am to 4 pm (CDT). Hyndman Gallery opens at 2 pm on Thursdays. For more information visit www.lubeznikcenter.org or call 219-874-4900.

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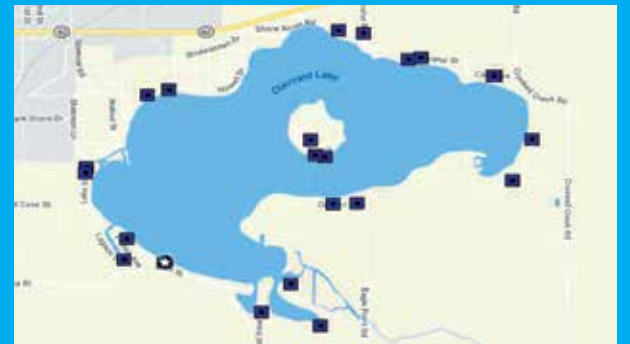
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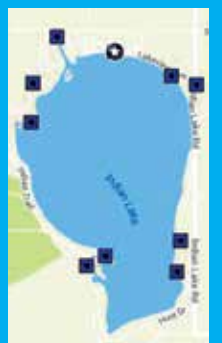
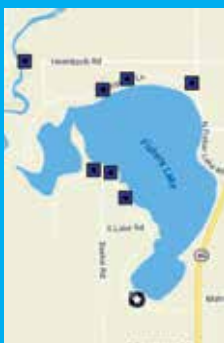
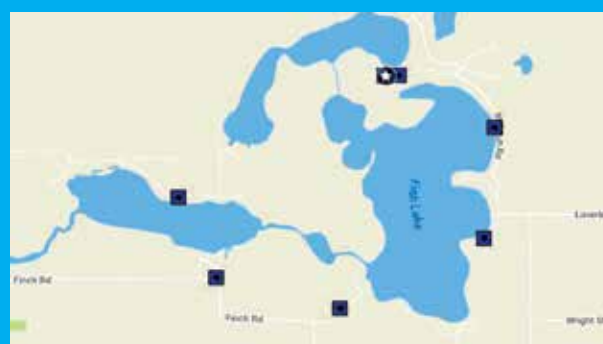


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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

April 12 - Niles History Center and Niles District Library spring program series Connections with Michigan History and X, A Novel, 6:30 pm, Niles District Library

April 3, 10, 17, and 24 - Storytime, 10 am on Tuesdays, recommended age 3-5 yrs old, enjoy stories, songs, activity/craft, and more. Cass District Library- Howard Branch, 487-9214

April 3 - DIY Kool-Aid Lip Gloss, 1 pm, Kids create their own lip gloss using coconut oil, sugar, water, and Kool-Aid drink mix. Free to attend! Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 3, 10, 17, and 24 - Infant Storytime, 1 pm on Tuesdays, recommended age birth-2 with caregiver. Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 3 - Cookies and Canvas for Kids, 2 pm, Call to register, space is limited to 20 kids ages 5 and older, Kids create a painting from their imagination or a picture. Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

April 4, 11, 18, and 25 - Storytime, 10 am on Wednesdays, recommended age 3-5 yrs old, enjoy stories, songs, activity/craft, and more. Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 357-7821

April 4 - Children's Author Cheri Hallwood, 1 pm, Listen to stories, make an origami frog, and participate in a jumping race with toy frogs! Cass District Library- Howard Branch, 487-9214

April 4 - Gaming: Wii and Board Games, 1 pm, Enjoy a variety of games with family and friends! Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 4 - DIY Kool-Aid Lip Gloss, 3 pm, Kids create their own lip gloss using coconut oil, sugar, water, and Kool-Aid drink mix. Free to attend! Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

April 5, 12, 19, and 26 - Storytime, 10 am on Thursdays, recommended age 3-5 yrs old, enjoy stories, songs, activity/craft, and more. Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 5 - Cookies and Canvas for Kids, 1 pm, Call to register, space is limited to 20 kids ages 5 and older, Kids create a painting from their imagination or a picture. Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 5 - Grow with Us! Seed Kits, 3 pm, Kids will enjoy making starter seed kits that they can plant later at home! Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

April 6-8, 13-15 - Dearly Departed at Beckwith Theatre, Dowagiac, \$15, call 782-7653 for information, showtimes and to purchase seats.

April 6, 13, 20, and 27 - Storytime, 10 am on Fridays, recommended age 3-5 yrs old, enjoy stories, songs, activity/craft, and more. Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

April 6 - Adventurers with Legos, 1 pm, A variety of building challenges will be available or attendees can build on their own. Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

April 7 - Introduction to wildlife photography, 8 am - Noon, Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery, Mattawan, 668-2876

April 9 - Painting with Acrylics, 6:30-8:30 pm, Painting classes are \$12 per night, bring your own painting kit, Contact sharronottart@gmail.com with questions, Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 10 - Identifying Spring Mushrooms, 6:30 pm, Dale and Debra Collins will present a slideshow presentation on wild mushrooms. Free and open to the public. Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

April 11 - The Power of Sculpture by Tuck Langland, Dowagiac Area History Museum, \$5 for non-members, 783-2560

April 12 - The Winsome Hags, 6:30 pm, The program includes sing-longs, silly stuff and maybe, a poignant moment. Free and open to the public. Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 12 - Connections with Michigan History and X: a Novel, Spring History program, Niles District Library, 6:30 pm

April 17 - Book Club, 10:30 am, New members welcome! Call to find out what the group is currently reading, Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 487-9215

April 17 - Cookies and Canvas for Kids, 6 pm, Call to register, space is limited to 20 kids ages 5 and older, Kids create a painting from their imagination or a picture. Cass District Library- Howard

Branch, 487-9214

April 18 - Card Making Class, 1-3 pm, Register to attend this card making class led by Deb Wiggins, Space is limited, class is for adults only. Cass District Library- Main Library, 357-7822

April 20, 21 - Michigan Lakes and Streams 57th Annual Conference, Crystal Mountain Resort, Thompsonville, MI, <https://www.mymlsa.org/mlsa-57th-annual-conference>

April 24 - free workshop on attracting wildlife onto your property, 5:30 pm, Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, www.mucc.org/pollinators, amitterling@mucc.org or 517-346-6454

April 24 - 5 pm - The National Association of Retired Federal Employees, SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or email jeanrowe70@comcast.net

May 3 - The Automobile: Beyond the Limits of Design by Gilmore Car Museum's David O. Lyon, Dowagiac Area History Museum, \$5 for non-members, 783-2560

May 5 - Women's Fly Fishing, 9 am - 5 pm, Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery, \$25, Mattawan, 668-2876 or ramsey2@michigan.gov for info or to register

May 10 - Niles History Center and Niles District Library spring program series History of the Bonine House, 6:30 pm, Niles District Library

May 10 - Cass County Medical Care Facility Auxiliary annual spring luncheon, 11:30 am, \$7, 445-3198

May 22 - 5 pm - The National Association of Retired Federal Employees, SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired /current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

June 6 - June 6 with "A History of the Beckwith Theater, Dowagiac Area History Museum, \$5 for non-members, 783-2560

June 9 - Diamond Lake Association

Annual Meeting, 10-11:30am, Diamond Lake Yacht Club

June 22, 23 - Diamond Lake All-Lake Garage Sale, 9 am-2 pm Saturday, 9 am - Noon Sunday

June 23 - Lubeznik Center ArtBash 2018, Michigan City, 5:30 pm

June 26 - 5 pm- The National Association of Retired Federal Employees, SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe 782 2879 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

July 7 - Diamond Lake Fireworks, 10:30 pm, Fireworks Island, Rain/Wind delay date will be Sunday July 8

July 21 - Diamond Lake Triathlon, 7:30 - 10:30 am, Park Shore Marina

July 24 - 5 pm - The National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

August 28 - 5 pm - The National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe, 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

September 25 - 5 pm - The National Association Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe, 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

October 23 - 5 pm the National Association Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired /current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe, 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net.

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PASTA ITALIA CON CHEF DONATO

Spaghetti carbonara con funghi

by Chef Dennis Bamber

This is a typical Roman dish that one should try when in Rome. It uses raw eggs. The heat of the cooked pasta cooks the eggs. In America, many restaurants add cream to the recipe, but I won't order it because I feel the cream takes away the balance of the flavors and sometimes turns the cheese into a gooey mess like an Alfredo sauce.

Timing is most important when making this dish. The drained pasta must immediately be added to the beaten egg mixture and tossed several times.

The normal recipe for this dish uses pancetta. In my version, we make it a vegetarian type of dish by substituting the mushrooms for the pancetta. Both ways, however, are great.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb package of spaghetti
1/4 cup (or slightly more) of olive oil
8 peeled whole cloves of garlic
15-20 Shitake or Cremini mushrooms, destemmed, washed and sliced
1/4 cup dry white wine
3 raw eggs plus 2 extra egg yolks
3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup of chopped fine parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. In a separate skillet. Add the olive oil, peeled garlic cloves and mushrooms. Salt and pepper to taste and cook over medium high heat, stirring often, until the garlic caramelize and the mushrooms cook down a bit, 15 minutes or so. Then add the wine and cook until it reduces. Keep warm. This can be made in advance and reheated right before serving.

2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil-



add salt 2-3 tbsl.

3. Remove the eggs one hour before making this dish from the refrigerator, and right before making the sauce, run the eggs under hot water for a minute. If the eggs are cold, they will not cook

4. Take a large bowl that you will be serving the spaghetti and break and beat the eggs, yolks, add the cheese, parsley, and pepper and beat a bit more.

5. Add the spaghetti to the boiling water and cook until Al Dente.(firm to



the bite).

HINT-WHEN THE PASTA IS COOKING I LIKE TO PUT THE BOWL WITH THE EGGS ON TOP OF THE POT FOR A MINUTE TO HEAT THE MIXTURE

6. Drain the pasta and immediately add to the egg mixture and toss rapidly until the pasta is well coated

7. Turn the heat on high for a minute when you are tossing the pasta, and add the mushrooms and garlic and toss some more.(I like the flavor of the caramelized garlic, but if you don't, discard it) Serve immediately into plates or bowls with extra Parmesan on the side if

desired.

OPTION-

don't like mushrooms? Omit them and follow the recipe.

Dennis Bamber is an avid cook. He grew up in the restaurant business and has traveled extensively worldwide as well as being a partner in a business

in Paris for 9 years. He is a second generation Italian-American. He is currently a Realtor with Cressy & Everett, licensed in Michigan and Indiana, and specializes in lake property.



TO YOUR HEALTH!

Effective ways to get a whiter, brighter smile

Since the moment I entered dental school friends, family and casual acquaintances frequently ask about the most effective ways to get a whiter, brighter smile. Over the last couple of years I've noticed that, not only is this a popular topic over cocktails, it's constantly popping up on social media. Here I offer the thoughtful opinion as a dental professional who is neither trying to sell you something nor garner more Instagram likes.

How well a product or procedure will work for you is largely dependent on why your teeth are discolored. Stains from coffee or tea are removed relatively easily; discoloration that happened while the teeth were developing presents a challenge. It's also important to remember that restorations like crowns or fillings will not whiten with the rest of your teeth. There are pros and cons to each type of product, and I'll do a quick run through here and touch on some of the trendier options.

Whitening toothpaste

One product with a ton of social media buzz right now is NuSkin's AP24. Several of our staff members have tried it. The general consensus between staff and patients is that while it does seem to do a good job of removing and preventing stains, it's not a very dramatic change. You can check out the American Dental Association's website for a list of stain-removal toothpastes from brands like Crest, Colgate and Tom's of Maine. All of



them have the ADA Seal of Acceptance and are priced much lower than the roughly \$20-a-tube price for the AP24.

Social media has also popularized "at home" methods of whitening such as using activated charcoal or "oil pulling" (swishing oil, most popularly coconut oil, for 10-20 minutes a day). There is very little scientific evidence supporting either of these methods, and neither should replace brushing with a fluoridated toothpaste and flossing. Activated charcoal could potentially be very abrasive and may damage teeth or gums.

At home whitening strips and gel

The next step up from a tooth paste in "bleaching power" is an over-the-counter white strip or gel containing peroxide,

generally either hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide. These products can cost anywhere from \$30 to \$100. Twenty eight to 35 percent of carbamide peroxide is roughly equal to 10 percent hydrogen peroxide, and that's about as high as you should use without the supervision of a dental professional. Higher percentage products come with a greater risk of tooth and gum sensitivity which is why you should obtain them from, and be monitored by a dental professional. Any bleaching system with peroxide comes with the risk of tooth sensitivity, and I generally recommend patients should start using a toothpaste for sensitive teeth at least 2 weeks prior to bleaching. At home whitening systems can cost anywhere from \$10-100.

In office whitening:

For a faster and more dramatic result, see your dentist for in-office whitening. At home whitening products are usually designed to be used over several days or weeks, where in-office whitening can usually be completed in an hour or so. A much stronger bleaching agent can be used because you will be monitored closely and precautions will be taken to protect your gums and cheeks. They may apply the agent several times based on the desired result. Again, sensitivity is the main possible side effect.

Our office uses the "GLO Science System" that contains an ingredient specifically to combat tooth sensitivity that is also used in products like Sensodyne. In office whitening can cost between a couple hundred to a thousand dollars.

One thing you can do that will cost you zero dollars to make your teeth healthier as well as look and feel better is to get whatever toothbrush and toothpaste you have, set a timer for two minutes, and then to brush gently for the whole time. Most people think they've been brushing for two minutes but it's really only about 40 seconds. If you're a working mom with two little kids, you probably don't always get to brush for two whole minutes ... and you can probably tell the difference when you don't.

This article was provided by Roger Pecina of Afdent, 605 West Douglas Rd., Mishawaka, IN 46545, (574) 277-7770.

LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Happy Spring! Get energized!

by **Jane Boudreau**

Hey Neighbors! Happy Spring! I know ... we have a long way to go, but just the few warm days we've had recently, and more sun than clouds, I feel energized. As a blogger, I often chat with and see photos from bloggers from all over the world. It really is amazing to see how the weather warms up, and when it warms up in different regions. The West coast and southern states are enjoying beautiful temps, and for some areas, like the Southwest, this is the optimal time to get outdoors. Folks in some parts of Arizona and Texas shut themselves inside during summer months, as the temps can reach well over 115 degrees. Wow. Still, I've never had anyone tell me they would love to live in the Midwest with our winters! We may complain a lot, but nothing beats four seasons.



I love to grow daffodils. They are the first spring flowers I see pop up along the border of my backyard. There are earlier but smaller bulbs you can plant, like crocus and grape hyacinth, but they need to be in an area where you see them close up. I'm going to have to look because they really are so delicate and pretty. I cut a small bunch to have inside the house. Old jars make the cutest vases I can think of. Tie some jute string around the top to give it a country farmhouse look. Tip: Spaghetti sauce and jams have the cutest jars. I know you will think I'm really crazy now. You can also find the cutest ever cans in your gro-



cery store. Especially vegetable and canned tomatoes. We have an international aisle at my store in the city, but a lot of tomatoes are imported and sold just about everywhere. Some of the labels are in Italian and are so colorful. A little bunch of backyard flowers or a mix from your store or florist, makes for a pretty display on a windowsill or end table. So, so sweet.

Oh, those blooming bushes and shrubs. Peonies, hyacinth, lilacs ... I can smell them already. It will all be happening soon. I have dried flowers like these many times. You are best to just look up the procedure than listen to me ramble about it. My only advice is to cut them when they are in full to late bloom. Give them just an inch or so of water in a vase. Let the water evaporate and then leave them alone. Voila. I once had a bunch of peonies that lasted well over a year until they just crumbled. Maybe

from dust, who knows?

I have an old forsythia bush in the corner of my yard. I cut whole branches when they still have some unopened buds. How pretty they look in a tall vase. In this picture (from last year) you can see the day lilies sprouting around it. If I ever met a flower I couldn't kill, this is it. Some call it a weed, I love them. I mix the yellow and orange...so pretty.

I tend to go overboard indoors decorating for Easter and spring. First off, I have a huge love of bunnies, and have a huge collection to match. They tend to multiply. We used to have a real bunny, a little white pet bunny given by a mindless mother to her eight year old daughter. After the mother spent three years chasing it and cleaning up little brown



pellets, she happened to find a sweet victim, er ... lady in town who was happy to take it. The daughter didn't realize little Snowy was gone for about two weeks.

Anyway, I have a ton of them, mostly large. I stopped putting all of them out, I was scaring the kids. So I've narrowed down the bunny decor and just do little vignettes of baskets, flowers, Easter eggs in bowls, candy in pretty dishes. Throw in some white or pastel candles. And it's amazing that you only have to remove some of the really Easter-like things, and then you have spring decor until June.

I spent most of the winter sick. I'm the sickest person you've ever met. If there is a germ nearby, stay with me, I'll be the one to catch it. At the end of December, my family likes to label the past 12 months for me as, "The Year of the...". Going back a few, it was The Year of The Back. I was laid up for weeks at a time, and did ten weeks of physical therapy. After that came The Year of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Out of nowhere, my hands and wrists started to ache. Surgery-- one hand first, then the second.

Ouch. That was followed up by The Year of the Broken Arm. Fell off a chair and broke my arm in three places. And then we had The Year of the CMV Virus I won't go there. Finally, its back to the good old, bad old back. Just getting worse and worse, and now I'm facing possible surgery. Having some laughs makes it easier. Anyway — what the heck am I talking about?

Yes; a new year, a fresh start. When you are laid up in bed, feeling like someone ran over you with a truck, your mind does tricky things. I imagine myself doing yoga, my back bending in ways it hasn't since my junior year in high school. I see my kitchen counters clear and spiffy, cabinets clean and organized. A linen closet with color coordinated stacks of towels you can't see through. I have no idea why I torture myself like this, and I do it all the time. Too bad it doesn't happen when I'm up and running, my house would be immaculate.

One thing I learned when I was flat on my back a few weeks ago ... ask for help. For those of us who are mothers, we find it easier to take care of others rather than ourselves. And missing work when we are ill is sometimes urged so germs aren't spread, yet we push ourselves. We've heard our friends, family, and numerous media sources tell us to slow down, the world will continue to

spin if we spend some time getting well.

Even now that it's just me and my husband, I have this inner alarm clock that gets me in motion when it's time to start dinner, do laundry, clean house. I'm set in my ways. I guess I'm just starting now to fear that my back may have me sitting on the sidelines for the rest of my life, so I started to ask when something heavy needed to be picked up. I love a clean kitchen at night, but I'm just piling dishes in the sink and letting it go. Funny thing is, my husband hasn't really noticed me slacking, and doesn't actually protest when I ask to borrow his muscular arms for lifting something (really, if you put it this way, you may get him to clean the basement).

So finally, enough about me. I have some cool recipes I want to share that I recently made. You might know by now, I try to give you recipes that honor and celebrate the season, using fresh ingredients that are available at that particular time.

I have a **stew recipe** here because although we are getting warmer, it does



get cool in the evening, and we crave something to warm our bones as we sit in front of the fire, or break bread with the family. I sometimes feel that stew can be somewhat bland and old school. It's not like I'm throwing artichoke hearts or pineapple in it, but you might be surprised by some of the spices.

Let me tell you a secret. For a very long time I would make a recipe I found somewhere. If it had an ingredient I thought was weird, or that I wouldn't like, I'd eliminate it. What a tragedy. Some ingredients may sound odd, unfamiliar, or simply not something that appeals to you in that dish ... you should still go for it. Try it once. Sometimes I make a new recipe, or something off the top of my head I tell my husband I should have added or deleted something. He says, "No, no. Keep doing it this

Continued on next page. See:

JANE

JANE

Continued from previous page

way." Well, what if I made a few tweaks and he liked it better? I rarely make the same recipe twice; the fun is in changing, evolving and discovering. If you don't like to cook, maybe just try one new recipe a week or month, whatever works. Play with it. You may find you have a creative side.

Jane's Beef Stew

Ingredients:

1 lb. beef stewing meat, cut into 1 inch cubes
 1/4 c. flour
 2 T veggie oil
 1 c red wine
 3 c. beef broth
 1 c each chopped onion, celery and carrots
 1 medium red potato, cubed
 1/2 lb. Brussels sprouts, bottoms trimmed
 S&P to taste
 1 T dried oregano
 1 T dried thyme
 2 t. cinnamon
 2 t nutmeg
 1 bay leaf

Directions:

Toss the stew meat in a large bowl with the flour while heating oil in a large oven proof pot or dutch oven. Brown the cubes on all sides over medium high heat, turning when meat loosens from bottom of pot. Remove to a plate and set aside. Carefully add the wine and stir, scraping up bits of meat off the bottom of the pot. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add the meat, veggies and spices and continue to boil 5 minutes. Stir well, cover the pot with a lid and place in preheated oven at 325 degrees for 2 hours. Remove and adjust seasonings to your liking. Serves 4.

Note: Do not be shy about adding the nutmeg and cinnamon. It gives a



deep, earthy flavor that is hard to describe. These spices are also fantastic in red sauce!!

French Onion Dip Sandwiches

I recently bought myself a fancy shmancy crock pot, or slow cooker if you will. I've never liked how much cabinet space they take up, and I felt anything I could make in one could be made on my stove or oven in a fraction of the time. I do see why they are heaven sent to those who work all day so I'm not bashing them. Recently, my daughter invited us over for meatball sandwiches. The combo of her homemade red sauce, and the meatballs which simmered in it all day in her slow cooker, was beyond delicious. It made a believer out of me.

Sandwiches are often served for casu-

al dinners here. I may get luncheon meat and cheeses one week, and plan for big sub sandwiches, or a hearty salad. Served with a side of pasta salad, it's a great meal. Sometimes I get fancy cheeses and make juicy grilled cheese (and sometimes ham) sandwiches on my griddle. I come up with ideas just looking at all of the artisan breads at the grocery store. This time of year is perfect for a hot sandwich and when I came across this recipe, I realized I had only had French Dip at restaurants. I found this on the website Pinterest.com. I made a multi-

tude of changes. It takes minutes to put together. You can slow cook it all day, or cook it a bit faster at 4 hours as I did. Here ya go:

Ingredients:

4 lbs. beef chuck, round, or rump cut roast
 1 10 oz. can of French Onion Soup (Campbell's)
 1 10 oz. can of Beef Consomme Soup (Campbell's)
 12 oz. Guinness Beer
 2 T Worcestershire sauce
 1-2 T dried oregano
 1 T dried garlic powder
 2 cloves fresh garlic, roughly chopped
 Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Add roast to preheated crock pot.

Pour the cans of soup over as well as the beer. (I only had Bud Lite and that was just fine!). Add the remaining ingredients, cover and set the timer for 4 hours if you want to get it going in short order, or 8 hours at leisure. At four hours, shred the meat right in the pot, or remove to a cutting board and slice as thin as possible. Taste the au jus for flavor and adjust. The oregano is such a good addition, make sure you have that flavor going. Add the meat back to the pot and continue to cook. Meanwhile, toast French bread rolls in your oven at 400 degrees for about 10 minutes until just crunchy. Serve the beef on the rolls with a generous amount of the sauce. Have bowls of au jus around for dipping. I picked up some french fries from a local restaurant carry out because I just couldn't match that addition. Serves 6.

You will have plenty of gravy left. I refrigerated mine and will buy some sliced beef at the deli later in the week to heat up in this tasty au jus. You can also freeze it. I think you can add it to stews and soups as well, it has a bold, salty flavor.

I hope all of you are enjoying these beautiful spring days by now. I love taking the dogs for walks and seeing the pretty cherry blossom trees in bloom, scattering petals like snow. Inhaling the cool fresh air feels healing. Open those windows, find some lighter curtains to swap out in a room. Clean up the grill until it shines. Find a little space in your backyard for an herb garden. Hang laundry outside. Pack a lunch and go to a park. Get out of the house!!!
 See you all in May!

Jane Boudreau is a writer and blogger, with a year round home on Diamond Lake, Michigan. She goes back and forth to her home in Chicago, and a mountain retreat in North Carolina. You can reach her at blindy9@yahoo.com.



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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Spring home maintenance & safety tips

By Charlie Retherford
Kemner-Iott Benz Agency
of Cass County

I'm daydreaming of sitting on the porch on a warm summer evening; enjoying a cold beverage with my dog Clyde beside me for company ...

But wait! Its barely spring and it's snowing outside, so back to reality and my to-do list. We all have one, especially this time of year when we like to make the entire home fresh, clean, and in good working order again. Most of us call it "spring cleaning" but today we will focus heavily on the "home maintenance" side.

Some of the home maintenance basics that we all know are: changing HVAC filters and the batteries in smoke detectors, flashlights, and radios. Here are some more tips for the other areas in your home:

1. Kitchen - Clean out the aerator on your faucet, flush your kitchen drain with hot water and baking soda, clean the filter from your range hood with degreaser and vacuum the coils on your refrigerator.

2. Bathroom - Clean the sediment from the shower head and checking to make sure the caulk is still intact in the bathroom as well as the kitchen could save you from a huge water and mold issue in the future.

3. Basement/ Utility Room - Check the hoses running to and from the washing machine for cracks or signs of wear. To help prevent dryer fires, be sure the dryer vent is clear of lint and that air is passing freely through to the exterior of

the home. Also, test the pressure relief valve on the water heater and make sure the sump pump is in good working order as well.

4. Attic - Make sure there are no visible water leaks.

5. Living Area - Reverse the rotation of the blades on your ceiling fans to help cool your home more efficiently and whether you are a parent or grandparent, you will want to make sure that all medicines and cleaning products are stored in a cupboard that can be locked or child-proofed and that all electrical outlets have child safety covers as well.

Now that we have covered some tips for the inside, let's take a walk around the exterior of your home. Check for any signs of problems that may have been caused by winter weather or high winds. Look for even the smallest damage that could allow access to the house or attic by small animals or birds. Be sure your gutters and basement window wells are clean and free of debris, and check to see that the auto reverse is in proper working order if you have an automatic garage door.

In Case of an Emergency!

All adults in the home should be familiar with where the shut-off valves are located in the instance that you would need to shut off your water, gas, or electrical. If you do not know where these shut-off valves are, look around or ask a professional to come show you. Every home should also have FIRE EXTINGUISHERS. How many extinguishers needed will be determined by



the size and layout of each home, but there should be one in every kitchen and one in each garage. Keep in mind, there are several types of fire extinguishers meant to put out fires of different origins. You can consult with the trained salesperson or a fireman for specific advice on which extinguisher suits your particular set of circumstances. Check each portable fire extinguisher to make sure the charge is still good when you do your spring cleaning routine.

Making sure all the extinguishers are charged and ready to use in an emergency is only half the battle. In the event of a small fire that you feel comfortable trying to extinguish with a portable fire

extinguisher, your success will depend on your knowledge and ability to handle the extinguisher properly.

KEEP IN MIND THE VERY FIRST THING YOU SHOULD DO IS CALL 911 FOR ANY FIRE!

Then if you can safely put out the fire with a portable fire extinguisher, you can do so but you must know how to effectively operate the extinguisher. Most of the people I talk to have never even tried to use one so here is a relatively easy way to help you remember the steps to using a fire extinguisher.

Websites for both the NFPA and OSHA show the acronym "PASS" as a method for remembering how to properly and effectively operate most portable fire extinguishers. **PASS** stands for the following:

P) PULL - Pull the pin which breaks the tamper seal.

A) AIM - Aim low, pointing at the base of the fire.

S) SQUEEZE - Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent.

S) SWEEP - Sweep from side to side at the base of the fire.

If the fire grows or you are having any other trouble at all, leave the area immediately!

Keep in mind that if you use your fire extinguisher, it will need to be replaced or recharged.

Good luck with your spring cleaning and maintenance projects and remember the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

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OUR CHILDREN

Celebrating the month of the young child

by **SANDY FLEMING**

April is the Month of the Young Child, so this month, let's focus on the very young people in our lives. If you happen to have an infant, toddler, preschooler, or young child at your house, there are loads of things you can do to nurture that little person and get them off to a great start in life. If you don't have a youngster nearby, there are still things you can do to help! They say that it takes a village to raise a child and that's very, very true. Even if you don't have a young child in your household, this is still important information for all adults who care about the future of our world, and there are things you can do right now to help and support the parents and caregivers who are raising the little kids.

In fact, let's begin with things that everyone in the community can do to support those with young children. Look around you on your next outing to the store, to church, or wherever it is that you go. Chances are very good that you'll see some families with young children. They're literally everywhere in our communities, and it's hard to miss them.

Borrow Some Children

Do you have friends or family members who are working with young kids? Lots of ways to help work best with people you know. Parenting is hard work. Can you offer to take the kid or kids for an hour or two while the parents get chores done, run errands, or have a little time to themselves? With the changes in our general lifestyles, sometimes it's very challenging to get someone to mind the baby even for small periods. Most parents will be grateful for a small respite from time to time.

But you don't have to go so far as to babysit, even. Pay attention to the kids in your life. Talk to them (more than telling them what to do). Converse with them, and listen to them. Play games with them. Tell them stories and read to them. Share jokes and riddles. Nearly any kind of positive interaction will have huge returns.

And if you are not around any children at all, try supporting community resources for families that do have children. Check with your local library for projects that need help. Talk to your spiritual or religious leader and learn about areas where your church supports children's development. There are community projects going on all around you, like book drives, parks department, or school programs you can support in many ways with volunteer efforts and financial donations. Simply get involved!

Nurture the Kids at Your House

By now, nearly everyone has heard



about how important it is to read to kids, even the littlest members of the family. Tiny infants benefit from hearing the language and seeing the pictures in books, and it only gets more valuable from there. So hopefully you are reading to the kids each and every day. You'll be helping them understand more words, building memory and comprehension skills, and much more. But there are other things you can do to nurture the very young when you are not reading to them.

In addition to reading to kids, talking to them is hugely important. It's easy to talk to them when you are telling them what to do, correcting behavior, or giving instructions. However, that kind of directive language is not nearly as beneficial to the kids as some other things you could be doing. It's necessary, but it's not good enough by itself. In addition to shaping behavior with your words, try these additions to the day:

- Have conversations. This means the give-and-take kinds of exchanges where you share ideas and thoughts about a given topic. Conversations build comprehension skills, knowledge about the world in general, and language skills. They also improve social skills, listening skills, and reasoning skills.
- Share your observations about the world. Especially for the very young, pre-verbal children, this running mono-

logue helps them internalize language. Explain what you are doing and why, identify new and familiar things in the environment, point out interesting items, describe things, and any other sort of talking that comes to mind. Babies may not be stellar conversationalists as yet, but they take in literally everything around them, and sooner or later, you will hear it come back to you.

- Ask questions. At first, you will likely be answering them as well, but sooner or later, kids will start to share their thoughts with you when you ask. You can ask questions about concrete things that can be seen or heard, and you can ask open-ended questions that get the mind thinking about connections, predictions, summaries, and many other higher-level thinking skills. And yes, babies are doing all of these things, even before they can talk. They just don't call them by the grown-up names. Infants are masters at categorizing and fitting together pieces of the puzzle to help themselves learn about the world around them.
- Retell stories and describe things that you and your child have experienced together. This ability is closely associated with the ability to recall and retell stories based on books that you have read together, so don't neglect it!

Games, Jokes and Riddles

Play games, too. Games are a huge way to help your young child develop into a functional human being. Games teach

a wealth of educational skills, like counting, matching, and recognition. They also teach important social skills like taking turns and being a good winner or loser. Start as early as you can with games, remembering that "peek-a-boo" is actually a game! As soon as your child is ready, try playing other early childhood favorites, including War, Crazy Eights, Go Fish, checkers, tic-tac-toe and more. By late preschool, kids are ready for many commercial games such as Candyland and Cootie. In elementary school, it's a great time to teach games with a bit of strategy such as Monopoly and Rack-O. When kids can spell, be sure to play word games like Scrabble and Boggle. You may want to consider a family game night on a regular basis—it's a great excuse to get together and do things as a family, it's cheap and it builds relationships.

Share jokes and riddles with kids as soon as they understand. The very young will respond to physical humor well before they can talk. When kids begin to talk, it won't be long before they enjoy jokes that rely on similar-sounding words. Older children will enjoy jokes and riddles that put two situations together that were never intended to be side by side, such as "How do you stop an elephant from charging? Take away his credit card." Jokes also make a great social lubricant, and if your child can master the fine art of sharing age-appropriate jokes, he or she may be able to make peers laugh in a positive way.

And finally, don't forget to share the traditional readiness activities with your young child. Activities such as puzzles, lacing boards, building blocks, coloring, and so forth play a huge role in helping a young child prepare for the demands of later academic, mental and physical tasks that are expected when formal schooling begins. So work on same and different together. It's great to play games like picture memory or Uno to begin to see the similarities and differences between two items. Put together simple jigsaw puzzles and work on concepts such as beside, beneath, and above. Sort items by color, by shape and by size. Use colored cereal rings to make patterns on a piece of string. Count and say the ABCs. All of these things have an important role to play in helping your child get ready for school and for life.

Sandy Fleming is a writer and tutor living in Edwardsburg, Michigan. Visit her website at <http://sandyflemingonline.com> for more fun ideas to help children learn.

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

Use two factor authentication for safety

Im continuing to read about the latest hacks and people who have had their accounts compromised. A friend recently had their debit card compromised. Ouch!

A good thing to practice whenever possible, is something called "two factor authentication" or "2FA." You can set up most of your social media networks or e-mail accounts to send a code to your phone via text message. In turn, when you login to your accounts, you type in that code. This verifies that it is in fact

you that is checking your email, or logging into your preferred social media page.

Not all companies are providing this service at the moment, but it is in use for many. It's another one of those "I'd rather be safe than sorry" moments in this case.

I have two factor authentication setup on my important accounts. That way, when I login, I get the code that I have to type in, which verifies that it is me. I know it's a bit of a pain. I really

do. But, let's say you've setup your bank account this way, using two factor authentication. Let's also say that you receive a text message one day from your bank, asking you to enter that code into the site, in order to login. If you're not trying to login to your bank account, you know that someone else is. You can prevent that login by setting up two factor authentication, thereby protecting your personal information.

Until our next cup!

Computing over Coffee

By **Ed Marshall**

Got a computer-related question for Ed?

Email him at ed@computingovercoffee.org

REAL ESTATE

The housing market in Cass County

Overall Cass County home sales in January increased by 3 houses in January 2018 over January 2017 (32 vs. 29). In February 2018, 3 fewer homes were sold than in February 2017. Year-to-date, overall home sales were even with 2017.

The number of waterfront homes at 6 matched the number of waterfront homes sold in February 2017. Non-waterfront home sales decreased by 3 houses in February 2018 (25 vs. 28).

In February, the average selling price in Cass County for all homes skyrocketed 47 percent to \$181,813 from \$123,414 in February 2017. The median selling price for all homes in February rose 60 percent to \$140,000 from \$87,500 in February 2017.

The average selling price for waterfront homes increased 73 percent in February to \$394,543 from \$227,583 in February 2017. The median selling price for waterfront homes soared to 102 percent (\$395,000 vs. \$195,500).

The average selling price for non-waterfront homes in February increased 29 percent to \$130,758 from \$101,092 in February 2017. The median selling price jumped 60 percent to \$119,900 from \$74,860 in February 2017.

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

In Cass County, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a part of all closed transactions in February increased to 16 percent from 12 percent in January. The highest percentage in the month of



February was 35 percent in 2014.

For comparison the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions increased in February to 16 percent from 10.5 percent in January. The previous lowest percentage in February was 13 percent in 2017. The highest percentage in February was 75 percent in 2009.

Throughout the area, the number of houses sold in February 2018 was 3 houses less than in February 2017 (184 vs. 187). However, the average and median selling prices for the month are up 19 and 17 percent respectively. The increase in selling prices pushed the total dollar volume up 17 percent; making it the highest total dollar volume in the year-over-year comparison since 2006.

Year-to-date, the number of houses

sold was down 4 percent (374 vs. 390).

And the year-to-date total dollar volume was 2 percent higher than in 2017 (\$76,396,204 vs. \$74,637,887). The year-to-date total dollar volume set a record over 2017 to become the highest set in the year-over-year comparison.

The average selling price in February 2018 was \$197,381 compared to \$166,520 in February 2017 (19 percent increase). Year-to-date, the average selling price was up 7 percent (\$204,267 vs. \$191,379). Both the monthly and year-to-date average selling prices set records in the year-over-year comparison.

The median selling price in February 2018 jumped 17 percent to \$133,250 from \$114,000 in February 2017. Year-to-date, the median selling price was up 11 percent (\$144,250 vs. \$130,000). The

year-to-date median selling price beat the previous recorded prices since 2006.

The inventory of houses for sale dropped 13 percent from February 2017. In almost a three county area, there were just 1313 houses for sale at the end of February compared to 1512 in February 2017. The market has just 4.2-months supply of houses for buyers. In February 2009, there were 3099 houses for sale.

Overall in SWMI, the mortgage rate increased to 4.53 from 4.24 percent in January. Last year in February, the rate was 4.314. Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in February was 4.43 up from 4.15 in January 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®.

To view properties that are for sale in your local area go to www.michric.org and click on "Property Search."

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FIELD TRIP



For the Record:

Pisgah Marsh is located on CR 350 N, Pierceton, IN, about 9 miles north of Larwill, and west of SR 5.

The Pisgah Marsh Area and Boardwalk has four areas set aside to preserve habitat resources for a variety of plant and animal species. The 445 combined acres of Pisgah Areas 1, 2 and 3 is comprised of grassland, wetland, upland forest and lake habitat. Pisgah Area 1 has approximately 128 acres as well as the 6.67-acre Pisgah Lake. The Durham Lake area is comprised of 502 acres with a 13-acre lake.

The Pisgah Marsh and Durham Lake areas are managed by Tri-County Fish and Wildlife Area.

For more information visit <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/3085.htm>



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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.

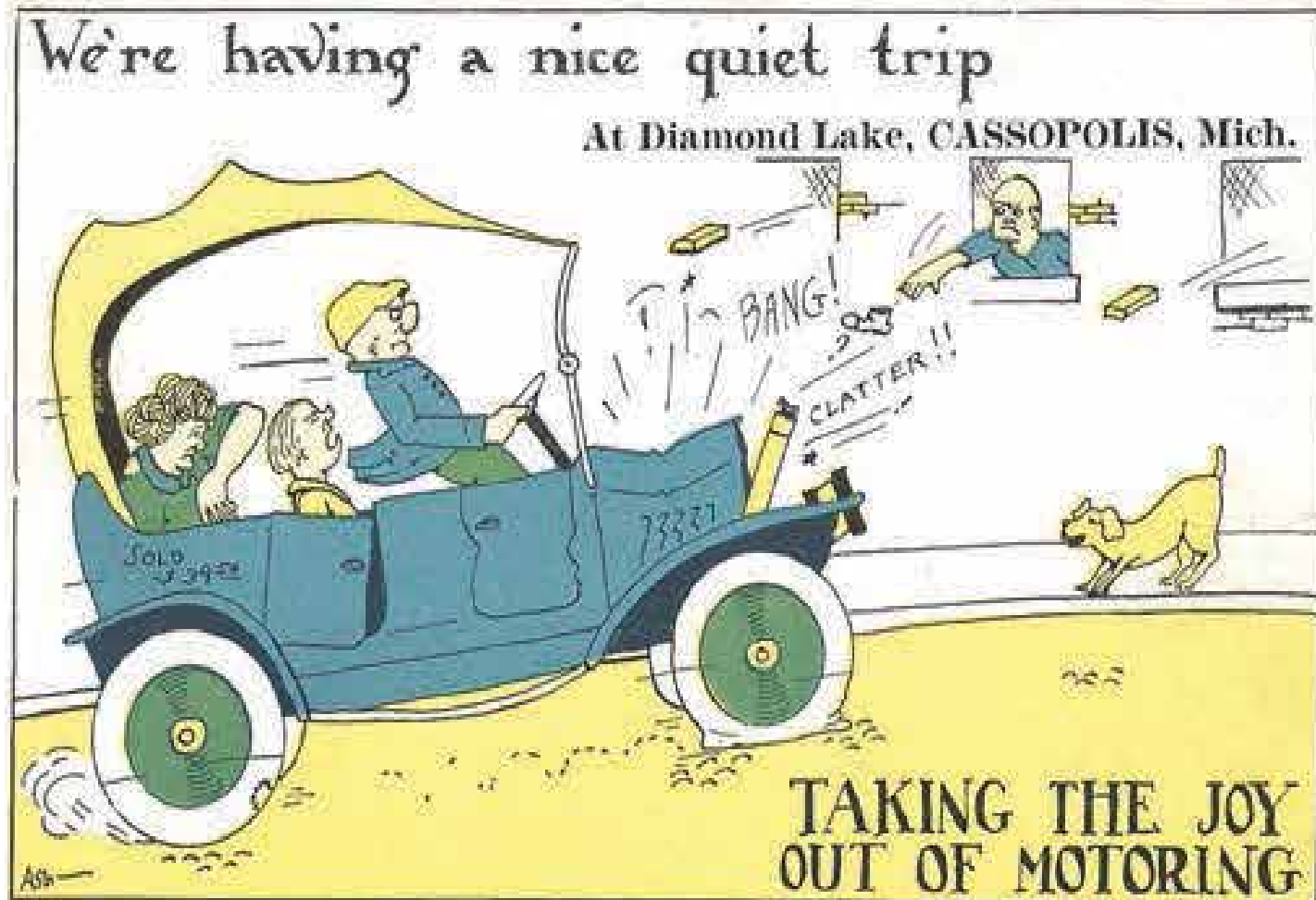
Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

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.arcadiapublishing.com

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of Diamond Lake, Cassopolis, and the nearby area.

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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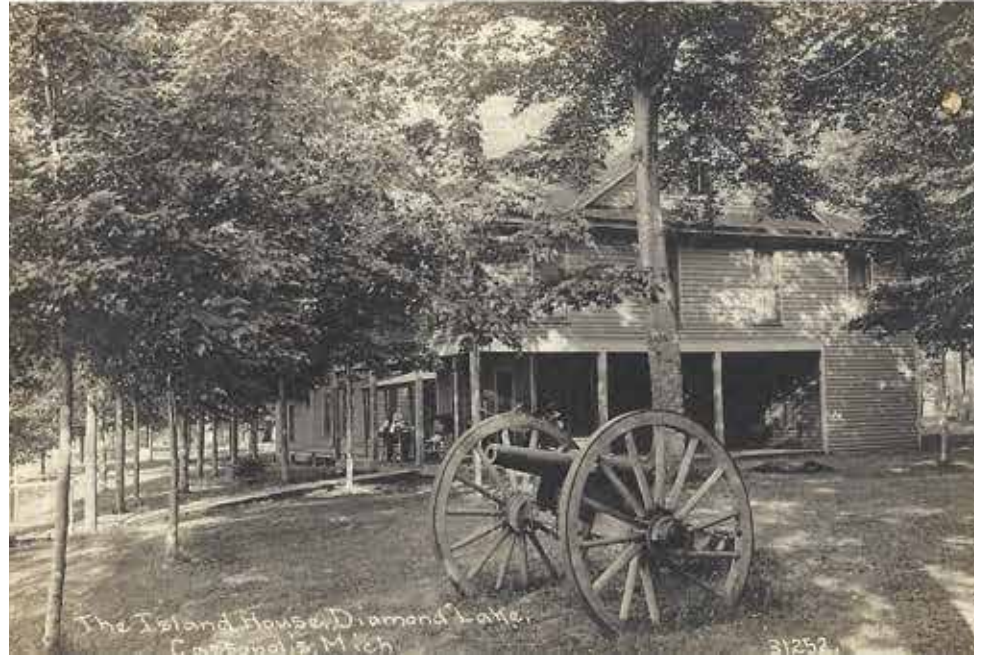
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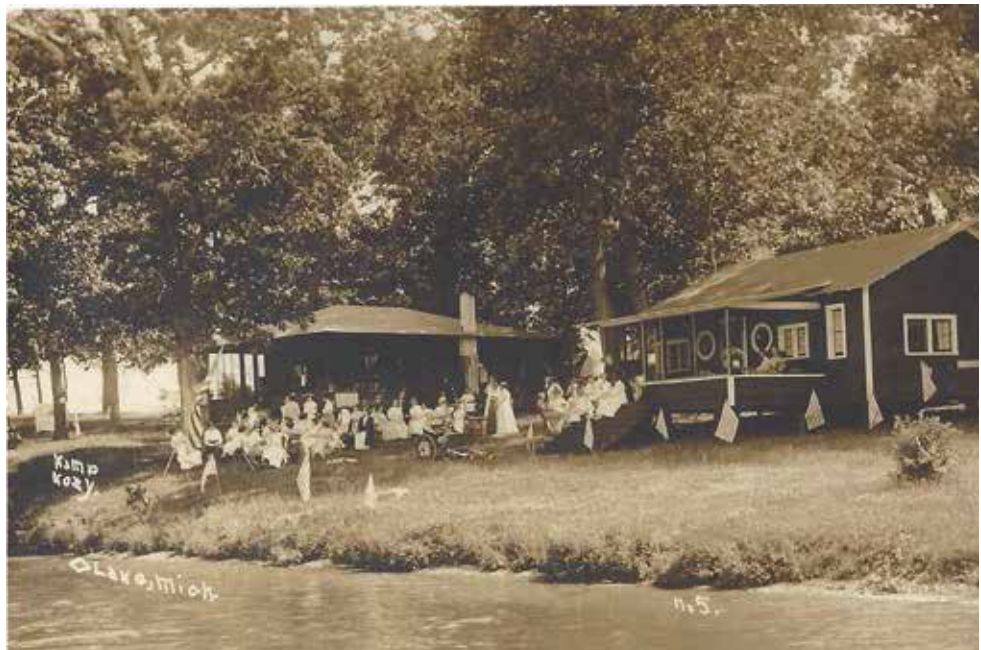
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NATURE NOTES

Wildlife reemerging as spring approaches

Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch

As this issue goes to press in late March, the Snowy owls that invaded Michigan this winter are headed back north.

Bob Conrad of St. Joseph captured some stunning images of a snowy owl, as it took a muskrat on Monday, February 26 along Linco Road.

These Arctic owls are still being reported throughout Berrien County. In addition to Conrad's sighting, at least one snowy owl was reported on February 24 at the intersection of Buffalo and Avery Roads near Three Oaks by Natalie McKelvy of Harbert.

Presumably a different individual was seen by Steve Gawronski on Monday along US-12 two miles east of Three Oaks. Farther north and again along Linco Road was one snowy owl on February 25, reported by Elizabeth Gravitt of Sodus.

There have been additional sightings of snowy owls along Totzke Road in recent weeks, involving up to three individuals.

Beginning in November of last year, the northern United States saw a large irruption of snowy owls, coming from the Arctic regions, where the species spends the nesting season. On average, Berrien County may only log one to five snowy owls sightings per winter, however this year produced multiple birds coming to our region, likely due to lack of food in the far north.

Snowy owls have been reported from 65 of Michigan's 83 counties this winter.

A northern shrike was located near the intersection Pardee and Browntown Roads near Three Oaks on February 24. The bird has been relocated on subsequent days by multiple observers until Wednesday morning.

Northern shrikes are uncommon songbirds that spend the winter in our region, known for taking smaller birds as prey, often impaling them on barbed wire or thorns.

In the old days, another common name for this species was butcher-bird, due to the habit of butchering its prey.

Last week I ventured out to Scottdale Road in south Royalton Township. The low-lying areas were flooded, which is no surprise to anyone. The flooded farm fields were full of thousands of migratory waterfowl, mainly mallards, but I was able to see a male ring-necked duck, a male American wigeon and three American black ducks.

Historically, the land along Scottdale Road at its intersection with Linco Road



was a wet prairie and cattail marsh, which would have harbored large flocks of waterfowl over thousands of years.

Eastern bluebirds are certainly a harbinger of spring in Southwest Michigan and during this time of year I receive many bluebird photographs and reports.

Pauletta Kollath sent in photos of both male and female eastern bluebirds which perched on the family bird feeders on Wednesday morning.

When I started learning about birds in the 1970s, bluebirds were not as common as they are today. Eastern bluebirds are native to southwest Michigan, but where thought to have been confined to forest edges, including open dune areas and tall-grass prairies until the 1830s when forests were cleared for farming.

The species prefers open and semi-open areas and generally avoids large tracts of unbroken forests.

Before bluebird nesting boxes became popular, bluebirds relied entirely on natural cavities for nest building. This included dead or partially dead trees, particularly oaks that were scattered among grasslands.

During the 1870s the house sparrow, native to Asia, became established in Michigan and competed for nesting areas. House sparrows will often kill adult and young bluebirds, and take over nesting



Above: Male and female eastern bluebirds, March 14, 2018 in St. Joseph Twp., photographed by Pauletta Kollath.

At right: A Red fox is seen in the backyard of Sharon Blackmond near the shore of Magician Lake in Van Buren County, February 25.



Snowy owl along Linco Road as it takes a muskrat, February 26, 2018. Photos by Bob Conrad of St. Joseph.

locations.

During the late 1920s another invasive avian species reached Michigan: the European starling. It too out-competes bluebirds for potential nesting cavities.

Another challenge to bluebirds in addition to other birds and mammals was the widespread use of the pesticide DDT during the middle 20th Century.

During the 1950s through the 1970s, bluebird numbers were on the decline. But during the 1960s and 1970s DDT was banned and bluebird nesting boxes became popular. Slowly the species' population increased across their range.

Today bluebirds are doing fine. They are present all year in our region, although numbers are reduced in winter.

During the recent winter, spanning from December 2017 through the last of February this year, bluebirds were reported from 47 of the 68 counties that comprise Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The northernmost report from Michigan this past winter were two bluebirds seen on January 2 at Petosky in Emmet County by John Cassidy of Elkhart, Indiana.

Just two records exist of eastern

bluebird occurring within ornithological winter, spanning the months December to February, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The first was in December 1962 and the second in December 2013, both reported near Escanaba. During the nesting season, eastern bluebirds are found throughout the state.

Southwest Michigan harbors populations of bluebirds, but the species is seen in reduced numbers until migrants from the south begin arriving in late February. A couple of weeks ago I witnessed a pair of bluebirds checking out a nesting box.

In summer they eat mostly insects and during the cold months will eat seeds, suet and berries.

In our region, bluebirds may raise up to three batches of young before autumn.

Sharon Blackmond of Sister Lakes captured an image of a red fox that had wandered into her yard, near the shore of Magician Lake.

Red fox are the more common of the two species of fox that inhabit our region. The second and less common species is the gray fox, which prefers woodlands over open areas.



LOCAL HISTORY

Early pioneer life in Howard Township

Provided by Cass District Library Local History Branch

Hardships and Incidents of a Pioneer Life in Howard Township, as told by John F. Coulter. Provided by Cass District Library's Local History Branch.

The Coulter home and farm were located on both sides of the intersections of Coulter Street and M-60.

"When they [Coulter family] landed on the site of their new home [in Howard Township] mother [Ann Coulter] didn't know a single person in the territory of Michigan outside of their home circle -- never seen any of them before. Father [James Coulter] was acquainted with a godly number. But two resided at Howard that knew him then, Perry

Perkins and William Salisbury, both of whom were born in August, 1823, so of course were good young boys. They soon got acquainted, for the people in those days would flock around a newcomer and make him feel welcome.

There were among those present when they got here, Uncle Billy Young, 38 years of age, and Ira Perkins of 40 years, both of whom lived to a good old age. Nathan McCoy, an uncle of Marshall Howell, occupied the farm that was afterward known as the Richard Shaw place. Besides these were William Thomas and Matthew Doane, Dennis Parmalee, Benjamin Cooper, SR., Joseph Smith, Almon Shepherd, Mason Lee and a Mr. Mowry, and on Yankee Street were John Pettingill, Ephraim Huntley, J. Abbott, Bailey Hussey, Zina Rhoades, and Major Heath with Jonathan Wells close by.

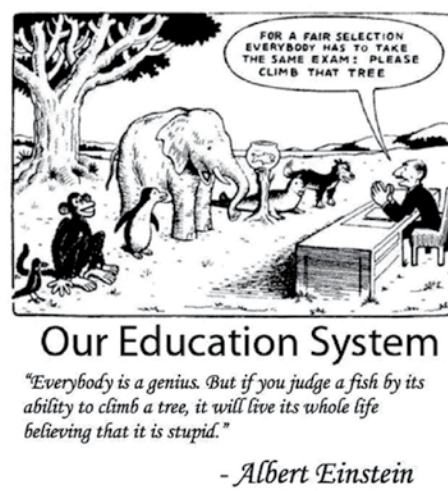
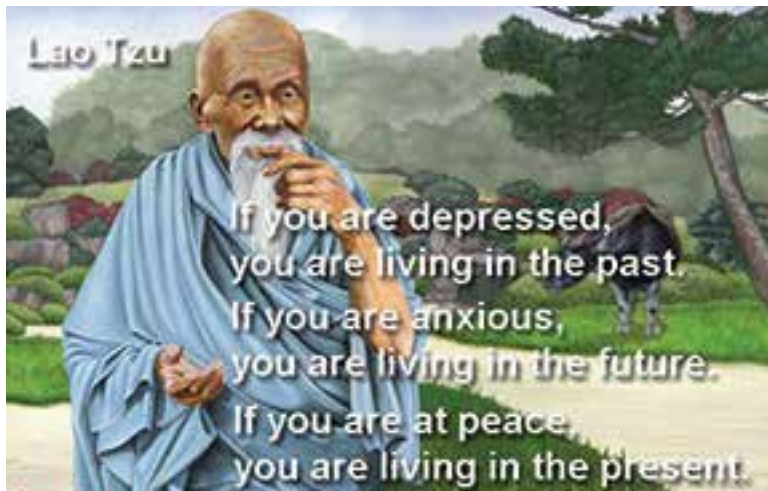
It is said that Mr. Kirk was the pioneer resident of Howard Township, being first here. I think I saw him when I was a small boy. There was also a Mr. Todd here very early, but he did not stay long. The three Gallop brothers were also early settlers.

The pioneers has no little sickness in the first settlement of the country. It was said that at times there were hardly well ones enough to care for the sick, and sometimes the premises looked as though they were deserted, which added to the natural homesickness that would be incident to the breaking up of old associations in their old homes. The prevailing sickness was chill fever [ague]. The doctors mainly for our section [of Howard Township] were Lockwood, Bugbee and Treat of Edwardsburg, and were not so skilled as at present and the principle

medicine in stock was senna, salts and calomel.

Every neighborhood had its unique characters and Billy Young was one of them. He was a good neighbor, honest man, quick wit and a robust swearer and loved his bitters as well as he ever did his mother. Billy got sick as well as all the rest, but Billy wasn't like the rest, for he preferred to buy his medicine like he did his whiskey, in large quantities and take it to suit himself--and that was not in homeopathic does either. When Billy got sick he sent for some calomel, and got him enough to last him 25 years, more or less; and when he got it he proceeded to take it immediately."

To be continued...



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THE LAST WORD

The day John Wayne tried to make money out of thin air

A long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away I knew a guy who went by the name of John Wayne. No, he wasn't *the* John Wayne, this guy was really named Mike, but almost all of our mutual friends called him John Wayne because, as the story goes, he was old enough to *be* John Wayne.

I was just a kid, a senior in high school when I met JW. I had gotten myself a part time job at a local supermarket, and on my first day there the manager sent me to work stocking the freezer case with JW, who was a seasoned vet. JW was a friendly, talkative guy, and we hit it off immediately. He told me he had been discharged from the army a few months ago, and that he had spent quite a bit of his time there in Korea where he had learned to eat Kimchi, a local delicacy made of cabbage and other veggies and a ton of spices, then buried in an earthen jar in the ground for a period of time to allow it to ferment. Very spicy, he said, but decidedly more appealing than rat or dog roast, which he swore the locals ate regularly.

I made a mental note that although JW's real last name was of Polish origin, his stories indicated that he might have at least a touch of Irish in him.

Well, JW and I became good friends (still are), and I had the good fortune to work with him often over the years I was at the grocery store and working my way through college. To say that he was a character is a considerable understatement; people who know me have heard a hundred John Wayne stories (JW is the one who first told me the story I wrote

about last year where a pike allegedly baited the trap with an acorn on top of a rock to lure a squirrel into the water where the pike could eat it).

Well, like I said, that was a long, long time ago, and JW has since retired and now spends his winters in Florida, so we don't communicate or see each other as much as we used to.

But I ran across a news story the other day that brought back a whole series of JW memories, and he's been on my mind ever since.

The story was headlined: "10 things that used to be free but aren't anymore." It talked about things like meals on airplanes, television channels, directory assistance and telephone operators (remember them?). A lot of the article dealt with new-technology things like ATMs and Internet-related services that were not only free but were free from advertising as well.

But there were a few things the story mentioned that echoed in my brain as a scream, "JOHN WAYNE."

The first one was water.

You see back then, every building in America had a water fountain, and water flowed free for the drinking.

So, there I was, a 17 year old kid unloading a supply truck with John Wayne, when what comes rolling off the truck but a case of individual-sized bottles of ... you guessed it ... water.

JW went off on a tirade.

"This is the stupidest thing I ever saw," he ranted. "Who in their right mind would ever pay for water? It falls out of the sky for crying out loud. It gushes from drinking fountains and sinks and hoses and all you have to do is

bend over and drink it. Who would ever pay for a bottle of water?"

I never said JW was a visionary.

It might have been that same truck (or the next, or the next, or the next), that we got a supply of dirt delivered in plastic bags. Black dirt. For potting plants, for gardens, whatever. Black dirt.

John Wayne went off again.

"YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!" he screamed. "They're thinking someone's going to be stupid enough to *pay* for dirt? My God, anyone with a shovel can just go harvest their own dirt ... who would ever be stupid enough to pay for dirt?"

Next was rocks in plastic bags. Then wood chips. And mulch.

My co-workers and I got used to JW's ranting and grumbling as item after item came pouring off the truck ... and it goes without saying that despite JW's misgivings, every one of those items not only had buyers, but they have all turned into cash cows that people now think nothing about paying for ... even though they are all still available for free.

Like I said, for the most part JW was anything but a visionary ... until one day he showed up at work with an idea that he began to pitch to anyone who would listen. An idea he said was ahead of its time; one that if we just invested a few bucks in now, would surely make us all rich beyond our wildest dreams.

Couldn't fail, he promised.

A get-rich scheme to top every get-rich scheme ever hatched. The secret, he imparted to us in conspiratorial tones, is ... Air.

We were skeptical. At the time, anyone who needed air could pull into any filling station and grab an air hose and

fill up the tires on your car whenever you needed to, air was ... well ... free.

"It's the next big money maker,"

John Wayne promised. "If we just find a cheap way to package it, and then are smart about how we market it, we'll all be richer than John Astor (think per-historic Elon Musk)."

"We can sell Midwest air to people in Los Angeles where the smog is so thick they'll soon have to strain it to breathe," he promised. "We can sell clean-smelling, pine-scented air from Michigan to city people who live near waste treatment plants or garbage dumps. We can sell warm air to Eskimos and cold air to Bedouins."

"It can't fail," he told us. "Everyone needs air, and we've got plenty of it! If there are enough idiots in the world who will pay for water and dirt and rocks and wood, there are certainly people who will be willing to buy air."

Well, as it so often does, life got in the way, and despite his best intentions (and an ongoing one-on-one sales pitch to anyone who would listen) no one was willing to fund his grandiose plan; ultimately John Wayne never got the air idea off the ground, and his dream faded into (ahem) thin air.

But as I read about the things that used to be free, I wonder if there wasn't just a spark of an idea in that dream ...

Hey, wait a minute.

Dreams are free too, aren't they? I wonder ... maybe someone might be willing to pay for a dream.

After all, there are more things in heaven and earth, John Wayne, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

If it works, I'll cut you in JW.

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